

# GEIBEL

The Geibel Family Newsletter • January 2018



GEIBEL ... A School of Excellence • A School of Faith • A School of Tradition •  
A School of Service • A School of Joy • A School of Character • A School of Spirit

[GEIBELCATHOLIC.ORG](http://GEIBELCATHOLIC.ORG)

### *Front Cover: Bishop Malesic and Geibel Alumni Tour Italy*

Ten Geibel Catholic alumni and the Superintendent for Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Greensburg were among those who toured Italy for two weeks with Diocese of Greensburg Bishop Edward C. Malesic in October.

Pictured in the front row at St. Peter Basilica are (from left) Jennifer (Smarto '70) Blout, Thomasine (Laskaris '69) Rose, Mrs. Lewandowski, tour participant, Maria Connell '00, Stephanie (Smarto'70) Connell, Michael Connell '70, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Yezbak; second row: Joe Lechnar '12, Fr. Willie Lechnar '82, Dr. Maureen Marsteller, Superintendent, Bishop Malesic, Fr. Michael Sikon '86; back row: Joan Blasinsky '77, Tricia (Connell '79) Herman, and Carol (Graczyk I.C.'61) Konieczny.

## Geibel Class of 2017

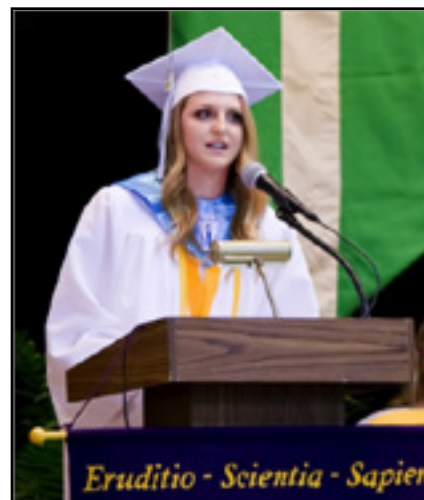


Members of the Class of 2017 are Matthew William Agostoni, Sidney Claire Anderson, Luke Michael Baluch, Cody Mathew Blanish, Tian Hao (Miller) Cai, Yu-Jen (Yoshi) Chiu, Chanhee (Chris) Choi, Seth Michael Clark, Toni Marie DeCarlo, Dalton MacKenzie Elcock, Maggie Clara Ewing, Jingyi Feng, Julia Elise Gaggiani, Noah B. Geary, Patrick Thomas Grundy, Purui (Robert) Guo, Hannah Nicole Judy, Destini Ann Klippi, Gabrielle Marie Kolencik, Lauren Elizabeth Kosslow, Joel Heid Lazar, Kawlija Charles Leapline, Jerome Michael Lechnar, Hyeon Jae (Dennis) Lee, Jun (Jane) Liu, Anthony Michael Lovat, Benjamin I. Lucero, Henry Maximilian Molinaro, Grace Elizabeth Nowicki, Kaylin Marie O'Wade, Tyler Joseph Pakish, Sydney Lea Marie Papinchak, JiYun (Helen) Park, Laurel Shae Patik, John Nicholas Pokol, Abbey Elizabeth Lian Sitko, Jonathan Walter Skotnicki, Nica Alessandra Swimmer, John-Luke Tlumack, Julia Steele Wachtel, Carley Celeste Ward, YiPeng (Jim)Wu, Yanming (Gary) Yu, Matthew James Zekir, Bol-un (Bill) Zhang, Xinyu Zhang.



**Lauren Kosslow,**  
Valedictorian,  
Class of 2017

*"Life is not always about the end result, but the journey along the way. The past four years went by in the blink of an eye, and the rest of our lives lie before us now. Hopefully we will experience many adventures throughout our lives, but Geibel sure was a great one."*



**Maggie Ewing,**  
Salutatorian  
Class of 2017

*"The Geibel faculty is a group of unique, faith-based teachers who have the extraordinary talent of turning a weakness into a strength. They have given us the means and motivation to thrive academically, faithfully, and socially, and the courage and confidence to become ourselves."*

# 2017 Geibel Grads With Alumni Parents



Pictured are 2017 grads and their Geibel alumni parents following the Baccalaureate liturgy at Immaculate Conception parish in Connellsville. Front row, from left, are graduates Grace Nowicki, Lauren Kosslow, Kawlija Leapline, and Gabrielle Kolencik. Back row, from left, are Diane (Mathias '75) Nowicki, Tom Nowicki '75, Carol (Bailey '82) Kosslow, Melissa (Franks '94) Leapline, Dana (Griffiths '90) Kolencik and Tom Kolencik '90.

