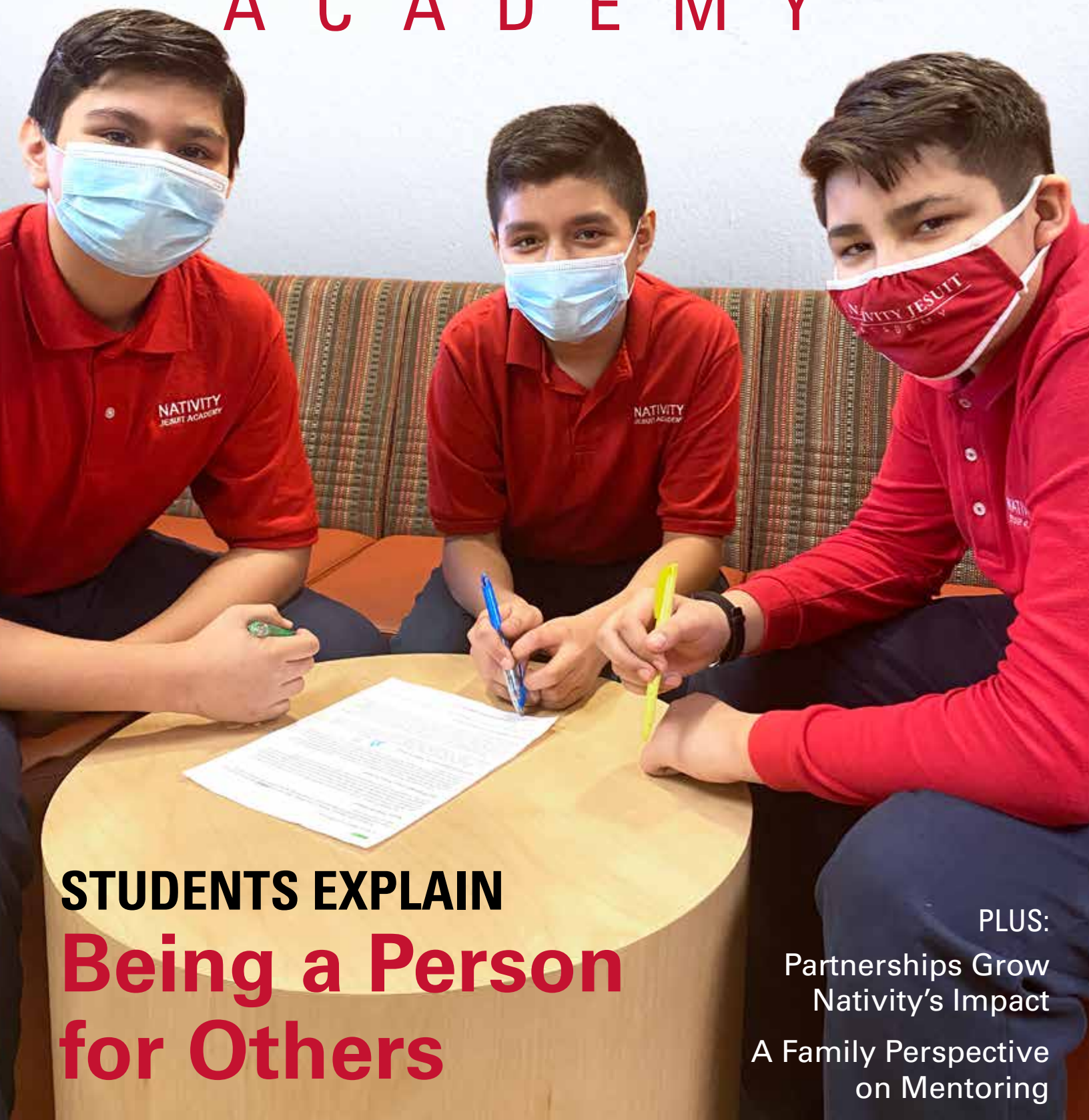


NATIVITY JESUIT

A C A D E M Y

SPRING 2022



STUDENTS EXPLAIN
Being a Person
for Others

PLUS:
Partnerships Grow
Nativity's Impact
A Family Perspective
on Mentoring

EDUCATING YOUTH FOR A LIFE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Spring is a busy time in the life of a school. Between spring break and graduation is a jumble of learning and year-end celebrations, but at Nativity there is an added layer of excitement as we prepare for summer learning. Students in grades 1–5 attend summer school at Nativity in partnership with the Center for Urban Teaching, while middle school students in grades 6–8 spend their summer at our Northwoods Campus in Iron County, Wisconsin, for our academic residential program (Camp Thunderhead).

