

A full-page background image of a football game. In the foreground, a player in a white jersey with green stripes on the sleeves and gold pants is running with the ball. He is wearing a gold helmet with a white face mask. To his left, a player in a red jersey is attempting to tackle him. The background shows other players and a blurred crowd.

Irish

MAGAZINE

RUNAWAY SUCCESS

2024-25 school year will
be remembered as one
of the most successful in
NDP athletic history

Page 30

IRISH

MAGAZINE

Dedicated to alumni, parents and friends of Notre Dame Preparatory School and our heritage schools, including Notre Dame High School, Pontiac Catholic High School, Oakland Catholic High School, St. Michael High School and St. Frederick High School.

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MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



A YEAR TO CELEBRATE AT NOTRE DAME PREP

Congratulations to the Class of 2025—one of the most accomplished in school history! With 134 graduates accepted to over 100 colleges and universities, including Notre Dame, Penn, Johns Hopkins and Michigan, this class earned more than \$8 million in scholarships. They also posted an average GPA of 3.944 and an ACT score of 26.6, and included

34 valedictorians, 25 IB Diploma candidates, and multiple direct admits to medical and business schools.

This year, we also were honored as a MACUL Distinguished District, and we remain proud to be both an Apple Distinguished School and a Microsoft Showcase School—a rare dual recognition.

Our success extended beyond the classroom:

- Three MHSAA state titles: boys soccer, football, competitive cheer
- Individual state champs – girls ski, girls tennis
- UDA national champion – jazz dance

Fundraising milestone:

Thanks to your generous support, we raised more than \$1 million this year, including a record \$650,000 for the Notre Dame Fund. These funds help cover the true cost of education and allow for campus improvements like new Smart Boards, updated HVAC, and lower school renovations.

Campus expansion:

We recently purchased the Pontiac Missionary Baptist Church property (2.2 acres) to support our growing campus needs.

Looking ahead:

We're exploring a capital campaign to add a new gym, expand the lower school, and launch a long-term endowment. Planned Gifts are an easy way to make a lasting impact—see our ad in this issue for details.

Thank you!

As an independent Catholic school, we rely entirely on your support. Your generosity keeps Notre Dame Prep strong, growing and accessible to families.

Gratefully,



Andrew J. Guest ND'84
Head of School



1389 Giddings Road
Pontiac, MI 48340

Notre Dame Prep: So Much More.

Why consider Notre Dame Prep? For more kinds of hands-on learning, from science projects in the greenhouse to championship robotics teams in lower, middle and upper school.

Learn about our Gateway scholarship program and merit scholarships for incoming ninth graders at ndprep.org.

ndprep.org



Notre Dame Prep
A Catholic and Marist Community

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ON THE COVER

The 2024-2025 school year, which will be remembered as one of the most successful in Notre Dame Prep athletic history, included a state title in football earned at Ford Field.



A photograph of two young boys in school uniforms playing on a grassy area. The boy in the foreground is wearing a dark blue sweater and khaki shorts, with his back to the camera. The boy in the background is wearing a dark blue sweater and dark trousers, facing the camera. They are both in motion, possibly running or playing a game. Large evergreen trees are in the background, and a wooden fence is visible on the left. The ground is a mix of grass and dirt.

The optimization of the lower school playground area to provide more play areas and to ensure that all students have a chance to engage in outdoor activities is one of the goals considered in the exploratory phase of a future capital campaign.



‘SHAKING’ UP THE FUTURE

Notre Dame Prep's Amazing Shake champions reflect on confidence, character and connection



At Notre Dame Prep, the fourth annual Amazing Shake competition has grown into more than just a middle school challenge — it has become a transformative experience that empowers students to develop real-world skills like confidence, communication and character. Inspired by the global competition created by the Ron Clark Academy, this competition challenges students to navigate dynamic social scenarios, mastering everything from a firm handshake to a compelling job interview, and so much more. And this year, two Notre Dame Prep students emerged as powerful examples of what this experience can truly cultivate.

Pranya Beri (left in yellow suit) is at the 2025 Global Amazing Shake, which was held at Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta. Daniella Sacco (top) is with her regional champion trophy.

Rising eighth grader Pranya Beri, winner of the 2025 Notre Dame Prep Amazing Shake and a finalist at the Global Amazing Shake in Atlanta, and classmate Daniella Sacco, this year's Michigan Regional Amazing Shake champion, reflected on their experience during an interview with IRISH magazine.

THE POWER OF THE SHAKE

For both Pranya and Daniella, the first real taste of the Amazing Shake came during the exhilarating Round One — The Gauntlet.

"I'll never forget walking into the Grimaldi Athletic Center and seeing 25 challenge stations," Sacco recalled. "It was everything at once — intense, hilarious, and unexpected. From day one, I knew this competition was going to shape who I am."

Beri described the Gauntlet as a moment where everything clicked. "The Gauntlet tests how fast you can adapt. You go from acting silly as a restaurant manager confiscating a rodent to seriously defending yourself in a mock speeding ticket scenario. It taught me how to stay calm under pressure — and how to lead with both confidence and empathy."

The first round is meant to be fun and fast-paced, but it also lays the foundation for what comes next: deeper thinking, clearer speaking, and the ability to adapt to unfamiliar territory.

"The whole competition pushed me outside of my comfort zone in the best way possible and helped me discover strengths I never knew I had," Beri continued. "From the very first handshake to the final round, every moment was filled with excitement, growth, and learning. Each round brought a new scenario, from 'Work the Room' to debates and interviews, and I loved how every experience helped sharpen a different skill."

Beri said the most surprising part was how real and high stakes each round felt.

The most challenging round was the debate, which she said pushed her to express her opinions, listen actively to what others said, and defend her arguments.

"On top of that, we had to be mindful of the time and make sure everyone on the team got a

fair chance to speak. It really tested our teamwork and composure under pressure," she said.

In addition, the corporate presentation round at Randy Wise Automotive Team and a mock job interview at Spark Technologies felt very much like the real deal.

REGIONAL AND GLOBAL RECOGNITION

After impressing at the school level, both students advanced to bigger stages — the Michigan Regional Competition, and the global competition in Atlanta, competing against students from across the country, Canada and Honduras.

"It was surreal," Beri said of the global competition. "Every round pushed me to grow. One of my proudest moments was winning the 'Deep Thoughts' award. It showed me that being thoughtful and reflective is just as important as being poised."

Beri said one of the most memorable parts of the event was the camaraderie among the competitors.

"Even though we were technically competing, it never felt that way. Everyone cheered each other on, shared encouragement between rounds, and celebrated one another's wins. That kind of support reminded me that leadership is not just about standing out, it is also about lifting others up."

Both Beri and Sacco were finalists in the global competition.

Sacco also stood out at the Michigan Regional Competition, where she was crowned champion among students from a variety of schools.

"It all happened in one day, but the energy was amazing," Sacco said. "The best part was seeing familiar faces — friends and even teachers. It felt like this growing family of people all passionate about the same thing."

BIG QUESTIONS, BIGGER LESSONS

One of the most daunting and rewarding rounds in the Michigan competition is Random Questions. In this round, students draw a question at random and must deliver a one-minute response in front of peers, teachers and judges.



“You don’t get time to script anything,” Sacco said. “You just have to speak from the heart. I learned the importance of connecting with your audience and being clear and honest in your message.”

Beri agreed, adding, “That round helped me find my voice. It is not about having the perfect answer — it is about staying present, being sincere, and letting people see who you really are.”

PREPARATION, PRACTICE, AND PURPOSE

Success in the Amazing Shake does not come without preparation. Sacco credits her calm confidence to daily practice with Principal Brandon Jezdimir, her coach and mentor throughout the competition.

“He would shake my hand and say, ‘Let’s talk.’ That regular practice made everything else feel natural. I also prayed before every round — faith gave me peace and reminded me to just be my best,” she said.

Beri’s preparation included staying informed about current events, reading regularly, and putting herself in new situations.

“I started introducing myself to teachers I didn’t know. I kept up with the news, so I would be ready to discuss anything. Being well-informed made me feel grounded and helped me in networking rounds like ‘Work the Room.’”

FAVORITE MOMENTS AND MEMORABLE CHALLENGES

Both students point to the Work the Room round as a personal favorite. In this scenario, students are placed in a room with 20–30 business leaders and must engage in as many meaningful conversations as possible.

“It’s fun and realistic,” said Sacco.

“You walk into a room and have to connect quickly with strangers. It’s like real-world networking. It’s one of my favorite challenges.”

Beri also mentioned the same round, highlighting its practicality. “It mirrors what professionals do every day. It taught me how to listen just as much as it taught me how to speak.”

THE JOY OF WINNING

For Sacco, winning the Michigan title was both emotional and affirming.

“When I won Michigan, I was full of joy. During the final interview, I just talked from the heart — about my family, faith and life. I didn’t try to perform. I was just myself,” she said.



Beri felt similarly about advancing to the global stage. “This competition changed how I see the world. I’ve learned how to listen better, speak with purpose, and carry myself with professionalism. I feel ready for interviews, for leadership roles, for anything.”

ADVICE FROM THE CHAMPIONS

Both girls now serve as role models for younger students entering the competition. Their advice? Keep it simple and be yourself.

“Be your genuine and authentic self,” said Sacco. “Your personality, your joy, your honesty — that’s

what makes you shine.”

“Don’t be afraid to take risks,” added Beri. “Say hello to someone new. Try the challenge that scares you. Growth happens when you are uncomfortable.”

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Both students are already thinking ahead to next year. Sacco is excited about the Gauntlet again:

“It’s the kickoff to everything. I love walking into the Grimaldi not knowing what we’ll face. It’s like stepping into a story that hasn’t been written yet,” she said.

Outside the competition, both girls stayed busy. Sacco was involved in Drama Club, track, the NDP Praise and Worship Choir, travel soccer, and tennis. Beri participated in theater, track and Michigan Youth in Government.

Both said they are forever grateful for their time at Notre Dame Prep’s middle school, for the teachers who support them, and for all the opportunities the school provides students with.

“The Amazing Shake changed my life,” said Beri.

“And I’ll carry its lessons forever,” added Sacco. +



The Notre Dame Prep contingent poses in Atlanta at the Global Amazing Shake competition at Ron Clark Academy.