*Absent from the photo were Michael Baluch '83 and Luke Baluch '17.*



*Fr. Willie Lechnar '82 and his nephew  
Jerome Lechnar '17*



Abbey Sitko was the 2017 recipient of the Geibel Alumni Award. This award has been presented annually since 1981 to the most outstanding senior student. Abbey is the first Geibel Catholic student to be accepted into the LECOM (Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine) program at Seton Hill University, where she is studying to become a physician.



## Dr. Anne Soisson '81

*Distinguished Alumna  
and*

*2017 Commencement Speaker*

Dr. Anne Soisson '81 delivered the commencement address for the Geibel Catholic High School Class of 2017 on Friday, May 26. She is currently the Senior Associate Director of the Center for Learning and Teaching at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts.

Anne holds a Doctor of Education degree in Administration, Training and Policy from Boston University with a concentration in Higher Education Administration and Counseling. She earned her Master of Education degree from Harvard University in Counseling and Higher Education. She spent one year in Besançon, France as a Rotary International Scholar after earning her bachelor's degree in Commerce and Modern Languages from Saint Francis College.

Prior to her current position she worked as a Senior Teacher and Learning Specialist at Tufts. She developed and wrote an instructor's resource guide, worked as a freelance editor, and was a project leader for the Quality Improvement Program at the University of Massachusetts. During time spent in London, England, Anne was the Dean of Students at Huron University. She also served as Assistant Dean of Students at Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts.

Anne has authored numerous conference papers and publications in the education field, has done external consulting in Peru, India, and Japan, and developed a course for faculty from Africa and Asia to improve the capacity of countries in high-risk areas to respond to outbreaks of emerging zoonotic diseases.

Anne is a recipient of the Tufts Faculty/Staff Multicultural Service Award, which recognizes the contributions of those who made significant efforts to define the university as a multicultural environment. She received the Champion of Collaboration Award for successfully building diverse and productive relationships across and beyond the university.

Anne and her husband Brad Harrington are parents of three children, Maggie, Hannah and Dillon. Her six brothers and sisters are all Geibel Catholic graduates. Her mother, Marge, taught Latin at Geibel for fifteen years.



*Anne Soisson and her mother,  
Marge Soisson.*



Annie Soisson '81 and Mary Jane (Kosisko) Speeney  
*In her commencement address, Annie Soisson shared the impact that Mary Jane (Kosisko) Speeney had on her as an incoming freshman. "Mary Jane had this bright smile. She was so kind. I decided then that I wanted to be like her and radiate that joy." Little did Anne know that Mary Jane was sitting in the audience! After the graduation ceremony, the two met in the front hall as they did for the first time forty years ago.*

*The following is the commencement address delivered by Anne Soisson, Ph.D to the Class of 2017:*

### **Small Choices**

Good evening Principal Nickler, esteemed teachers, Father Lubic, and most importantly, Geibel Class of 2017 and your families and friends. It's an honor to be here talking with you tonight. It's an honor, not just because I myself am a graduate of Geibel High School, but because I am one of 7 siblings who attended this wonderful school, and the proud daughter of Marge Soisson, who taught here for many years. I am honored to be up here representing my mom and all of them.

I know the love and care of Geibel faculty and staff first hand from having watched my Mom with her own students here. She cared deeply about them. My siblings are evidence that this is the gift of a Geibel High School education. All of my siblings are good, caring wonderful people. Among us we have 7 Bachelors degrees, four Masters degrees, and two Doctoral degrees. We benefitted greatly from our time here, and we are all grateful we had parents who valued a Catholic education.

So some fun facts about my time at Geibel:

Fun fact #1 Geibel's construction began the year I was born. Fun fact #2 I was in a talent show on this stage and my dear friend Ruth tripped up the stairs before her squeaky oboe solo, and I trumped that by singing... wait for it... "You light up my life" off key as my friend Susan accompanied me on the piano. For those of you graduating, look that song up – ouch! Fun fact #3 I was on the first girls' cross- country team, and we used to stop part way through the course at our friend Johnna's house to watch a soap opera before running back! Leo Lowney, our coach, wondered why he could never find us on the course. I know you, like I do, will have fond memories.