In many ways, the camp experience is the capstone of our educational model. At the Northwoods Campus, students engage in math, science and reading classes six days a week. They also engage in leadership training, team building and all of the joys of a typical summer camp. This program is also a poignant reminder of the trust Nativity parents place in our school. It is only possible because of the close partnership we share in educating students for lives of Christian leadership and service.

In this newsletter, you will find stories that are full of alumni and current students who have learned the importance of being people for others and are giving back to their community in concrete ways. Through your partnership, you have helped to instill these values in generations of Nativity students. Our mission cannot succeed in isolation. We are grateful each day for the network of partnerships that make up Nativity Jesuit Academy:

- Parents, who not only trust us with their children, but also commit to actively participating in our comprehensive model of education
- Benefactors, who choose to invest in the Nativity model and believe in the potential of Nativity students to transform Milwaukee
- Mentors, volunteers, and alumni who give their time and talents to guide our scholars as they become men and women for others
- Community partners—including the Midwest Society of Jesus, healthcare providers, and educational groups—all of whom expand the range of services available to Nativity students

Within our “mission that does more,” your partnership empowers our students to grow in transformational ways. Thank you for being a beloved part of our Nativity community.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (AMDG),
Vanessa Solis
President, Nativity Jesuit Academy



Vanessa Solis and Nativity’s recruitment team pose with parent volunteers at our fall open house.

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Cover photo
7th grade students Axel, Manny and Manrique share what they have learned on being people for others during their time at Nativity Jesuit Academy.

Nativity Jesuit by the Numbers

STUDENTS

98%

Students receiving need-based financial aid through Choice vouchers

99%

Families self-identifying as Catholic

100%

Students self-identifying as Latino

256

Total enrollment in K4–8th Grade

OUR MODEL

100%

Parent participation in school conferences

4

Weeks of summer instruction for students in 1st–5th grade

78

Middle school students attending our summer academic residential program at Camp Thunderhead

1:1

Mentoring for Nativity graduates through high school

RESULTS

#1

K–8 Choice school in Southeast Wisconsin

#1

School in the state of Wisconsin serving a student population that is 75%+ Latino

99%

College acceptance rate

24

Average ACT score for recent graduates—compared to national average of 21 for all students and 19 for Latino students

Make a Nativity Education Possible!

Nativity’s unique model of education is made possible by community support from generous donors like you. With gratitude, we invite you to support our 256 students by funding one of the following items from our current wish list:

- **\$15** covers a MAP test for one student. This incredibly useful tool helps teachers see students’ individual progress in reading and math.
- **\$155** covers a month of music class for one grade level from the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music.
- **\$435** covers religion textbooks for one grade level.
- **\$680** covers hands-on Makerspace materials for our middle schoolers while at Camp Thunderhead.

Please give today through the enclosed envelope or at nativityjesuit.org/support

Thank you for your support of Nativity students!



Nativity Students' Guide to Being a Person for Others

*By student authors Axel R., Manny M. and Manrique V.
from Nativity's Class of 2023*

At Nativity Jesuit Academy, we learn many different things, such as how to calculate the volume of a 3D shape and how to write an essay. Beyond academics, there is something else that we learn that forms us to be the best we can possibly be. At Nativity, we call it being a “person for others.”

Being a “Person for Others”

As “People for Others,” we strive to follow Jesus’ example. We think of others, and we show them that we love them through our actions, even if it means going out of our way to do so. It is important that we don’t just think about doing something—instead, we take the initiative. Everyone is important, so whether they are our best friend or a

complete stranger, we can still show them God’s love. Being a “Person for Others” humbles us because we realize that everyone is just as important as we are, and that we are all part of something bigger than ourselves. At Nativity, we call this mindset being a “Lobo,” which is our school mascot (a wolf).

Why Being a “Person for Others” is Important

It is no secret that there are a lot of problems in our world today. In order to solve these problems, we must be “People for Others.” If we only think of ourselves, the problems that we all face will continue. Some people are only focused on what their status is, or what they want. By thinking this way, they are not considering the bigger picture.