A large group of graduates in green gowns and caps are celebrating, with many caps thrown into the air. The graduates are smiling and cheering, creating a festive atmosphere. The background shows a grassy area with trees and a cloudy sky.

Michigan's Catholic academic powerhouse graduates another outstanding senior class that finishes with a 100% college acceptance rate, 34 members of the valedictory court, an overall GPA of 3.944 and more than \$8 million (reported to date) in academic, merit-based college scholarships.

**ANOTHER NDP
CLASS GRADUATES
READY TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE**

Notre Dame Prep's Class of 2025 graduated May 18, 2025, in front of a gymnasium full of family and friends after an inspiring Baccalaureate Mass and Commencement, the school's 31st. With a high school career that began just as the world was beginning to recover from a global pandemic, this year's remarkable class graduated and finally completed their own unique academic tour through this prestigious Catholic, Marist and International Baccalaureate school.

Andrew J. Guest, Notre Dame Prep's head of school, in remarks conveyed during the commencement, said the day marked a momentous occasion in the graduates' lives as they gathered to celebrate the culmination of four years of hard work, dedication and perseverance.

"It's just been great to watch all of you grow," he told the seniors. "You sit here before us not just as students who have completed their academic journey at Notre Dame Prep, but as young men and women prepared to go out into the world ready to make a meaningful difference."

Guest also said that after graduation, the Class of 2025 must pass on the love they've all received and enjoyed from the school community during their time on campus.

"You are called to lead with empathy, to serve with humility and to live with integrity," he stressed.

This year's class of seniors finished their NDP journey not only as the school's 31st graduating class leaving behind a very proud faculty and staff and arguably the state's top academic Catholic high school, they are leaving behind a number of impressive data points as a group.

According to figures released recently by Notre Dame Prep's counseling department, to date this year's senior class has earned more than \$7.4 million in academic merit-based scholarships from colleges and universities, a number that surely will go up as the graduates continue to receive and report scholarship offers throughout the summer.

In addition, the Class of 2025 averaged 26.66 on the ACT with 35 seniors scoring a 30 or above on the test and finished the year with an overall grade-point-average (GPA) of 3.944.

Thirty-four graduates filled out this year's valedictory court for the class, which also featured 25 candidates for the prestigious International Baccalaureate diploma.

A total of 137 of the finest colleges and universities across the country have accepted Class of 2025 graduates so far, including 34 for the University of Michigan, three for the University of Notre Dame, 10 for Purdue as well as acceptances for Villanova, Johns Hopkins, Loyola Chicago, Carnegie Mellon, Pepperdine and the University of Pennsylvania, among others.

This year's class also was highlighted by five direct admits to medical school at Michigan State University and three to U-M's Ross School of Business.

And finally, perhaps most important, each of this year's graduating seniors spent increasingly significant amounts of time on leadership-level projects as part of their service requirements — once again proving that besides turning out academic scholars, Notre Dame Prep continues to graduate truly Christian people and upright citizens. +

2025 VALEDICTORY COURT

Elyse M. Abbott
Alessa G. Atallah
Cecilia M. Belej
Brynn M. Caffrey
Erin M. Connelly
Violet T. Dedivanaj
Ethan Dhomnic
Adriana M. Dimovski
Christian D. Estrellas
Sehaj M. Gill
Isabelle M. Gumma
Brooklyn M. Haddad
Aaron P. Hall
Drew A. Heimbuch
Matthew M. Kafarski
Selena M. Kalasho
Michael H. Khouri

Mary Grace C. Kozemchak
Mary G. Larocca
Adriana L. Lorenz
Emily C. Mantych
Addison Mikel
Lucy C. Milback
Geraldyn Nguyen
Maria J. Nunning
Lillian M. Perkins
Dominic Sarti
Abigail A. Stewart
Creighton J. Studt
Vincenzo S. Tartaglia
Audrey T. Thummel
Nicole E. Voto
Ryan M. Wojichowski
Christina E. Years



Culture

HOW NOTRE DAME PREP IS SHAPING TH

A photograph of a school hallway with several children in uniform. In the foreground, a boy with glasses and a dark sweater over a light blue shirt is partially visible. Behind him, a boy with curly blonde hair, wearing a white shirt, a dark tie, and a dark sweater, looks towards the camera. To the right, a girl with a long braid, wearing a white shirt and a dark sweater, is seen from behind. The background is slightly blurred, showing other children and the hallway's interior.

in focus

THE FUTURE OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



This past spring, Notre Dame Preparatory School embarked on a meaningful initiative rooted in a single powerful idea: listening. In collaboration with Panorama Education—a national leader in school climate assessments—NDP conducted a comprehensive culture survey to better understand the experiences of its students, families, faculty, alumni and board members.

The results offered not just a snapshot of life at the school, but a mirror—reflecting the community's strengths and its areas for growth. It was a moment of reflection on the Marist ethos and, more importantly, a call to action.

"This wasn't just about collecting data," said Mia Burbank, Chair of Notre Dame Prep's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Board Committee. "It was about listening with intention and using what we heard to become a stronger, more inclusive community."

A MOMENT FOUR YEARS IN THE MAKING

The spring 2025 survey marked the second time NDP had undertaken this type of cultural assessment. The first survey, conducted four years ago, helped establish a baseline that informed several schoolwide initiatives—many of which are now embedded in the school's strategic plan. Revisiting the survey this year was intentional.

"We wanted to see if the work we put in over the past few years was truly making a difference," Burbank explained. "It was also a chance to assess new challenges and make sure we're staying aligned with the evolving needs of our students and families."

The survey's questions focused on four key areas: belonging, safety, mission alignment, and the day-to-day experience of life at NDP. Many questions mirrored those from the original survey, allowing for clear comparison over time.

"By asking similar questions, we could measure progress and identify where we've grown—and

where we still need to grow,” Burbank said. “It also let us reflect on how well our mission is being lived out in everyday school life.”

ENCOURAGING INSIGHTS: SAFETY AND CONNECTION

As part of the qualitative data collection, the school sent surveys to all faculty and staff, current parents with students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, students in 4th through 12th grade, and Notre Dame Prep alumni from the past 10 years.

The results paint a hopeful picture in many areas. Most notably, students overwhelmingly reported a strong sense of physical safety on campus: Ninety-two percent of students said they do not worry about physical fights. Eighty-nine percent said they don’t worry about school violence.

Equally significant, 70 percent of students reported a sense of belonging and connection to the NDP community.

“These results affirm that we’re doing important work in creating an environment where students

feel safe and supported,” Burbank noted. “Safety and belonging are essential foundations for learning.”

Overall, families, teachers and staff responded favorably to the topic of school climate, with 80 percent of families stating they believe students have respect for school staff, while 60 percent believe the school values the diversity of students’ backgrounds. Ninety-two percent of teachers felt like they are trusted to teach in the way they think is best.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: RESPECT AND INCLUSION

The survey also revealed some hard truths—insights that school leaders are now using to guide the next chapter of growth:

- Many students felt a noted lack of respect in the way people treat each other with notable variation across grade levels.
- Favorability regarding school culture declined with age.
- Students receiving financial aid reported a



lower sense of belonging than their peers, along with less favorable views on overall school culture.

“We didn’t go into this looking for perfect scores,” said Burbank. “We wanted honesty. And that’s what we got. The results show us that while we’ve built a strong foundation, we must do more to ensure every student feels respected, valued, and seen—especially those who may face additional barriers.”

Beyond the metrics, the survey included open-ended questions that offered deeper insights and personal reflections. Themes emerged across

NEXT STEPS

The survey findings are currently being reviewed by the DE&I committee in partnership with school leadership. From this, a concrete action plan will be developed that focuses on: targeted initiatives to improve belonging and respect across all grade levels; additional support for students who receive scholarships or feel less connected; focus groups to gather qualitative feedback; integration of findings into both the school’s operational goals and long-term strategic planning; and transparent communication about progress and next steps.

“This work doesn’t live in a binder or a boardroom,” Burbank emphasized. “It’s woven into how we make decisions, set priorities, and serve our students every day.”

Perhaps the most important takeaway from this survey is that culture is never static—it evolves with intention, dialogue, and trust. Burbank said the school’s leadership—including Head of School Andrew Guest and the Board of Trustees—are committed to that principal.

“We’ve built something special at NDP,” Burbank said. “But the work of building culture never

ends. It takes listening, reflecting, and acting with heart. That’s how we ensure every member of our community feels at home here.”

Guest agreed, stating: “Creating a culture where every student feels they belong is not a box we check—it’s a promise we make daily. When our students know they are welcomed, valued, and respected for who they are, they can thrive. As a Catholic, Marist educational community, that’s the kind of school community we’re called to be.” +

groups—highlighting both praise for the school’s strengths and suggestions for how to improve. Strong participation across all key constituencies gave the school’s administration confidence that the survey reflects the broader community’s voice. Still, school leaders understand that data alone isn’t enough.

“Surveys give us the ‘what,’ but not always the ‘why,’” Burbank said. “That’s why we’re hosting focus groups this fall. We want to sit down with students, parents, alumni and faculty to hear the stories behind the statistics.”



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about your
legacy

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Notre Dame
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EMBRACING

Notre Dame Prep alum is charting an inspiring journey of academic excellence and global engagement through a prestigious scholars program at the College of William & Mary

Selected as one of only 20 students in the American Statecraft cohort of the Global Scholars Program (GSP) at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Va., Notre Dame Prep 2023 graduate Natalie Burg is spending a year immersed in an ambitious academic campaign focused on U.S. foreign policy, global diplomacy and hands-on research.

A SURPRISE EMAIL WAS THE START OF IT ALL

“When I saw the ‘Congratulations’ email, I was in shock,” Burg said. “It was incredibly competitive this year. Being part of this program is beyond what I could have imagined.”

The GSP is a year-long, credit-bearing program offered through William & Mary’s Global Research Institute. It pairs students with D.C.-based mentors, offers specialized coursework and provides global experiences, including a winter trip to India where students will meet Indian government officials.

“India’s democracy will act as a mirror to ours,” Burg adds. “I’ve never been to Asia, so I’m beyond excited for this experience.”