While I was thinking about what I wanted to say up here, I looked through the Geibel Facebook page, website and Instagram. Had I not known how many students there actually are here, I'd have thought there were a thousand of you! You have been busy! What an amazing class you have had! You have excelled in so many ways in academics, athletics, through service, in friendship, through the arts. In this special place, your teachers, coaches, and staff have tried to help you become young men and women of integrity, foster mutual respect, and help you develop into your best selves. And from what I have seen and heard, you are well on your way.

Now, you are moving from this little pond to bigger ponds. You are nearing the end of that phase of your lives where people are there to oversee your day to day life. Your parents and your teachers and coaches have done their jobs. You are at a point where the decisions you make are YOURS to own, as exciting and terrifying as that may be.

If any of you have seen the movie "Freaky Friday," it's a story about a mother and daughter. At one point, the mother drops her daughter off at high school and as her daughter walks away, she shouts out "make good choices!" I adopted this with my kids, and at drop off I would yell out to them as they walked away "make good choices!" (Obviously, they loved that.) And that's the call I'll make to you as you hit this amazing milestone in your lives, and embark on the next leg of your journey- "make good choices!"

Don't worry, I'm not here to lecture you on the clothing choices you'll make once you're done with these uniforms, though maybe someone should. And I'm certainly not here to tell you what the right choices are to make. But I've been reflecting lately on what choices that I have made that have made me a happier, more well-rounded person. What struck me was that many of them were seemingly "small choices."

I'd like to share with you some of the choices I've made-

First, I choose to embrace serendipity. What does that mean? Serendipity is a term coined by Horace Walpole, a fairy tale writer who claimed his heroes "were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of." When I left Geibel, I thought I was going to be an interpreter, and put Ms.

Gasbarro's and Ms. Ercegovich's language instruction to good use. Instead, I took a job as a resident director in a college dormitory and found that I loved it. I chose to follow this passion and see where it took me. It sent my career in a completely different direction than I had planned. When I pictured the love of my life, I thought I was going to marry an Italian and save my children from the pale, Irish skin and freckles. But when I met an Irish American man in an English pub in London after college, I chose to give him a chance. We now have three beautiful pale, freckled children. The goals and dreams I had were important. But along the way to my goals, other opportunities presented themselves, and I chose to be open to them. Through this, I've found some of my greatest joys, and carved paths even more interesting than I had planned.

Second, I choose to smile. This small choice is one I can trace this right back to Geibel. I came here for a tour when I was about to enter high school and my tour guide was Mary Jane Kosisko. Yes, all these years I remember her name, because she changed my life. She had the biggest smile and was so warm and kind, that I knew I wanted to be like her. I wanted to smile and be warm, and be responded to in the way people responded to her. Now, each night, I try to say my prayers and reflect on three positive things that happened in my life that day. I take pictures of things that make me happy or show my son videos that make me smile. Look for good, and you will start seeing it more. I hope you can find ways to smile and remain positive.

Third, I choose to listen. The world has too many talkers, and not enough people listening with genuine curiosity. My daughters used to look at me funny for always stopping to talk with the grocery store employees and strangers in line. (I learned this from my mother). While this might be normal around here, in Boston, it is not. But this is one way I chose to stop and listen. When you leave Geibel, and find yourself in your new life, look at the people you are with, ask what their hopes and dreams, their fears and frustrations are. Whether these people are strangers, family members, romantic partners, roommates, classmates, coworkers, or new friends, I hope you will listen to them and learn.

I try to choose to be kind. Being kind doesn't have to be big, it only has to be thoughtful. For me this has meant making someone a meal, sitting with them, sending a card, holding a hand, inviting someone who is alone to eat at your table. These things matter, and are remembered. I hope you choose to reach out to others with kindness and compassion. Each little kindness makes this world a better place.

I choose empathy over judgment, though I am not always perfect at it. I realized at some point that I have no idea what is going on in others' lives, what their past has been, what their pain is. I try to give people the benefit of the doubt, and hope they will do the same for me when it's my turn. When someone cuts in front of me while driving, I choose to think to myself (instead of the more profane words that immediately spring to mind) "maybe his wife is having a baby" or "perhaps they just got a call from the emergency room." "Perhaps their mother is sick." I may be wrong, but this practice helps me feel calmer, more empathic, and more loving. I hope you choose not to judge others or yourselves too harshly.