To solve complex problems in our world today, we need to work together and think first of the greater good, which considers everyone’s needs instead of just our own. Just as happiness is contagious, caring for others can also inspire others to live the same way. By doing this, people will think of us as leaders.



Students practice working as a team during the camp Olympics.





Below: Students deepen their faith through Mass with Fr. Ben Osborne, S.J.



Above: Alumni César Belmontes '03 and Brayan Beltran '06 continue to be People for Others by serving as mentors in Nativity's Graduate Support Program.

Right: 8th grade students collaborate in the STEM lab building "roller coasters" for marbles.



How Nativity Taught Us to be "People for Others"

During our years at Nativity, we learn to be "People for Others" in many ways. For example, we have yearly themes, like "Be Here Now" and "Walk The Walk." These themes help guide us to become the best version of ourselves. Another example—and a big benefit—is having Mass, where we can build a strong community with one another and reflect on how to create God's kingdom here on Earth.

Nativity is well-known for its camp program, where middle school students go up north to learn and grow each summer. Camp has changed our whole lives. There are many things at camp that have taught us how to work well with others and to consider others' ideas. We play many team sports, including our own version of the Olympics with volleyball and track competitions. We even have an "Egg Drop" challenge, where we work together to design a structure to keep our egg safe when dropping it off the deck. During activities like these, we learn to listen to one another, try others' ideas, and build connections to successfully complete them. We also have reflection circles, where we brainstorm feedback for ourselves and for others as to how we could improve the ways we work together.

Our Advice on How to be a "Person for Others"

While there are many ways to care about those around us, here are some suggestions that you can try to live like a "Lobo":

- Think of ways that you can work with others as a team.
- Take the initiative.
- Ask others how they are doing and if they need anything.
- Listen to others' perspectives and ask others' opinions.
- Consider how others might be impacted by your decisions.
- Think of what would create the "greater good" and make the world a better place.

MEET THE AUTHORS

Axel R.

7th Grader

Favorite thing about Nativity—

"I love our mission to become Christian leaders. I am grateful for activities such as Mass and assemblies."

Message to the community—

"Thank you for taking time out of your day to read our article, and for supporting us and the Nativity community!"

Manny M.

7th Grader

Favorite thing about Nativity—

"Camp Thunderhead, because you learn to work as a team."

Message to the community—

"Thank you for supporting us so we can continue to learn while at school!"

Manrique V.

7th Grader

Favorite thing about Nativity—

"The teachers and the facilities, because we have a great learning environment."

Message to the community—

"Thank you for creating a wonderful environment for us to learn!"

Strong Partnerships Expand Nativity’s Impact

As a Jesuit school, educating and caring for the whole person is at the heart of Nativity’s model. However, a small school working alone would lack the capacity to provide students with the comprehensive range of services they need. Through the support of our parents, benefactors and generous community organizations, Nativity is never alone.

Thank you for walking alongside Nativity students in our “mission that does more.” The following profiles highlight just a few of the partnerships that help us to fulfill our value of Cura Personalis, or “care for the whole person.”

Bread of Healing Clinic

COVID-19 has been the defining challenge in education over the past two years. At Nativity, we see vaccinations as the most effective tool to keep our community safe against serious illness and learning disruptions.

Thanks to a collaboration with the Bread of Healing Clinic, a faith-based nonprofit working to serve low-income communities, Nativity was able to host two vaccination clinics this spring. These free events delivered first, second and booster doses of the Pfizer vaccine to anyone five years or older.

“Everything we do at Nativity comes back to the trust that our parents place in us. When they requested that we host a vaccination clinic, we knew that we needed to organize an on-site event where families would be comfortable and assured that Spanish translation would be available,” says school principal, Jon Nowak. “The fact that Bread of Healing was able to bring such a caring team of Spanish-speaking health professionals to Nativity was truly a blessing.”

To learn more about Bread of Healing Clinic and their work in the Milwaukee community, visit breadofhealingclinic.org



Nativity students show off their COVID vaccine bandages.