Her coursework at W&M is equally immersive. This fall, she’ll study Exercise of Power under Professor Stephen Hanson, who will in part analyze the legacy of current W&M Chancellor Robert Gates, a former secretary of defense under presidents George W. Bush and Barack

THE GLOBAL



Obama, and a former CIA agent who spent 26 years at the agency.

“We might even tour the CIA or Department of Defense,” Burg added hopefully.

Outside of her GSP work, Burg will serve as a residential teaching assistant for the National Institute of American History and Democracy, helping pre-college students explore Virginia’s historical sites while she builds her own foundational academic skills.

A PASSION FOR GOVERNMENT ROOTED IN NDP

At William & Mary, Burg is majoring in government with a minor in philosophy. But her interest in how people shape political systems was sparked at NDP and sharpened through some pretty impactful college courses and a couple of inspiring professors.

“Professor Paul Manna became a mentor — he’s from Michigan like me — and our conversations after the 2024 election made me feel seen and supported,” she said.

She also credits Hanson, calling him “the smartest person I’ve ever met,” for helping her develop a nuanced understanding of comparative politics.

“He taught me to put on different lenses when analyzing global systems,” she said. “That mindset has changed how I approach just about everything.”

A SWIFT-LED COMMUNITY

In addition to her academic work, Burg co-founded William & Mary’s official Taylor Swift Club — a fun and inclusive space for fellow “Swifties.” “Taylor’s music was the soundtrack of my coming of age,” Burg said. “It only made sense to turn that passion into something bigger.”

After discovering there was no existing fan club during freshman orientation, Burg and fellow student Addy Al-Saigh teamed up to launch one. They wrote a constitution, secured funding and quickly grew a strong following. The club since has hosted tote-bag painting nights, friendship bracelet-making events, trivia contests and concert watch parties.

“We wanted a space where students could

connect through a shared love of Taylor’s music — and it’s been incredible to see how many people show up.”

The club even caught national media attention, with Al-Saigh featured in British news outlet The Guardian discussing Taylormania on college campuses. “Our club is joyful, creative and welcoming — it’s exactly what I hoped it would be,” Burg said.

NDP’S LASTING INFLUENCE

Reflecting on her time at NDP, Burg is quick to praise the school’s faculty. “The teachers at NDP are incredible. Mrs. [Katrina] Sagert and Mrs. [Melissa] Archer made me the writer I am today, and I still update Mrs. [Heidi] Newby on my college journey.”

She also remembers never being told “no” when she pursued unique learning interests — like, for example, an essay on the hidden meanings in Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody,” she



recalled.

Whether singing in choir, performing in theater or leading Model UN, Burg said NDP's supportive environment laid the groundwork for her current success at W&M.

"NDP taught me that being an upright citizen isn't just a value — it's a lifestyle," she said. "It's simple things like holding doors open, it's offering help to others who need it and representing yourself and your school with pride."

EYES ON THE FUTURE

While law school remains on her radar — sparked in part by her childhood fascination with music copyright law — Burg is also seriously considering a career in foreign service.

That's because a serendipitous encounter with U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ambassador Melanie Higgins, a fellow Kappa Delta sister, opened her eyes and some new doors.

"She gave me her business card and we later had a Zoom call," she said. "Talking to someone who's represented the United States abroad really moved me. I realized that diplomacy could be a way to make a difference."

Burg says, however, the best advice she's received so far in her still-young life is simple: say yes to opportunity. "At college, I learned that the worst someone can say is no. That mindset helped me connect with deans, ambassadors and mentors. And I owe a lot of that confidence to my time at NDP."

With curiosity as her compass, a love of learning in her toolkit, and Taylor Swift's lyrics echoing in the background, Natalie Burg is ready to take on the world — one bold opportunity at a time. +



From St. Fre

A childhood spent reading and a high school education turned Frederick alum into a high-flying career

From his childhood in Southeast Michigan to the creative studios of Hollywood, St. Frederick High School alum Mike Vosburg (Class of 1965) has lived a life shaped by hard work, persistence and a vivid imagination. A self-taught artist and storyteller, Vosburg's artistic journey has taken him from drawing fanzines in his bedroom to earning an Emmy and working alongside some of the biggest names in comics, animation and film.

EARLY INSPIRATIONS: A WORLD WITHOUT TV, BUT NOT WITHOUT WONDER

Growing up in a modest household — his father a janitor, his mother a well-read disciplinarian —

Vosburg learned early the value of education and the power of belief.

"My dad never made more than \$150 a week, but still put four kids through college," Vosburg said recently from his home in California. "My mother was a very intelligent and literate woman who instilled a sense of discipline in all of us. There was never a word of discouragement in whatever we attempted."

Without a television in the home until he was 12, a young Vosburg instead immersed himself in books and comic books, his first encounters with narrative art. Funny animals, westerns, horror sto-



d's to 'Spawn'

gh school full of inspiration lift St.
career full of storytelling and art

ries, superheroes — he consumed them all — and then graduated to authors like Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, and renowned illustrators like N.C. Wyeth.

“Reading was my major source of entertainment, and those reading skills certainly paid off with study habits when I was in high school. And they were a big help years later when I was looking for professional work,” he said.

ST. FREDERICK HIGH SCHOOL: WHERE COMICS MET CRAFT

St. Fred’s wasn’t just where Vosburg hit the books — it’s where he found a kindred spirit. A pivotal friendship with fellow student Fred Jackson sparked a creative collaboration in comic book making. Together they created and swapped home-made comics, cultivating a hands-on understanding of both storytelling and visual composition.

It was also during this time that Vosburg became involved in the early days of “comic fandom.” He connected with Jerry Bails, a professor at Wayne State University and one of the founding fathers of comic fandom, who encouraged Vosburg to produce his own fanzine. The result: a small publication, *Masquerader*, that reached a few hundred readers by mail — laying the groundwork for what would become a lifelong career.

“In fact, most of the people I would eventually work with in the comics industry I met or came in contact with while I was still in high school,” Vosburg said.



COLLEGE YEARS AT OAKLAND UNIVERSITY: LESSONS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Following high school, Vosburg attended Oakland University — remarking that it was actually a shorter commute than St. Fred’s had been. There, he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree. But while his academic focus was important, much of his learning took place outside of lecture halls.

“I didn’t make too many friends at O.U. outside of folks I played basketball with at the gym,” he admitted. “It was very different from high school.”

He became a regular at Oakland’s courts, honing a love for basketball that would eventually lead to a short stint in coaching. “While I was the worst player on a really terrible basketball team at St. Fred’s, I was obsessed with the game,” he recalled.

Vosburg also worked part-time during college, primarily at the Pontiac city library — a job that sharpened his research skills and complemented

his growing artistic sensibility. “Being a library page helped me learn how to research, which turned out to be very useful later on in storyboard work and art direction,” he said.

LIFE LESSONS FROM TEACHING AND COACHING

After graduation, Vosburg spent several years teaching elementary school in the Pontiac area, including St. Michael and St. Benedict schools. At the same time, he took on coaching roles, including basketball and even golf.

“Mel Larsen, who was a former principal and football coach at Pontiac Catholic — and later a state legislator — talked me into coaching since I was always screaming at the coaches during games,” Vosburg joked. “I also was a scout for the team that went to the Class C semifinals.”

Though his time as an educator was rewarding, it also helped solidify his decision to pursue cartooning full time. “After three years of teaching, I decided there had to be an easier way to make a living,” he said. “So I started to focus on working as a cartoonist, which I’d been involved in since I was a kid.”

HOLLYWOOD CALLING: COMICS, COVERS AND CINEMATIC SUCCESS

In 1984, Mike and his wife, Anna, moved to Los Angeles, where he took a leap of faith into the world of professional visual storytelling. He’d already gained traction as a comic book artist, having worked for both Marvel and DC Comics during the 1980s, but L.A. opened the door to a wider array of creative opportunities.

Vosburg went on to storyboard for music videos by top artists like Eminem, Marilyn Manson, and Gwen Stefani. He illustrated all of the cover inserts for HBO’s “Tales from the Crypt” and directed animated segments for HBO’s “Spawn,” which earned him an Emmy Award. His film credits include storyboarding for directors such as John Frankenheimer and Robert Zemeckis, and on major Hollywood projects such as “The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe,” “Prince Caspian,” “The Voyage of the Dawn Treader,” and “Journey to the Center of the Earth.”

“While I had no formal art training, I knew a



good bit about storytelling from doing my own stories,” Vosburg said. “Virtually every artist I worked with became a ‘teacher,’ and since I worked with some exceptional artists, I received excellent practical training.”

REFLECTIONS FROM LOS ANGELES

Now comfortably established in Los Angeles, Vosburg enjoys the vibrant culture of the city as well as its sunny climate. “I love both the city and the weather. . . and that we have such a racial and cultural diversity. It’s a great place to call home,” he said.

Still, his heart retains a special place for his roots in Michigan and especially at St. Fred’s for which he reserves a corner of his drawing board. “Going to St. Fred’s was a great experience that shaped me for much of my later life,” he said.