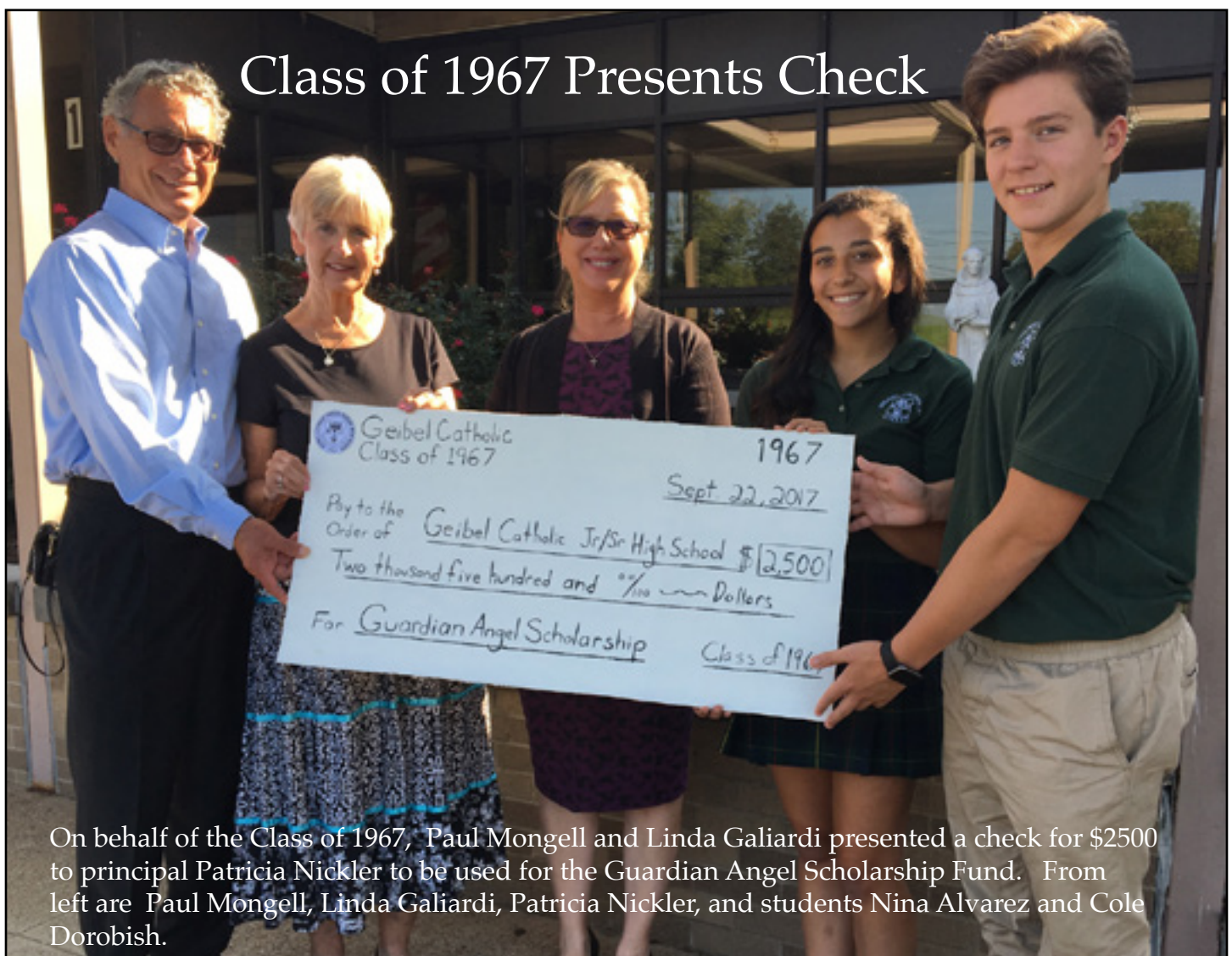
I choose to sing – by myself, with others, in the car, in the shower, at work. Often, I don't even know all of the words to a song or the right words, but that doesn't stop me. When I sing with people whether in church or at a concert, I feel joy. This came from my childhood, where my family sang in the car all the time. I hope you will sing loudly, off key if that is how it is, and not be apologetic. Whether it's hymns or hip hop, music is a unifying force. It is a universal language. I saw on Facebook a song from last year's musical you particularly enjoy singing together...Rama lama?