Prevent Blindness Wisconsin

In October 2021, Prevent Blindness Wisconsin conducted vision screenings for all Nativity students. According to Prevent Blindness Wisconsin, approximately 1 in 4 school-aged children have a vision problem that the child—and their family—might not even realize. Left untreated, vision problems can lead to trouble focusing and lower academic achievement for students.

“Our mission at Prevent Blindness Wisconsin is to improve the lives of children, adults, and families through early detection of eye conditions to prevent blindness and preserve sight,” shares Prevent Blindness Co-Chairman and Nativity supporter Charles Groeschell. “Ongoing vision screenings at Nativity will help to ensure a lifetime of healthy eyesight.”

Thanks to the free service that Prevent Blindness Wisconsin provides, each Nativity student has received a comprehensive vision screening, an assessment of whether or not they need glasses and opportunities to fund the cost. We are also so grateful to the Baird Associates volunteers who worked side by side with the Prevent Blindness Wisconsin team to screen our 256 students.

To learn more about Prevent Blindness Wisconsin, visit wisconsin.preventblindness.org



Volunteer from Baird Associates helps a Nativity student with their vision screening.

Sixteenth Street Community Health Center

Vanessa Rosas is not only a licensed professional counselor with Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, she is also the aunt of two current Nativity students and one recent graduate. Through our new partnership with the Center, Rosas provides psychotherapy services to students in need of support. She comes to Nativity in person each week to work with students on an individual basis. School counselor Elizabeth Janners works closely with Rosas to coordinate student schedules, ensure access to a secure space, and maintain confidentiality for students.

“One of the greatest impacts of this partnership is being able to provide students who are at a higher risk for a mental health concern the opportunity to have mental health care accessible to them within their school,” reflects Janners. “By providing care that is convenient and accessible, Vanessa Rosas and Sixteenth Street Community Health Center help ensure all our students have the tools they need to thrive.”

To find out more about Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, visit sschc.org



Vanessa Rosas from Sixteenth Street Community Health Center poses with Nativity school counselor Elizabeth Janners.

Expanding Pathways to Quality Education

In 1993, Fr. Bill Johnson, S.J., and Larry Siewert were pounding the pavement trying to find the financial support to start a unique all-boys' middle school in the basement of St. Patrick's Parish on Milwaukee's southside. When they approached Gordon and Mary Henke to invest in Nativity Jesuit, it was a natural fit.

"I think the most important reason Gordy and I decided to support Nativity in the beginning was the fact that the students would be in school all day, and then spend five weeks at an academic summer camp up north," recalls Mary Henke. At the time, gang violence was a significant safety concern for young men on the southside.

"Gordy understood how detrimental idle time in an unhealthy environment could be for a young person, and he wanted to give them a different path."

Since Gordon's passing in 1995, Mary has worked to preserve her husband's legacy by expanding pathways to high-quality education for students facing socioeconomic barriers. In so doing, she has built a reputation as an advocate for Milwaukee's youth and the impact of Jesuit education.

Mary's passion is fueled, in part, by the transformative impact of Jesuit teaching. At Nativity, she sees the effect of that transformation in the confidence with

which students greet her during her school visits, and present to the crowd at our annual Scholarship Dinners. "There is a feeling of warmth at Nativity that is hard to explain. It is a feeling of care and compassion. The teachers, volunteers and everybody involved want students to learn and be successful. It creates an atmosphere of success that you feel when you walk into the building."

Over the years, Mary has met many Nativity families, but one stands out in her memory. She grew to know the parents, and remembers being struck by their dedication to education. With that strong foundation behind them, all of their children found academic and professional success. Mary beams as she explains that one son went on to attend law school at Marquette University, and is now a practicing attorney in Milwaukee. That is her dream for each Nativity student. "To get a good education and become successful people who give back to their community—that's what it is all about."

The Gordon Henke Family Foundation will be honored at Nativity Jesuit Academy's Annual Scholarship Dinner on Thursday, May 12, 2022, as the recipients of the Companions Award.



Mary Henke gathers with friends and Jesuits at the 2018 and 2019 Scholarship Dinners.

Sustaining Partners

From video streaming to meal kits, and even this morning's coffee—monthly subscription services make it easy and affordable to invest in the products and services you care about most. For a growing contingent of supporters, this convenience has grown to include a monthly gift to Nativity Jesuit Academy.