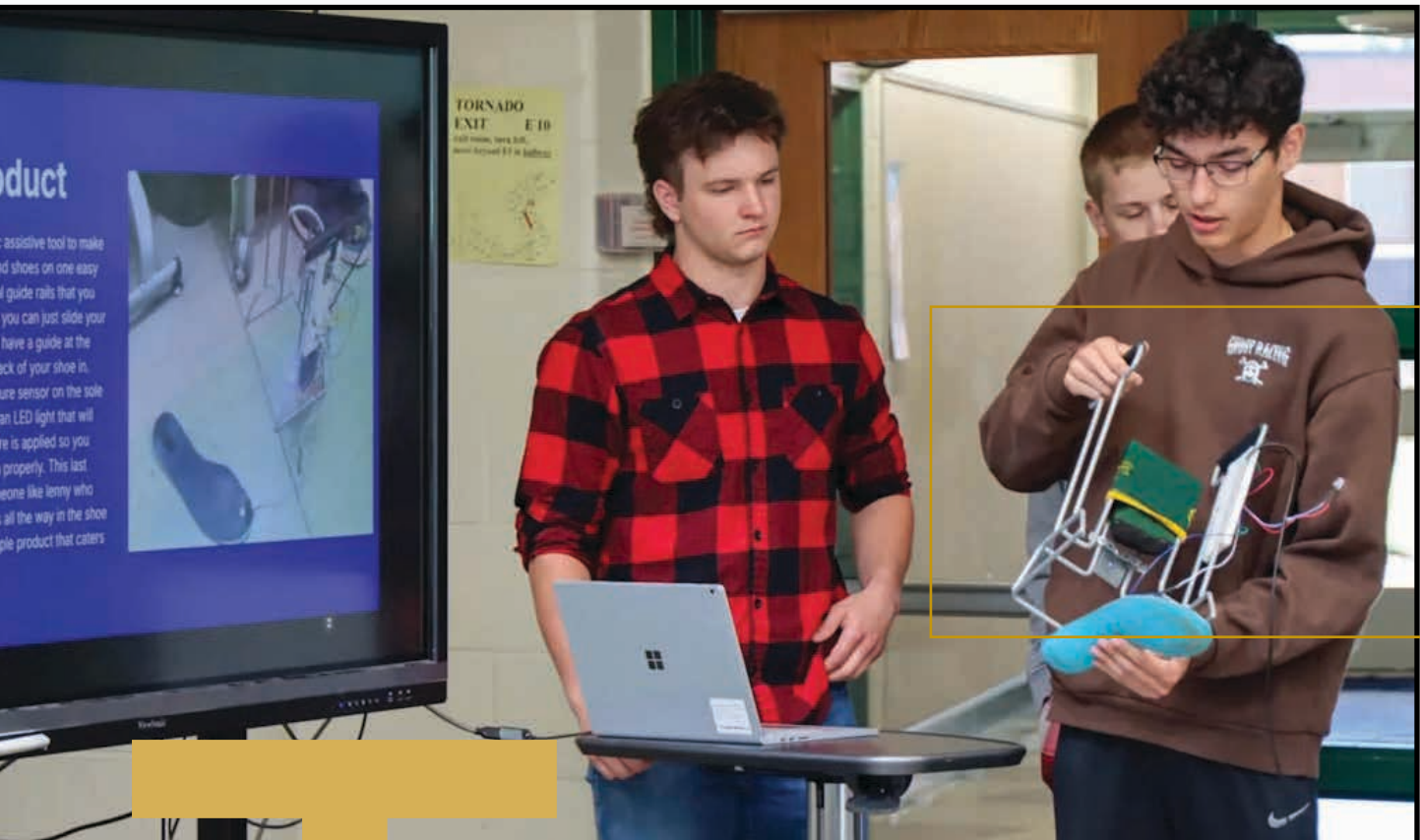
Vosburg recently designed the program and organized a Zoom call with some of his high school classmates who couldn’t make the Class of 1965’s 60th reunion this year.

THE ENDURING LEGACY OF A VISUAL STORYTELLER

From a comic-loving kid trading fanzines with his best friend in Pontiac to an Emmy-winning director working on iconic projects, Mike Vosburg’s story is proof that talent, hard work and passion — backed by a supportive community and family — can take you just about anywhere.

“Storytelling was a religion to me, and I wanted to be one of its high priests,” Vosburg said. And by all accounts, he still is. +





This past semester, upper school students at Notre Dame Prep wrapped up a course focused solely on improving the lives of individuals with disabilities. The hands-on “engineering and empathy” class—now a staple of the school’s science curriculum—encourages students to design, test, and prototype inventions that address real accessibility challenges.

Now in its fifth year, the class aligns with the school’s mission to form upright citizens

and remains a popular elective. Inspired by Project Invent, a non-profit empowering high schoolers to create change through technology, the course tasks students with identifying a community partner, then developing a product, business plan, and marketing strategy.

This semester, students collaborated with residents of Angels’



Innovative course incorporates design thinking and Project Invent, an educational concept focused on developing products that directly affect the lives of those in the community with real-world needs.

EXCEPTIONAL ENGINEERING AND EMPATHY

Place, a Southfield nonprofit serving adults with developmental disabilities. They also engaged with Shelly Loose, president of Ms. Wheelchair America, and Gary Miracle, a bilateral amputee and author.

"The course was collaborative and challenged us to creatively tackle real-world problems," said rising senior Anthony Palazzolo. "It wasn't just about building; it was about making something functional and user-friendly."

Palazzolo and his team developed a "shopping cart conveyor belt" and highlighted the prototyping phase as a fa-

vorite part. "It was exciting to bring an idea to life through trial and error," he said.

Erin Eby NDP'25 worked with classmates Erin Connelly and Christianna Fakhouri on a device to assist with compression socks. "This class let me channel my passion for engineering into making a real impact," Eby said. "Meeting people like Beatrice Janka, who works in prosthetics, emphasized the importance of independence for those with physical disabilities."

Instructor Louise Palardy praised her students' work and the course's impact. "En-

gineering and empathy uses a human-centered approach," she said. "It starts with listening to people's needs. Watching students realize they can truly help others is the most rewarding part."

Eby echoed the sentiment: "It's amazing to see students discover their power to make a difference. We're lucky to have a class like this at NDP." +



Runaway success

Notre Dame Prep claims five MHSAA state championships

The 2024-2025 school year will be remembered as one of the most successful in Notre Dame Preparatory School's athletic history. The Fighting Irish earned five MHSAA state championships—boys soccer, football, competitive cheer, girls tennis and girls ski—plus a first in jazz at the 2025 UDA National Dance Team Championship in Orlando, highlighting the school's consistent commitment to preparation, teamwork and student-athlete development.

Each title represented a different part of the athletic calendar and a different strength of the NDP community. Together, they formed a school year that stood out not just for the number of trophies, but for the way they were earned—through hard work, strong leadership, devotion to mission, and a focus on doing things the right way.

BOYS SOCCER BREAKTHROUGH: FIRST STATE TITLE

On Nov. 2, Notre Dame Prep's boys soccer team made school history, winning its first-ever state championship with a 3-2 victory over Elk Rapids. The title was more than two decades in the making and capped off a 23-2 season under longtime head coach Rob Suffredini ND '87.

"This championship is a testament to the dedication and passion of our players," Suffredini said. "It's been 23 years since the soccer program has been in the finals, so to be the group that finished the job is really special."

Led by senior captain Will Lanham and key contributors like juniors Jack Kilpatrick and Ben Liparoto, and defenders Henry Graff, Alex Ruschak and Ethan Janssen, the team advanced through a difficult playoff stretch that included wins over top-ranked Detroit Country Day and Flint Powers Catholic.

"It was a complete team effort, top to bottom," Suffredini said. "Every player contributed. The belief in each other and commitment to the team's goals made the difference. Also, I've always tried to align our program's efforts with the core values of the NDP mission—faith, character and excellence."



FOOTBALL FINISHES STRONG: TITLE AT FORD FIELD

Later that same month, the Irish football team added another milestone. On Thanksgiving weekend, NDP claimed its first MH-SAA state football title with a 42-7 win over Frankenmuth at Ford Field. Head coach Patrick Fox, a Frankenmuth alumnus, emphasized the importance of building a program where athletes grow over time.

“We’re a developmental program, and a lot of our players have been with the school since pre-kindergarten,” Fox said. “We take the time to develop them and they stay in our program.”

Junior quarterback Sam Stowe led the way with 293 passing yards and four touchdowns. Wide receiver Billy Collins had four catches for 126 yards and two touchdowns, and the Irish defense held Frankenmuth scoreless until the final quarter.

“The lights at Ford Field weren’t too bright for our offense,” Stowe said. “We stayed focused and executed. I’m grateful to be part of a team like this.”

The win marked the completion of a 12-1 season and confirmed NDP’s rise as a football program built on stability, trust and long-term development.

COMPETITIVE CHEER RETURNS TO THE TOP

In early March, the competitive cheer team added to the school’s championship total with a first-place finish in Division 3 at the MHSAA Finals in Mount Pleasant. It was the team’s sixth state title and the first since 2018, ending a six-year run of near-misses, in-

cluding four second-place finishes.

“We should have won it last year, but we didn’t get it done,” said senior Paige Marlinga. “That really motivated us this season.”

Head coach Jocelyn Welsh, in her second year leading the program, credited the team’s willingness to push themselves every day in practice.

“I challenged them to go outside their comfort zone,” Welsh said. “They responded by working harder and aiming higher.”

The Irish led the field in all three rounds of competition, finishing with a total score of 784.22. Seniors Grace Kinkade, Gabrielle Phillips, Jenna Robin, Leila Mains and Marlinga helped anchor a team that maintained an undefeated season through districts, regionals and the finals.

“We trained to compete at a higher level this year,” Welsh said. “And they delivered when it mattered.”

STUDT STRIKES GOLD ON THE SLOPES

In February, junior Maren Studt won individual state titles in both the slalom and giant slalom at the MHSAA Division 2 girls skiing finals at Boyne Highlands.

Studt had missed the 2024 championship due to a broken collarbone suffered just days before the event. Her return this year was focused, steady and ultimately dominant.

“I was nervous for most of the season,” Studt said. “But I went into the finals just trying to do my best and stay consistent.”

Her two-run combined time of 1:16.10 in slalom and 66.79 in giant slalom were good enough for first place in

both events.

“GS is my favorite discipline,” she said. “The snow was a little rough in the second run, but I fought through and I’m really happy with the results.”

Studt’s performance was a bright finish to the winter season and underscored the strength of individual athletes at NDP. With her senior year ahead, she already has her sights set on defending her titles.

SCHOOL YEAR CONCLUDES WITH TENNIS TITLE

The NDP girls tennis team competed at the MHSAA Division 4 state finals held in June in Midland and for the second consecutive year, the Irish finished as the team runners-up to Ann Arbor Greenhills while establishing a new school-best in team points. Greenhills finished with 38 points while third place Traverse City St. Francis had 20.

In the individual competition, NDP once again fielded an individual state champion as the four doubles team of Elena VanDieren and Vanessa Artinian took out the tournament’s first seed 6-3, 6-0, in the finals to become state champions. +



RESOLUTION x TWO



CITY HONORS STATE CHAMPS

The Pontiac City Council issues official resolutions in celebration of the state championships of Irish competitive cheer and skier Maren Studt

Notre Dame Prep's competitive cheer team and skier Maren Studt were honored April 29 by the Pontiac City Council for winning MH-SAA championships this past winter.