*Rama lama lama ka dinga da dinga dong  
Shoobop sha wadda wadda yippity boom de boom  
Chang chang changitty chang shoobop  
Dip da dip da dip doowop da doobee doo  
Boogedy boogedy boogedy boogedy shooby doowop shebop  
Sha na na na na na na na yippity dip de doom  
Rama lama lama ka dinga da dinga dong  
Shoobop sha wadda wadda yippity boom de boom  
Chang chang changitty chang shoobop  
Dip da dip da dip doowop da doobee doo*

*Boogedy boogedy boogedy boogedy shooby doowop shebop  
Sha na na na na na na na yippity dip de doom  
Wop baba lumop a wap bam boom*

I choose to always work hard. I do it so I can feel good, whatever the outcome. We all have different talents and gifts, and they are not all the same, and we sometimes find them a little later in life. I didn't think I was smart for a lot of my life because I compared myself to others. And because I once got a D in health class. But you know what? You are unique. Continue to find your gifts and to use them to work hard. The world needs you in all of your goodness, with all of your kindness, hope and enthusiasm, with your intelligence, with all of your love.

You will choose where you want your life to go, who you want to be. You will choose new places to live, friends and activities, jobs, and majors. These are the big choices. But whatever your path, whatever your place, whatever life hands you, remember that it's the small daily choices that make a life. I hope that you will carefully consider all the small choices you make that add up to who you want to be. It's not always easy and sometimes we make mistakes. But each day, each hour, each minute, each second presents a new opportunity to try again. In the end, many of these things are good for others, but always they are good for ourselves. Be good to yourselves. Be your best selves. Make good choices.





## 50th Reunion for the Class of 1967

Members of the Class of 1967 celebrated their 50-year reunion on September 9, 2017 at Nino's Restaurant in Mt. Pleasant. Prior to the dinner, they toured the school and attended Mass at the Geibel Catholic chapel, held in the memory of deceased classmates. Pictured from left are Patty (Molinaro) Jeter, Chuck Wolenter, Eileen (Ash) Arienti, Bob Colland '68, Chrissy (Bailor) Colland, Linda Galiardi, Paul Mongell, Bonnie (Rohland) Halsell, Buddy Zoracki, Dennis Beran, Babs (Connors) Prudente, Joe Prudente, and Sylvester Most.

As part of their reunion festivities, the Class of 1967 made a generous donation of \$2500 to the school's Guardian Angel Scholarship fund in memory of deceased class members.

The Guardian Angel Scholarship pairs a benefactor with a student whose family may be otherwise unable to meet tuition expense, financially adopting him or her for the school year with this donor-named award.

### Planning a reunion?

**We can help! Contact Mary Dreliszak, Director of Advancement, at 724-628-5600, ext. 2208 or at [mdreliszak@geibelcatholic.org](mailto:mdreliszak@geibelcatholic.org). She can provide addresses, schedule a Mass and tour of Geibel Catholic, and also assist with class giving opportunities, including creating a class-named Guardian Angel Scholarship.**





In 1967, Lyndon B. Johnson was the President of the United States; a gallon of gas cost 33 cents; Elvis Presley married Priscilla; "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" was released; Martin Luther King, Jr. was addressing crowds in Berkeley, California; and Frank Reno was principal to a graduating class of 80 seniors at Geibel High School. Thirty of those classmates gathered on September 9, 2017 to celebrate their golden reunion.

In attendance were (row 1) Linda Galiardi, Rosella (Canada) Kerns, Eileen (Ash) Arienti, Susan (Glovola) Kite, Paula (Santini) Whetstone; (row 2) Patty Molinaro, Kathy (Sapanara) Puff, Patty (Boyer) Gittinger, Chrissy (Bailor) Colland, Mary (Doerfler) Dall; (row 3) Francine Hovanec, Wilda Kaylor, Becky (Graft) Raymond; (rows 4-5) Kathie (Smithula) Colonna, Mary Ellen (Eckman) Cavalier, Bonnie (Rohland) Halsell, Buddy Zoracki, Debby (Conlon) Herman, Rita (Nowicki) Pfrimmer, Denny Beran, Babs (Connors) Prudente, Joe Prudente; (row 6) Francis Hatter, Paul Mongell, Frank Belko; (row 7-8) Bill Maricondia, Vince Siecinski, Sly Most, Joe Herchko, Chuck Wolenter, John Krystyniak.