"Nativity's model of education is year-round. With a monthly gift, my support is year-round as well," says current sustaining donor, Shirley W. "It was easy to set up online, and it feels good to know that Nativity can plan on my investment month after month."

If you are interested in establishing a monthly online donation or recurring electronic funds transfer, please reach out to Emily Keuter at keutere@nativityjesuit.org or 414-645-1060 ext. 151. Your sustaining investment will ensure that Nativity students continue to receive the best education possible in their journeys to become people for others.



Servant Leadership in Action

Nativity is pleased to announce that Bob Monday will be honored as the recipient of this year's St. Ignatius Leadership Award at our Annual Scholarship Dinner on May 12, 2022.

Bob has been involved at Nativity for more than 25 years. He has served as a mentor in the Graduate Support Program four times, helping recent alumni navigate their high school careers. He is an Emeritus Trustee and active member of Nativity's Advancement Committee, as well as co-chair of the Nativity Magis Society, working to ensure that every Nativity graduate has the option to attend the Catholic high school of their choice.

Reflecting on his service at Nativity, Bob credits the parents with the school's success. "It is the parenting of these students that drives

my passion for Nativity. Hard working, faith based, filled with gratitude, they will sacrifice anything for the benefit of their kids. They want to be accountable and understand the role they play in the academic success of their children."



Answering a Calling on Milwaukee’s Southside

For many first-time homebuyers, meeting with a bank can be an intimidating prospect. Nativity alumnus Victor Hernandez ‘06 is working to change that. As a CRA Mortgage Banker for BMO Harris Bank, Victor supports prospective homebuyers with low or moderate income. “I grew up on the southside near 15th and Mineral. Working back in the community where I grew up feels good. I can be a resource for low-income families by educating them on the homebuying process, and telling them about grant programs available to them.”

Like many of his customers, Victor grew up in a low-income household. As the youngest of four siblings, and the only boy, his parents thought that providing him with a faith-based education was out of reach until they found Nativity. It was a natural fit.

Always competitive, Nativity helped Victor to harness that energy into organized sports.

“Role models at Nativity taught me that it was just as important to manage my academics as my athletics. Building that foundation of discipline at Nativity, I was able to carry those skills with me through high school (Pius XI) and college (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).”

For Victor, Nativity was more than a middle school—it was a source of support when he did not know where else to turn. “I was taught to work to get the things that I wanted. Starting in high school, I worked as a dishwasher, serving at a deli counter, landscaping—I did it all.” Still, there came a moment in college when Victor could not afford his textbooks. It is the type of barrier that has forced countless low-income students to drop out of college.

“I didn’t know what to do, but Nativity was always there for me, so I figured it was worth a shot. I brought my situation to the Graduate Support Program, and they helped me access the resources I needed to buy the books. For me, that was huge. Personally, I am always going to be grateful for Nativity, for everything they did for me and the support they gave me. Now that I am an adult, it is my turn to find ways to give back.”

Over the years, Victor has given back in many ways. Inspired by his own mentors Rob and Lisa Harrington, Victor has served as a mentor in Nativity’s Graduate Support Program. He has served as a counselor for Nativity’s summer academic residential program, commonly known as Camp Thunderhead. He also serves on the steering committee for the Nativity Jesuit Alumni Association. “My calling is to help others—and I found that calling at Nativity.”



Victor and wife Shayna pose with his mentors from Nativity, Rob and Lisa Harrington

ALUMNI NOTES

- Michael Contreras ‘18 and Cristian Rubalcava ‘18 spent two weeks volunteering full-time at Nativity as part of Marquette High School’s Senior Shared Life Project. The students participated in a mix of direct student interaction and administrative tasks.
- Guillermo Pavon-Prieto ‘18 is a member of the state-championship winning Marquette High School Soccer team. He is now a two-time state champion, as he was a member of last year’s championship team as well.
- The Nativity Jesuit Alumni Association hosted Lobos Connect, a networking event, at the offices of IronwoodDrive Financial Group in January, as well as a Wellness Seminar at Nativity addressing mental health in March. Their next event will be an Alumni Mass on Sunday, June 12, 2022. Fr. Bill Johnson, S.J., will serve as celebrant for the Mass.
- On Thursday, March 31, current Nativity mentors and invited guests gathered at Zócalo Food Truck Park (co-owned by Nativity alumnus Jesus Gonzales ‘05) for an evening of celebration and gratitude. Thank you to all of the mentors who serve in the Graduate Support Program.
- Galin Education once again partnered with the Graduate Support Program to deliver a free ACT prep course to members of Nativity’s Class of 2019.
- Nativity Jesuit Academy’s Northwoods Campus, affectionately known as Camp Thunderhead, is currently seeking staff for the summer of 2023. All candidates, including Nativity alumni, are encouraged to apply at www.nativityjesuit.org



You Can Transform a Life. Become a Mentor Today!