Along with coaches and members of both teams and with other Pontiac honorees, the council chamber was packed with people there to support the players, including NDP parents, friends and school administrators.

District 7 Council Member Michael McGuinness first introduced Studt and welcomed Irish ski coach Craig McLeod to the podium

to talk about his skier who earned state championships in both the slalom and giant slalom at the MHSAA finals meet held in February at Boyne Highlands.

"On behalf of the coaches and all the team, we proudly congratulate Maren on her incredible victories in both slalom and giant slalom at the 2025 state finals," McLeod said. She had

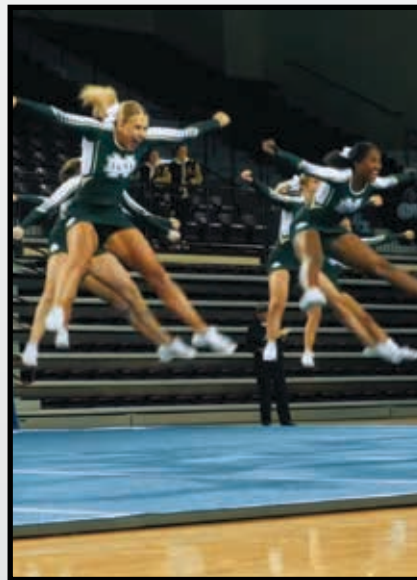




a truly remarkable season, defined by determination, discipline and excellence. In fact, her training actually began in August of 2024 with a trip to Chile where she worked through nearly three weeks of focused preparation."

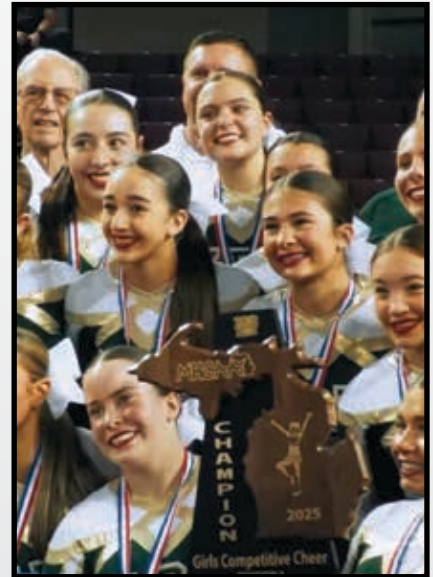
McLeod described the NDP junior's "amazing" hard work as well as the season she had culminating with her run through states.

"Maren found another gear fueled by furious determination and came back to win the second run by over a full second, clinching the



overall win on the slopes," he said. She exemplifies what it means to be a student-athlete while juggling a demanding training and racing schedule. All while continuing to take honors-level courses and maintaining straight As throughout the school year."

District 5 Council Member William Parker Jr. then read a proclamation congratulating the NDP cheer team and their coaches.



The team claimed its sixth MHSAA state title in program history and first since 2018 in early March, capping an unbeaten season with one final strong showing at the MHSAA D3 finals meet held at Central Michigan University.

"The Pontiac City Council's resolution celebrating and honoring Notre Dame Prep's 2024 Michigan high school competitive cheer state championship, whereas the 2024/2025 competitive cheer team representing Notre Dame Preparatory School in Pontiac, demonstrating extraordinary dedication, team-



work and skill throughout their season," said Parker. "And whereas the Pontiac Notre Dame Prep 2024/2025 competitive cheer team competed in the Michigan High School state finals and finished in first place under the outstanding leadership of coach Jocelyn Welsh.

"The team consistently displayed exemplary sportsmanship, perseverance and commitment to excellence. And whereas this accomplishment reflects the talent and hard work of the cheer team, but it also reflects the committed support of their families, school and community. And whereas the 2024/2025 Notre Dame Prep competitive cheer team has brought pride and inspiration to the community for its historic victory. Now, therefore, be it resolved that the members of the Pontiac City Council, the Mayor of Pontiac, and the members of this great community congratulate the 2024/2025 Notre Dame cheer team

for their outstanding achievements in winning the championship and commends their dedication and effort in representing our community with honor and distinction."

The city proclamation was followed by statements by the coaches and team members who also thanked the city council for honoring them during the evening.

Andrew Guest, NDP's head of school, also spoke and said how grateful the school is for the support of the city and noted that the school is celebrating its 30th year as Notre Dame Prep while mentioning its Pontiac founding and the heritage schools that preceded it.

"We're very proud that we're in the city of Pontiac and we're very proud of our student-athletes," he added. +

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'LOVE BUILDING ROBOTS

Demonstrating true Notre Dame Prep ideals, passionate team of middle schoolers brings home prestigious award from VEX Robotics world championship in Dallas.

Notre Dame Prep students were among the more than 2,400 student robotics teams from across the United States and over 60 countries who converged on a very hot Dallas, Texas, through May 14 at the 18th annual VEX Robotics World Championship, presented by the Robotics Education and Competition Foundation (REC Foundation).

Held at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, the event brought together top teams showcasing custom-built robots in pursuit of the world title. The event united students from elementary to university levels competing in:

- VEX IQ Robotics Competition (elementary and middle school)
- VEX V5 Robotics Competition (middle and high school)
- VEX U Robotics Competition (college/university)

According to Jerry Palardy, who mentors NDP's VEX participation, the school featured teams in Dallas that qualified across multiple divisions in el-

ementary, middle and high school levels.

"NDP's team 3333T, known as the Tornado Troopers, comprised of rising freshmen Steven Carter, David Ma and Juan Pablo Turrubiarres, participated in the V5 middle school competition and earned the esteemed Design Award, the highest honor judges can award to a team in each division," Palardy said.



OTS'



According to the REC Foundation, the Design Award "recognizes an organized and professional approach to the engineering design process, project and time management, and team organization. The honor also acknowledges a team's ability to document and explain its engineering design process through an engineering notebook and team interview."

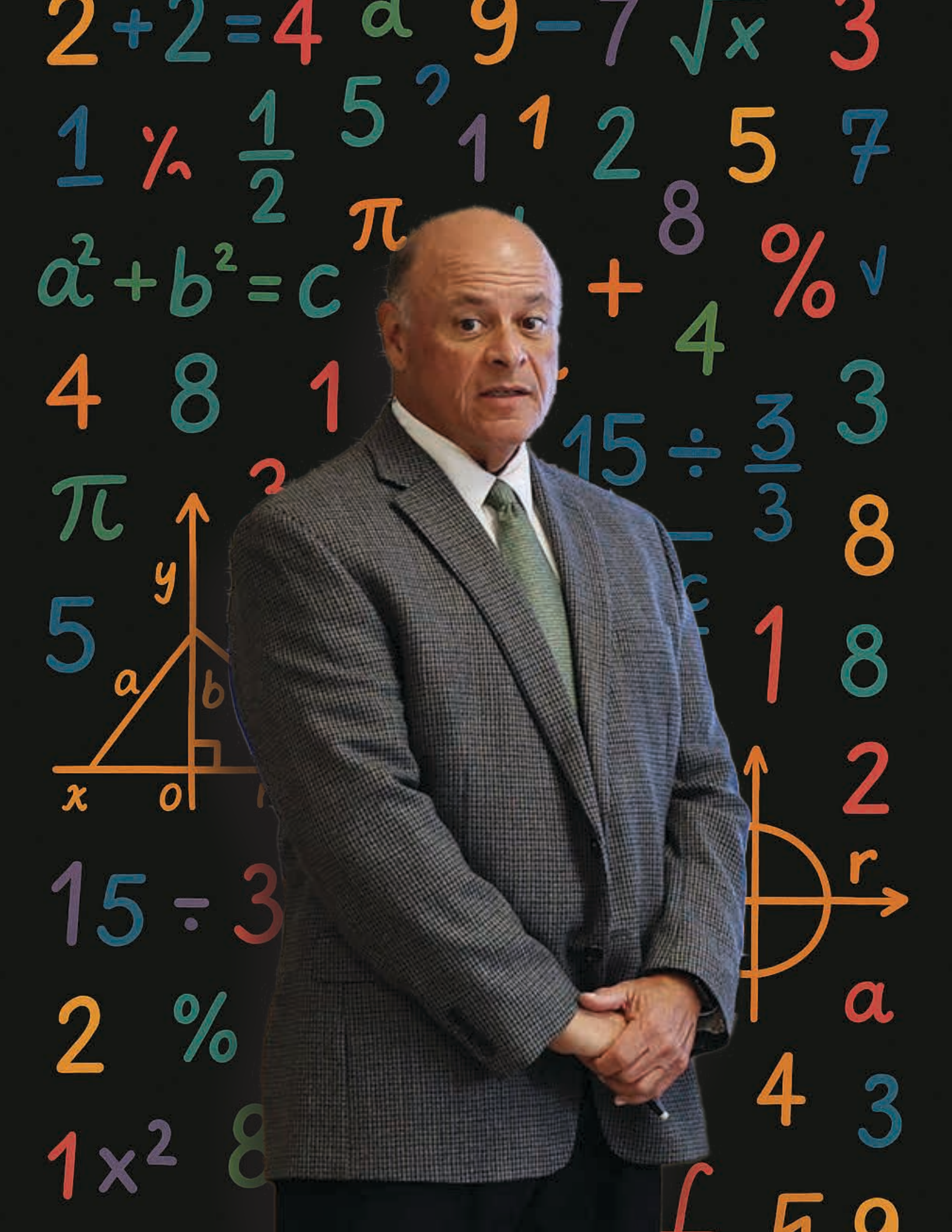
"Team 3333T exemplified all of this and more," added Palardy. "Their engineering notebook alone spans nearly 500 pages, showcasing their ideas, research, CAD models, prototyping, testing data, competitive analysis and strategic planning."

Palardy also said the team constantly pushes each other to improve, demonstrating remarkable dedication, independence and teamwork.

"They truly embody the values we strive to instill in every Notre Dame Prep student. And above all, their passion is unmistakable — they simply love building robots."