# Class of 1982 Celebrates 35 Years



Twenty-seven members of the Class of 1982 celebrated their 35th reunion on September 30, 2017 at Bud Murphy's Sports Bar and Restaurant. Classmate and chef Steve Wardega baked and decorated a cake for the class to share. Pictured above are (row 1) Madonna Rabatin, Ed Urbaniak, Fr. Willie Lechnar, Jacque Caringola, Melissa Brooks, and Bethann (McKlveen) Ambrosini; (row 2) Bob Kendi, Amy (Graft) McKlveen, Mary Agnes (Ermine) Martin, Merriann (Melego) Grant, Rita (Arthur) Byers, Mary Beth (Zavislan) Kerekes, Theresa (Quaranto) McCullough, Karen (Ulerich) Lonigro, Francis Molinaro, Jill (Bertocci) Bertoni, Bob Opst, Beth (Kissinger) Bayer, Dan Lonigro, Ed Keebler; (row 3) Pat Ferrell, Steve Wardega, Pete Yezbak, Harlan Furbush, and Julie Kurdila. Not pictured: Wayne Shaw and Lori (Baluch) Ellis.

As part of their September 30, 2017 reunion, the Class of 1982 attended mass, celebrated by classmate Fr. Willie Lechnar, and then toured the school. Pictured are: (row 1) Ed Urbaniak, Ed Keebler, Dan Lonigro; (row 2) Karen (Ulerich) Lonigro, Lori (Baluch) Ellis, Beth (Kissinger) Bayer, Mary Agnes (Ermine) Martin, Rita (Arthur) Byers; (row 3) Melissa Brooks, Jill (Bertocci) Bertoni, Madonna Rabatin, Theresa (Quaranto) McCullough, Steve Wardega; (row 4) Francis Molinaro, and Bob Kendi.

# Geibel Class of 1972



October 14, 2017

## 45<sup>th</sup> Class Reunion

J. B. Shavel  
PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

Twenty-two members of the Geibel Class of 1972 celebrated their 45th reunion on October 14, 2017 at Bud Murphy's Sports Bar and Restaurant following a class mass at Geibel Catholic chapel. Pictured in the first row from left are Karen Nakles, Denise (Thomas) Wilcox, Mary Ann (Macko) Gmutza, Debbie (Molinaro) Gephart, Goldie (Malone) Lohr, Marian (Gasbarro) Cadwallader, and Gail (Grabiak) Rhodes, row 2: Bill Herbert, Kathy (Davare) Roth, Paula Rendine, Debbie (Cohen) Daugherty, Kathy (O'Laughlin) Engelmeier, David Mullaney, Chuck Cronin; row 3: Tina (Martinchalk) Martin, Angela (LaCaffinie) Means, Judy (Caringola) Watson, Debbie (Nolan) Fullem, Mark Shuder, Joe Potocki, and Tom Schomer. Not pictured: Jim Lembo.



*Class of '72 friends Kathy (O'Laughlin) Engelmeier, Debbie (Molinaro) Gephart, Goldie (Malone) Lohr, and Chuck Cronin*



*1972 classmates Joe Potocki, Mark Shuder, Jim Lembo, and Tom Schomer*



## In Memoriam

*The  
Geibel Catholic community  
extends sincere sympathy  
and  
heartfelt prayers  
to the families and friends  
of our deceased alumni.*

**Joseph Rudnik '67**  
**February 14, 2017**

**Janean (Gilbert) Vaughn '68**  
**May 23, 2017**

**Robert J. Connors Jr. '70**  
**December 10, 2016**

**Andrew Smith '75**  
**March 26, 2017**

**Mary Campbell-Spegar '81**  
**November 12, 2017**

**Robert Regney '83**  
**Nov. 28, 2017**

**Stephen P. Mullaney '08**  
**August 5, 2017**



Mrs. Margaret Soisson, a beloved Geibel Catholic teacher, passed away on June 7, 2017.

She was born Jan. 8, 1937, in Scottdale, a daughter of the late J. Alex and Margaret (Finerty) Yahner.

A graduate of Scottdale Joint High School, she held a Bachelor of Arts degree in education from Mount Mercy College (Carlow University). Mrs. Soisson was a substitute teacher in the Connellsville public school system for 20 years and subsequently taught English, Latin and Spanish at Geibel Catholic for 15 years before her retirement in 2004.

A devoted and faithful Roman Catholic, she was an active member of Immaculate Conception Church in Connellsville, where she served as a lector and prayed with the Light of the Cross prayer group.

Throughout her life, Mrs. Soisson treasured the opportunities she had to travel with her students as well as her family. An especially impactful part of her life was the time she spent with her family as a missionary in Malawi, Africa.