Nativity Jesuit graduates are matched with an adult mentor at the start of their freshman year of high school. Are you interested in helping to guide Nativity graduates through the successes and challenges they will encounter during their high school careers? Please contact Kevin Foley at foleyk@nativityjesuit.org to learn more.

Building Connections Through Mentorship

In only the nine short months that he has been participating in the program, Class of 2021's Azlan Fonseca's mother, Natalia Vega, has recognized the impact of the unique aspects of Nativity's Graduate Support Program. In particular, she is grateful for Azlan's relationship with his mentor, Barb Kohn. "Barb makes an effort to build a genuine connection with Azlan, and he recognizes that," said Natalia. "Their relationship gives him a sense of encouragement that is unique from any teacher or parent relationship."

Azlan echoes his mom's sentiments, pointing to the sense of support he feels from multiple sources within the Graduate Support Program. "Mentoring is reliable, and there is always someone by my side to make sure I'm doing what I need to be doing," he said, pointing to the regular communication he and Barb maintain. He also appreciates the continued guidance he receives from Nativity staff, even after his graduation from Nativity: "[Nativity Graduate Support Director] Mr. Foley is always checking on us, and it feels good to know someone is there for me."

"Mentoring is reliable, and there is always someone by my side to make sure I'm doing what I need to be doing."

Barb, who also serves as a mentor to Alonzo Saavedra '21, has enjoyed seeing Azlan's growth as a person and as a student during her time mentoring him. She was very proud of him for seeking out an after-school enrichment program at Marquette University High School, where he gets extra tutoring for his algebra class. "He has taken responsibility for his learning and has come to recognize what will help him to be successful," said Barb.

She has also loved getting to know Natalia and Azlan's younger brother, Caspian. She and the family went out for lunch over the winter, and she noted, "I can just see how much Natalia supports Azlan and Caspian. They are a really strong unit, and that just makes me happy. It reminds me of when I was raising my own sons."

For her part, Natalia views Barb as a welcome extension of the family: "She is like a bonus grandma for Azlan."



MEET A LOBO

Melissa Peñalba



Meet Ms. Peñalba, Nativity's 2nd Grade Teacher. This is Ms. Peñalba's first year at Nativity, after living for the past seventeen years in Nicaragua. When her daughter moved to Milwaukee to attend Marquette University, Ms. Peñalba was not far behind. "The social-political environment in Nicaragua exploded, so in 2021, I moved to Milwaukee to be near my family. I was praying when I was searching for a teaching position, and I truly think that God answered my prayers. Nativity has been an eye-opening experience for me because of the great joy I feel every day."

Many facets of life in the United States are different from Ms. Peñalba's previous years in Nicaragua (getting used to the cold Wisconsin winter alone was quite the adjustment!) When Nativity families learned that she had recently moved to Milwaukee, Ms. Peñalba started receiving notes from parents giving her recommendations on things she needed to know. "I got recommendations for so many important things,

including which restaurants to go to, and what clothes to buy to stay warm. Everyone has been so welcoming and helpful. It's been a huge change, but it's been incredible," says Ms. Peñalba.

Nativity's mission is important to Ms. Peñalba because of our focus on educating the whole person. "I am so impressed by everyone's investment in our mission. I see that so many people care about educating our students. In turn, we are able to focus on the bigger picture of a student's formation. It's not simply about what they're learning, but how they're interacting with one another, following a Catholic lifestyle and learning to be the best that they can be in whatever situation they're in. I am so amazed by what we make possible for our students together."



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UPCOMING EVENTS



ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP DINNER

Thursday, May 12, 2022 at Greenhouse #7
njadinner22.givesmart.com

GOLF OUTING 2022

Monday, August 1, 2022 at Westmoor Country Club
nativitygolf22.givesmart.com

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