Other NDP teams attending the world championship in Dallas were:

- Team 3333H - Cyber Capybaras: rising seventh graders Dylan Jonckheere, Jack Knapman, Allison Lester and Jameson Sweeney
- Team 3333W - Power of the Square: Dino Acciavatti (rising senior), Kevin Carter (rising senior), Brooklyn Haddad NDP'25 and Alex Chung (rising junior) +



Not just about the numbers

It's not just about numbers when discussing Notre Dame Prep's mathematics curriculum. It's about the teachers behind those numbers, including veteran educator John Meyers.

A recent study conducted by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) compared the mathematical literacy — that is, the ability to express, apply and interpret mathematics in different contexts — of 15-year-old students in the United States to those in other industrialized countries. Out of 69 countries, the United States ranked 36th.

A different study by the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) indicated that 8th-grade students in the United States were outperformed in math proficiency by students in Singapore, the Republic of Korea, China, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Canada and Ireland.

While the studies paint a somewhat dire portrait of math education in the United States, it is by no means reflective of math literacy at Notre Dame Prep and other high-performing schools. Many strong school math programs in the U.S. offer the chance to take courses like AP Calculus, a rigorous class at NDP that covers as much as a year of traditional college material.

But at Notre Dame Prep, that's just the start. Other advanced options at the Oakland

County school range from algebra in middle school to International Baccalaureate math HL 1 and 2 analysis and approaches in the upper school, a class that encompasses topics like function operations, complex numbers, De Moivre's Theorem, 3D vectors and proof by induction.

But it's also about the "who's" behind such a strong math curriculum that is making all the difference at NDP.

Which is where John Meyers comes in.

A veteran math teacher with more than 25 years in private school settings, Meyers first came to Notre Dame Prep's upper school in the second semester of 2023 after returning to Michigan from Texas and a math position at Greenhill School, a co-educational, independent pre-K through grade 12 school located in the Dallas area.

Prior to Greenhill, Meyers taught and coached for 23 years at nearby Detroit Country Day.

Now heading to the end of this school year's second semester at Notre Dame Prep, he's hoping for another strong finish from hard-working students in his AP precalculus, honors geometry and IB HL math classes.



No stranger to hard work himself, including outside the classroom, he's also been an important part of the Irish softball and football programs, and helps his daughter coach an 11U travel softball team, which he says is one of his "greatest joys."

"I really enjoy getting to work with our kids outside of the school environment," said the Clinton Township resident who studied mechanical engineering and math at the University of Michigan and Northern Michigan University, and received his education certification from Eastern Michigan University.

Irish head football coach Patrick Fox said

(Above and right) An assistant coach on Notre Dame Prep's varsity football team, Meyers shows off the team's recent state championship trophy and celebrates with fellow coaches.

he's glad to have such an experienced hard worker on his staff.

"John has been a valuable member of my coaching team," said Fox. "He's got tremendous credentials, which include more than 20 years coaching and teaching at perennial athletic powerhouse Detroit Country Day."

For Meyers, his nearly three years on the NDP campus have been nothing short of extraordinary and he's not shy about saying why.

"NDP is an exceptional and delightful place," he said. "The academics are strong, the students are kind, polite and have a great spirit. The community at NDP is just special, and I feel it is one of the best schools in the state."

He also addressed another critical component of his current employer.

"The faith aspect here is a refreshing improvement over the school I taught at in Texas," he said. "I feel that our values definitely provide a strong foundation for the quality education our kids get." +



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Irish Legacy Gala

A new tradition takes root

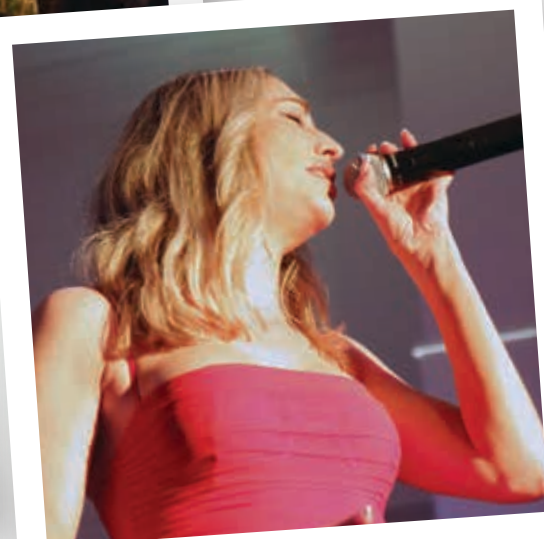
Notre Dame Preparatory School's community came together in spectacular fashion for the inaugural Irish Legacy Gala, held April 5 at the elegant Palazzo Grande in Shelby Township. Organized by the Notre Dame Prep Parents Club, the evening drew more than 250 parents, staff and friends for a night of camaraderie, celebration and community.

The event featured an exciting silent and live auction, with items generously donated by local businesses. Some of the top live auction prizes included coveted parking spaces at both the lower and upper schools, a memorable fire truck ride to the lower school, as well as enticing vacation and sports venue packages for the Detroit Pistons and Red Wings.

In total, the gala raised \$74,650 for the Notre Dame Fund, the school's unrestricted annual fund that supports the student experience throughout the year.

"The gala is really about bringing our school community together," said gala co-chair and parent Luain Hajjar. "We eventually want this to be the major social event of the year for our families to have a place to meet old friends and make new ones, plus it is a great way to benefit the school's annual fund."

The evening concluded on a lively note with music and dancing, highlighted by a special performance from alumna Monica Notaro NDP '07. With this strong start, the Irish Legacy Gala is well on its way to becoming a cherished Notre Dame Prep tradition.





KILLER BEES WIN SPECIAL SUMMER EVENT



Congratulations to the Killer Bees (Team 33) for a strong performance at the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) "That One Off-Season Event" held June 21 at Rockford High School in Rockford, Mich. This "glow-in-the-dark" competition, which featured 24 teams from Michigan and around the country, was a great opportunity to get the past season's robots back on the field, introduce new students to competition, and reconnect with fellow teams in a fun, low-stakes environment.

The Killer Bees won the day with partners the Laker Dreadnoughts from Pigeon, Mich., and the Baldwin Coded Dragons from Baldwin, Mich. The alliance's overall record across the event was 14-1, as they were ranked a close second coming into the main competition after qualifications. They also set the high score of the day with a 260 in the semifinal round.

EIGHTH GRADER WINS NJHS OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Alexis Bigelow, a rising ninth grader at Notre Dame Prep, was selected last semester as a National Junior Honor Society Outstanding Achievement Award recipient. As a result, Bigelow receives \$500 in a 529 college savings account to be applied toward her higher education.

Recipients are chosen based on their demonstrated work to support the five pillars of NJHS: scholarship, service, leadership, character and citizenship.

Thousands of applications were received and judged on the five pillars as well as on their qualifications for

service, citizenship and leadership. Students also were required to each get a letter of recommendation attesting to their character and submit their grades to cover the scholarship portion. In addition, they each wrote a required essay.

"Alexis is one of the strongest leaders we've had in the middle school," said Kelly Simon, middle school language and literature chair and NJHS co-advisor (with Sydni Oliver). "She exemplifies not only our Marist mission, but also demonstrates the



NJHS five pillars in all she does: in the classroom, the hallways or on any field or court. So proud that a national organization as prestigious as NJHS sees what we see in her!"

18 FROM NOTRE DAME PREP EARN NATIONAL AND STATE AWARDS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE IMPACT

Eighteen upper school students from Notre Dame Prep were recognized by the United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) and InnerView in the eighth Annual Community Service Impact Awards. This program, which is open to all U.S. students, connects student community service activities, skill development and commitment to the Global Goals to transform our world.

Alessa Atallah NDP'25, Erin Connelly NDP'25, Erin Delaney NDP'25, Ana Dimovski NDP'25, Sehaj Gill NDP'25, Isabelle Gumma NDP'25, Selena Kalasho NDP'25, Jack Karasek NDP'25, Amelia Kayi NDP'25, Michael Khouri NDP'25, Sami Khouri NDP'26, Daniel Kim NDP'27, Addie Mikel NDP'25,

Samuel Phillips NDP'25, Joshua Powers NDP'27, Chloe Smith NDP'27, Augustin Villajuan NDP'26 and Finley Wise NDP'27 all received national and state awards this school year.

"At NDP, our students serve from the heart responding to their call to action by being people of mercy and compassion," said Della Lawrence, director of campus ministry at Notre Dame Prep. "The students earning these awards matched their gifts, interests and passions to serve the needs of others."

Lawrence added that NDP's Ambassador Awardees, Erin Connelly and Alessa Atallah, each engaged in more than 150 hours of community service this year and received multiple national and state awards.

"Between the two of them, the various projects included virtual English tutoring for displaced Ukrainian teens, hospital shifts, outreach to Hospice patients, blood drives, animal shelters, educational farm children's program, scout programming for the Islamic House of Wisdom, local church projects, Mackinac Island honor guard and outreach to the elderly," Lawrence said. "A big shoutout to all of the students earning awards this year. These students went above and beyond to live out their call to missionary discipleship."

MATTHEW ST. ANDRE WINS ESSAY CONTEST ON UKRAINE TRAGEDY

A few years after Ukraine was forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union, the Communist regime of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin embarked on a campaign to break the resistance of the Ukrainian people, especially its



fiercely independent farmers. Its plan? Engineer and brutally enforce a man-made famine and starve Ukrainians into submission. The result? In the land called the breadbasket of Europe, millions of men, women and children starved to death.

This horrendous act of genocide against the Ukrainian people is known as the Holodomor, or murder by starvation.

The Holodomor remains one of the most devastating tragedies of the 20th century. Many say that understanding this history is crucial to recognizing the parallels to Russia's current invasion and war in Ukraine.

That effort to understand this terrible part of history in Eastern Europe is behind the 2025 Holodomor Genocide Student Essay Competition, which was sponsored by the U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor Genocide Awareness, based in Washington, D.C.

Matthew St. Andre, a rising senior at Notre Dame Prep, was so moved by the event when he first learned of it in Heidi Newby's AP comparative government and IB history classes that he dove headfirst into even more research, which led to him writing and submitting one of only three winning essays to the UHGA committee.