She took great pride in her teaching and left behind many students who will always remember her extraordinary enthusiasm and sense of humor.

One of those former students, Vince Roskovensky '96, commented, "When I came to Geibel as a freshman, I took Latin because it was a base for all languages. Going into a class where I didn't know the language or my classmates, Mrs. Soissons's enthusiasm made me feel part of the group and made learning fun. Her genuine sincerity and enthusiasm put her at the top of my list of favorite teachers. She will be very missed."



# Coaching Legend Misiak Left Lasting Legacy

*This story is used with permission from the Herald Standard and was written by reporter Jim Downey '78.*

Ken Misiak spent nearly his entire adult life working a job he truly enjoyed, putting nearly a half century into teaching and coaching young men and women from the region at Geibel Catholic High School.

Misiak died January 8, 2018, leaving behind a legacy that will stand the test of time.

Misiak began his teaching and coaching careers at Immaculate Conception High School in Connellsville in the late 1950s. When he concluded his career 49 years later, he finished with 730 victories, one PIAA championship, two WPIAL titles and was runner-up in the PCIAA in 1967.

Misiak also has the distinction of coaching George Laskey, the 1987 WPIAL golf champion, even though he didn't golf.

Bob Fedorko was on the bench for many of those victories as Misiak's long-time assistant coach after he was hired in the 1966-67 school year.

"I had 40 years of basketball with him and 42 years of teaching," said Fedorko. "He was instrumental with so many kids. He was a mentor to me.

"He never ran for political office, but he was involved in recreation. He was known around town."

As the PCIAA faded into history, Misiak was one of the coaches/athletic directors involved with the transition of programs at Geibel, St. John's (Uniontown), and others into the WPIAL for the 1973-74 season.

"I know he was involved in the meetings," said Fedorko.

Fedorko continued, adding, "He was athletic director for so long. He pushed for all the sports, football, girls sports, soccer. He was president of the Men's Club."

As Misiak and Fedorko were side-by-side on the bench, so were their wives, Barb and Carol.

"Barb, she was the main rooster. She was the spark behind everything," Fedorko said of the fervent Barb Misiak.

"It's a big loss," concluded Fedorko.

Leo Lowney played for Misiak at Immaculate Conception and later joined the staff at Geibel in 1970. He was the long-time freshman boys basketball coach.

"I have good memories," said Lowney. "We disagreed sometimes, as people do."

Misiak's accomplishments on the court are well documented, but he also was a driving force in the unionization of the high school teachers in the Diocese of Greensburg.

"If it wasn't for him, we would not have had a union," said Lowney. "If it wasn't for him, we wouldn't have had benefits. He had a big effect."

"Ken's a fine person. You'll never find a better person than him," praised Lowney. "His wife, his daughter (Jamie), no one took care of him like they did."

Misiak not only received that special treatment from his family, but also shared it with his family.

"How he took care of his mother and brother, the person he was with his family," added Lowney.

"How he lived his life was a good example to everyone. He was a great example."

Misiak bridged the coaching legends of yore, Abe Everhart, Henry DiVirgilo, Horse Taylor and Lash Nesser, to the likes of Mark John, former boys coach at Laurel Highlands, and veteran Carmichaels boys coach Don Williams.

"Kenny was a class act. We had a lot of epic battles," said Williams, who started at Carmichaels in 1975. "His teams were always well prepared. He was demanding and his player showed it. You always had to give top effort."

The 1976-77 season had German, Carmichaels and Geibel Catholic tied for first place with only one team going to the playoffs. Misiak won the flip and German defeated Carmichaels at Cal U. The Gators then overcame a 6-point deficit in the final 90 seconds to beat the Uhlans for a spot in the WPIAL Class A playoffs.

The Gators lost in the WPIAL finals and then lost in the PIAA semifinals in the longest game in the history of the tournament, four overtimes to Shanksville-Stoneycreek.

“I think any one of those teams (would’ve done well in the playoffs). Our toughest games were Geibel and German that year,” said Williams.

“The gym would be packed against Geibel because they know they would see a good basketball game.”

Williams related a personal story about Misiak away from the court.

“Ken’s mother was in Mount Macrina. Somehow he found out my mother was there and he would always stop to see my mom. That really meant a lot to me,” said Williams.

John knew Misiak as a playground leader, opposing coach (to his uncle Lash Nesser), and opposing coach (as coach of the Mustangs).