"I think the thing that inspired me the most while writing this essay was the current state of Ukraine," said St. Andre, who's been a student at NDP since eighth grade. "I also believe that what is happening right now over in Eastern Europe is tragic and needs to be addressed because it is very similar to the forced genocide of the Ukrainians during the 1930s."

2025 IB DIPLOMA PROGRAM CANDIDATES CELEBRATED

On May 1, then-Notre Dame Prep seniors enrolled in the IB-Diploma Program got together with family and friends in the St. Peter Chanel Library to celebrate their candidacy for the IB Diploma and to accept the special IB sash they wore on graduation day May 18.

This was a group that was both



energizing and effortless to work with, according to Katrina Sagert, NDP's IB Diploma Program coordinator and English/social studies teacher. "They liked being challenged by the material and by one another. They were exceptionally good-natured, and I loved the community they created."

This event also showcased the students' work on their extended essays, which are 4,000-word research studies, or "mini-theses," on a topic of their choice deemed to be of global significance and using at least two of the six academic subjects.

This year, students wrote on subjects that included how artificial intelligence software can improve modern dentistry; the disorder and unpredictability of chaos related to the structure and order of fractals; and the exploration of the cultural, linguistic and identitarian impact of the Detroit Lions, among others.

PALARDY RECOGNIZED AS PROJECT INVENT FELLOW OF THE YEAR

Science teacher Louise Palardy, who also serves as Notre Dame Prep's



STEM specialist and manager of the school's robotics center, accepted her 2025 Project Invent Fellow of the Year award in April in Manhattan.

Palardy also teaches NDP's engineering and empathy course and is the only teacher in the U.S.

to receive this year's honor, which celebrates individuals who have made exceptional contributions to furthering Project Invent's vision of "creating a generation of fearless, compassionate problem solvers."

NDP was the first school in the United States to use Project Invent as an integral part of its in-class curriculum and the credit goes to school administrators and Palardy who didn't hesitate to adopt the innovative course.

The New York City awards event was held on the 48th floor of the 7 World Trade Center building "with an amazing view of Manhattan," according to Palardy.

FOUR SENIORS SIGN TO PLAY SPORTS AT THE NEXT LEVEL



In an event held April 16 in front of their peers in the school cafeteria, four senior student-athletes from Notre Dame Prep signed to play athletics at the next level.

Joey DeCasa will become a member of the track and field team at the University of Detroit Mercy; Will Lanham signed to play soccer for Calvin College; Lily Perkins will join the dance team at the University of Michigan; and Colin Whalen signed to play basketball at Albion College.

High school athletic highlights and honors for each student-athlete follow:

Joey DeCasa – Track and Field – University of Detroit Mercy

2-Year Varsity Letter Winner (Track and Field)

2024 First Team All-State, Long Jump (Third at State Finals)

2024 All-Oakland County, Long Jump

(Second at County Meet)

2024 Individual Regional Champion,
Long Jump

2024, 2025 State Finals Qualifier

Notre Dame Prep School Record
Holder, Long Jump

Will Lanham – Soccer – Calvin College

4-Year Varsity Letter Winner (Soccer)

2024 All-American Selection

2024 MIHSSCA Dream Team Selection

2024 MIHSSCA D3 Offensive Player of
the Year

2023, 2024 First-Team All-State

2022 Honorable Mention All-State

2022, 2023, 2024 All-Region

2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 All-District

2024 Individual Academic All-State

2021, 2024 Team District Champion

2024 Team Regional Champion

2024 Team State Champion

**Lily Perkins – Dance – University of
Michigan**

4-Year Varsity Letter Winner (Dance,
Sideline and Competitive)

2023, 2025 NDP Fighting Irish Award
Winner

2025 Team UDA National Champion
(Jazz)

2025 Team UDA Third Place (Pom)

**Colin Whalen – Basketball – Albion
College**

2-Year Varsity Letter Winner
(Basketball)

2025 BCAM Team First Award Winner

2025 NDP Most Improved Award
Winner

2025 Team District and Regional
Champion

*NOTE: Athletic accomplishments
current as of April 15, 2025.*

**JUNIOR RECOGNIZED FOR WORK IN
THE COMMUNITY**

Jacob Evans, a rising senior at Notre
Dame Prep, was presented with the
2025 Youth Recognition Award by the



board of directors of the Rochester
Area Youth Assistance (RAYA), a
nonprofit organization whose goal is
to strengthen youth and families in the
Rochester community.

The Youth Recognition Award
recognizes students who have made
a positive impact in their community
or created a new opportunity through
leadership to do positive things for
people who need help.

Evans was selected for the award
after donating more than 800 new
baseballs and more than 300 new
softballs to the Detroit Police Athletic
League (PAL) through the first annual
"Helping Others Play Like A Champion
Ball Drive" at NDP, and for his work
on the Youth Leadership Council for
Charlotte's Wings, a local nonprofit
that provides books to children in
hospitals and hospices throughout
Michigan.

Bobbie Hall, physical education
department chair and health and
English teacher at Notre Dame Prep,
and Karen Holt, the executive director
of Charlotte's Wings, nominated the
Rochester resident for the award.

"Jacob truly is a mission-driven student
at NDP," Hall said. "His desire and
passion for serving others is clearly
evident in the initiative he created for
the Detroit Police Athletic League."

**NOTRE DAME PREP NAMES VARSITY
GIRLS BASKETBALL COACH**

The athletic department of Notre
Dame Prep announced in April that
Matthew R. Matuza had been named
head varsity girls basketball coach.

"Matt embodies our school's mission
and has seamlessly integrated himself
into our community during his two
years with the JV program," said Aaron

Crouse, NDP's associate athletic
director. "His enthusiasm at games
and practices, ability to build strong
relationships with student-athletes
and parents, and extensive basketball
expertise make him the ideal candidate
to lead our program."

Matuza takes over the program after
more than 1,000 games coached at
various youth levels, including at the
AAU, high school varsity and junior
varsity levels.

Before coming to NDP, Matuza
coached varsity at L'Anse Creuse North
High School in Macomb, Mich. He also
spent years coaching for the Michigan
Cagers (AAU) out of Swartz Creek, and
for Greg Grant Basketball in Sterling
Heights.



He said he's looking forward to taking
over the Irish program.

"It's really a dream come true for me,"
Matuza said. "In the past two seasons, I
have met so many great people — the
girls, the parents, the staff — and have
so many wonderful memories. Looking
forward to many more!"

Matuza holds a Bachelor of Science
degree in management from GMI
Engineering and Management Institute
(Kettering University) and works
professionally as vice president and
senior financial advisor at Merrill Lynch
Wealth Management in Bloomfield
Hills.



NOTRE DAME PREP SENIOR ACES ACT

Mary Larocca, a 2025 graduate of Notre Dame Prep, scored a 36 on her ACT — the highest score achievable. It represents the 16th Notre Dame student since 2009 to achieve such perfection.

According to ACT, about 0.25 percent of students who take the ACT will earn a top score. Last year 3,041 of 1.37 million ACT takers, or 0.22 percent, reached perfection.

"When a student earns a top score of 36 on the ACT test, it opens doors to a promising future, demonstrating for colleges and universities that they are ready for the challenges ahead," said ACT CEO Janet Godwin in a news release. "This remarkable achievement is something we celebrate along with the student and their family."

As the leading college admissions test, the ACT measures what students learn in high school to determine their academic readiness for college with tests covering four skill areas: English, math, reading and science reasoning. Each area is scored on its own scale of 1 to 36. A student's composite test score is the average of those parts.

In February, Larocca was named a finalist in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program, joining classmates Ethan Dhomnic and Marc Farah with the honor.

MACUL HONORS NOTRE DAME PREP WITH PRESTIGIOUS EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY AWARD

The Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning (MACUL) named the recipients of its 2025 MACUL Annual Awards, with Notre

Dame Preparatory School earning the organization's annual Innovative District Award.

The awards recognize and honor MACUL members who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in the use of technology to improve education. MACUL honored Notre Dame Prep along with other awardees in leadership, teaching and technical service during its recent annual conference at Huntington Place in Detroit.

"This prestigious recognition highlights our commitment to educational excellence and our innovative use of technology to enhance student learning," said Eden Konja, Notre Dame Prep's director of information and academic technology. "I'm incredibly proud of our teachers and staff for their dedication and hard work."



Congratulations to our entire school community; this is a testament to their passion and dedication!"

Notre Dame Preparatory School was the leading candidate for the MACUL District Award, which recognizes schools or school districts for their commitment to using technology to enhance learning. As the only school in Michigan to hold both Microsoft Showcase School and Apple Distinguished School status, Notre Dame Prep offers a personalized learning experience that develops critical digital skills in students, including critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration.

The school is also at the forefront of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into its curriculum, with clear AI guidelines and a focus on developing skills like prompt engineering, according to MACUL, a nonprofit organization

dedicated to the effective use of educational technology in Michigan.

SHIFTING INTO SAFETY

Notre Dame Prep announced in March that it is participating as one of three schools selected to pilot the Just Drive program, an initiative created by the Kiefer Foundation to promote safe driving habits among teenagers. The program, which aims to reduce distracted driving and encourage responsible driving practices, is a natural fit with NDP's ongoing commitment to student wellness and healthy lifestyles.

For two weeks in April, all students in the upper school's physical education classes participated in the Just Drive program. Through interactive lessons and hands-on experiences, students gained valuable knowledge about road safety, learning firsthand the importance of staying focused while behind the wheel.

"The biggest takeaway I had was that texting and driving is dangerous, and you really don't know how far the car is traveling when you have to suddenly stop," said Luke Kissman NDP'28. "The virtual reality was intense. I really felt like I was in the car when the driver picks up the phone and you have to tell them to put it down before it causes an accident."

The Just Drive program was created by Steve Kiefer, whose son, Mitchel, a 2016 Catholic Central graduate, died from a distracted driving accident in 2016, months after graduating. Mitchel's vehicle was struck by a driver who was using the popular social sharing app Snapchat before the accident.

The simulators vividly illustrate how quickly situations can spiral out of control when you look at your phone, talk to a passenger, or take a call while driving, the Foundation website states.

"By integrating this program into its curriculum, NDP provides students with the tools they need to become responsible drivers, reinforcing its mission to nurture conscientious and informed citizens," Bobbie Hall, physical education department chair said. +

NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

Class of 1967 58th Reunion

Save the Date: Oct. 25, 2025

Century Banquet Center – American
Polish Century Club
33204 Maple Lane Drive
Sterling Heights, MI 48312

Contact Mike Maraone at maraone.
mf@gmail.com for information.

NOTRE DAME PREP

Class of 2005 20th Reunion

Save the Date: Nov. 8, 2025

Parker's Hilltop Brewery
6110 Dixie Hwy.
Village of Clarkston, MI 48346

Register at www.ndprep.org/05reunion

HOMECOMING

Save the Date: Sept. 19, 2025

Tailgate at the Fr. Colin House | 5 p.m.
Game | 7 p.m.

Register at ndprep.org/homecoming.

NDP AT THE JAZZ FEST

Aug. 30, 2025

The Notre Dame Prep Jazz Band
has been selected to perform at the
Detroit Jazz Festival's Valade Jazz
Main Stage in downtown Detroit on
August 30. Typically, only the top
ten high school bands in the state
are invited.



Prayers

Notre Dame Prep mourns the loss of our
dear brothers and sisters and invites our
community to join with us in prayer.

1950-1960

Bob Bendzinski ND'58 | Feb. 23, 2025
Deacon Valere Richard Buyle ND'59 | Nov. 14, 2024
John G. Maruschak ND'59 | Dec 4, 2024

1961-1970

Michael Brower ND'62 | Sept. 13, 2024
Kurt Dieterle ND'66 | Feb. 8, 2025
Mark Dieterle ND'68 | Feb. 6, 2025
Raymond Lucas ND'61 | Feb. 4, 2025
Gary Lytle ND'61 | May 14, 2025
James Michael Noland ND'67 | July 12, 2024

1971-1990

Jack P. Accardo ND'73 | Nov. 26, 2024
Chris Japalucci ND'84 | May 2, 2025

1991-2000

Doug Danckaert ND'92 | Dec. 21, 2024

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

John "Jack" Louis Dalton Jr. | April 3, 2025. He is the
grandfather of Zach Atkins NDP'17 and Hailey (Atkins)
Grady NDP'15.

Rita Frances Lesnau | July 2, 2025. She is the mother of
Thomas ND'69, Paul ND'72, Dennis ND'77 and James
ND'81.

Reginald Patrus | Feb. 2, 2025. He is the father of Jeff
Patrus ND'89.

Patsy Piech | Dec. 30, 2024. She is the wife of Joseph
Piech ND'65.

Eric Wells | Jan. 31, 2025. He is the father of Ryan
NDP'24, Caroline NDP'22 and Evan NDP'20.

Orville Oliver Wills | Feb. 21, 2025. He is the father of
Gregory Wills ND'90.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

If you would like our community to remember a loved
one in prayer, please email prayers@ndprep.org.

Class Notes

Notre Dame Prep: (NDP); Notre Dame High School: (ND); Pontiac Catholic: (PC); Oakland Catholic: (OC); St. Frederick: (SF); St. Michael: (SM)

NOTRE DAME PREP

Natalie Burg NDP'23 accepted a position as a Residential Teaching Assistant (RTA) for the National Institute of American History and Democracy this summer. As an RTA, she will be helping facilitate two classes at The College of William and Mary, History 218: The Road to the United States Civil War and History 219: American Independence, for pre-college students. Burg says: "I am so grateful to be a part of this incredible program that is dedicated to preserving, teaching about, and fostering interest in the craft of history."

Sarah (Fram) Boueiri NDP'05 and her husband Elias H. Boueiri joyfully welcomed their first child,



a baby boy, Elias Kamal Boueiri, on Dec. 29, 2024. Named after his father and great-grandfather, Elias Kamal means "God's perfection," a beautiful reflection of the family's deep faith. Mom and dad are deeply grateful to God for this precious blessing, and all are doing great.

Francesco Fregoli NDP'18 graduated with a bachelor's



degree in political science at Oakland University and went on to become a published author, with four books to his name. He is also the proud owner of Dunhill Publishing, a company dedicated to supporting new voices in literature. His works include "Man of the Fields: The Next Crusade for Salem", "Providence Upon Us", and several others that explore the intersection of history, faith and the human spirit. Fregoli credits much of his success to his family, and the education and foundation he received at Notre

Dame, where he was not only challenged academically but also grounded in strong religious values that continue to guide his work, his leadership, and his passion for storytelling.

Rachel Jankowski NDP'09 and her husband Santiago welcomed their first child, Lucas Santiago on April 10 at 6:25 a.m. at 6 pounds, 7 ounces.

Megan Thornton NDP'18 graduated from University of Dayton's Physician Assistant Program and passed her PANCE



board exam. She is now a certified physician assistant and has accepted a job. She writes, "Going to NDP was transformative in my work ethic, comprehension and memorization abilities, and passion for medicine."

NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

Michael Balow ND'90 was recently elected to the Michigan State University Board of Trustees with just over 2.4 million votes. Balow just started an eight-year term. He writes, "I'm really looking forward to serving our 52,000-student land-grant university. I narrowly missed in the 2022 election, and the second time was the charm. I guess the 'no quit' attitude they taught us at Notre Dame High School worked!" Balow has lived in Plymouth Township for the last 24 years, and would love to hear from any old Notre Dame grads. He can be reached at mikebalow@gmail.com. Balow writes, "I run into fellow Harper Woods grads somewhat frequently at the Detroit Athletic Club, like Sean Moran and Pat O'Keefe. Looking forward to catching up with some grads up at Michigan State University sometime!"

Jim Champine ND' 77 is happily and humbly reporting his retirement in May from a 30-year career as a biology professor. On April 25 he was honored with emeritus status and an engraved rocking chair from Southeast Missouri State University. Go Redhawks! Champine writes, "I hope all my fellow members of the Class of 1977 are in good health and enjoying their best

life. I plan to make more trips to Michigan and possibly reconnect with some of you all. Best wishes for brighter days ahead for all of us."

Gary Coakley ND'69 writes:

"I have never forgotten my experience at Notre Dame. Whenever asked, I proudly tell them where I went to high school. So many wonderful experiences to remember. I bused in every morning from the east side of Detroit to Harper Woods--two totally different worlds. Trying to navigate through that was much beyond my years. But everyone was so warm and welcoming, which was kind of unusual for that time. I was the first black student to attend Notre Dame and I was afraid. I just want to thank all my classmates, teachers, coaches, and anyone else that were there for me. Notre Dame was one of my proudest moments."

Frank D'Anna ND'77 welcomed their first granddaughter, Kamryn

Austin Fredricksen, on Jan. 29, 2025. D'Anna writes: "Our daughter Josephine and husband Austin did a great job. Carol and I are thrilled. We are awaiting granddaughter No. 2 in June of 2025. Grandparenting is a whole different way of life!"

Ron DiCesare ND'85 writes,

"Hello to the Notre Dame classes of 1982-88 ('85 being mine)! Just a quick note to say that if you haven't been to the "new" school (Notre Dame Prep), I was surprised how much it felt like home and reminded me in many ways of the old Notre Dame in Harper Woods. There were even a few of our Notre Dame High School teachers there when I visited! Not bad for several decades after graduation. After high school I did the college thing, then the job thing, and now I'm into the retired thing, though there doesn't seem to be tons of time on my hands, funny how that works. Best wishes all!"



Jerry Drenzek ND'75 received his 10-year recognition award from the Stahl Auto Collection Classic Car Museum in Chesterfield, Mich. As a collection docent, I am tasked with sharing my historical automobile knowledge of the collection vehicles with visitors from around the world.



Thomas Gladysz ND'79 writes: "The Louise Brooks Society, a website I launched devoted to the silent film star Louise Brooks, celebrates 30 years online in 2025. It's been praised by Leonard Maltin as well as The New York Times, USA Today, Wired magazine and others. I've written dozens of articles and published five books on the actress and her films (with a couple more in the works), recorded audio commentaries for DVDs, curated exhibits, spoken on TV and radio, and introduced Brooks' films around the world. Check it out at www.pandorasbox.com."

Matt Lipinski ND'70 writes: Greetings to my fellow classmates! Just dropping in to let you know what condition my condition is in (thank you, First

Edition). I am retired, living in New Hampshire, and continuing to pursue my many passions in life: the outdoors, Detroit Tigers baseball, Michigan football, music, and above all, chasing after my two beautiful grandchildren. Wouldn't have it any other way. I hope you are all well!

Mark McGreevy ND'76 writes, "After 23 years of teaching at NDP, and 22 years as an architect prior to that, I'm calling it quits and retiring. I've had the privilege of two wonderful careers of which I thoroughly enjoyed. I have four kids that graduated from Notre Dame Prep with excellent educations. Notre Dame has been a big part of my life and will remain in my heart for the rest of my life. Time to move on to my next adventure. Hopefully I will see a few of you at Homecoming or perhaps a 50th anniversary."

Kristopher Powell ND'75 writes: "My daughter, Lauren NDP'16, recently got married to her long-time sweetheart, Scott Allen. Congratulations to both of them! What a wonderful couple."

Mike Slubowski ND'72 writes: "Hello to all Class of 1972 graduates! Still smiling with memories of our 50 year celebration three years ago!"



ST. FREDERICK

John Soderberg SF'57 writes: "This is a brief look at the careers of the four Soderberg family members, all graduates of St. Frederick High School. **Margaret Soderberg SF'50** served as a professor at Eastern Illinois University as well as Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. She moved on to the Vice Presidency of North Adams State College, now known as Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. **John Soderberg SF'57**: After a brief career in mid-level retail management, moved on to become a purchasing agent for the City of St. Louis, Miss. Shortly thereafter he became purchasing manager for the St. Louis Public Library. **Ingrid Soderberg SF'58** began serving abused and neglected children for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Later she became a contract administrator for the Illinois Department of Human Services. **Mary Soderberg SF'60** started as a licensed practical nurse, then on to become a staff member for former U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, as well as a policy analyst and field director for the Michigan Democratic Party. All had successful careers and all are still living the good life. Much of this thanks to the efforts of the many IHM Sisters at St Fred's who initially guided us down the path to success. Go Rams! Go Irish!" +



**Notre Dame
Preparatory School**

A Catholic and Marist Community

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