“Another legend. My heart feels so bad,” said John. “He was such a great guy.

“He was playground director at Lincoln View. Everyone wanted to be on his team because you knew you were going to win. I think he was the first guy to start up a summer league. The Uniontown summer league was a premier league.”

As for the rivalry with Nesser and St. John’s, John said, “Those two guys and schools were as intense when the games were played. Respect was beyond reproach.”

“He beat me,” John said with a laugh. “It was always fun being around Coach Misiak. He was a fun guy.

“Barb and Jamie were right beside him. He meant so much to Fayette County athletics. I can’t say enough about him.

“He was just a great guy. I couldn’t say a negative thing.”

Dan Andria coached against Misiak at Fairchance-Georges and then later coached the Gators for a couple seasons.

“That was a heckuva rivalry,” said Andria. “It was intense. It was almost always for the section (title). I had a lot of respect for Kenny. He was such a gentleman.”

The 1980 WPIAL Class A final paired Fairchance-Georges and Geibel, the first time two teams from the same section advanced to the title game.

“We beat the twice in 1980 and then played the WPIAL finals at Laurel Highlands, not the Civic Arena. There was a lot of respect between the teams,” said Andria, who lost to Geibel in the title game.

A sign of that respect was the stars of the squads, Bill Belko and Mike King, were good friends.

“Kenny and Bob were quite a team. Both were great guys,” praised Andria. “What a gentleman. To get to coach against him, what an honor. And, to coach where he coached, what an honor.”

Mark Mongell was on the undefeated 1978 WPIAL and PIAA championship team.

“He was a great fella,” said Mongell. “He was a great ambassador for Geibel. He dedicated his life for the young people of our area.

“We were always prepared and better conditioned. Our expectation was better than most teams. That’s a tribute to him. We’d run through a wall for him.

“It wasn’t about giving everyone a trophy. He made tough decisions, some not always correct. He led by example. Everyone wanted our school to be the best.”

Mongell continued the thought, adding, “He dedicated his life to the spiritual and growth of your mind. The world is a better place.”

David Timko graduated from Geibel in 1983 and continued his career at Slippery Rock University.

“Coach Misiak would not let us settle for mediocrity. He pushed and inspired us to be the best we could be on the floor and in the halls of Geibel. He taught us to be proud of the successes, but also to be humble. We were a proud group in the early 80s, but more proud to have been coached by a true legend and gentleman. Thanks Coach Misiak,” said Timko.

Dave Brooks was the oldest of three brothers (Mark and Rick) to play for Misiak and the Gators. He graduated in 1973, the final season in the PCIAA.

“My impression of (Coach Misiak) was he was so good for Geibel. He was an upstanding, principled man,” said Brooks. “He helped me. I went to Bethany where he went. I’m sure he made a few phone calls. I always appreciated what he did for me.

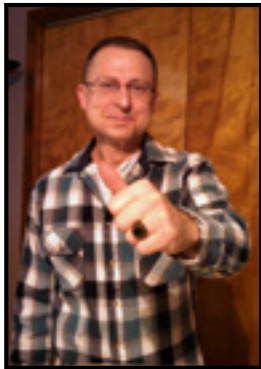
“Basketball was the sport then. The student body rallied around basketball. That’s what the school was known for.

“He genuinely cared about all the players and all the kids. He was a teacher. You just know he cared. I remember my mom went for parent-teacher talks and he wanted to know how were my grades.

“He was an institution. He will be remembered by more than just players. He was the right man at the right time for Geibel.”

# Class Notes

## 1976



**Mike Lusty** lost his class ring when he was stationed at March Air Force Base in Riverside, CA between 1977 and 1979. For years, he assumed it fell out of his pocket while he was working on a B-52 bomber. (Rings can't be worn when working on aircraft because it is considered a safety hazard.) In many places, he was working on his back or side due to the compact equipment arrangement. He also thought it may have been lost in the barracks.

Fast forward to February 2017: Tina Haky, Geibel's administrative assistant, received a phone call from a woman named Terri Capece from Ontario, California, a town about 25 miles from the Air Force Base; she told Mrs. Haky that she had found the ring in a box, but she didn't elaborate where the box had been found. She gave Mrs. Haky the initials in the ring and the class year. With the help of the 1976 Geibel yearbook, the ring was traced back to Mike.

Mrs. Haky put the woman in contact with Mike, and she mailed the ring back to him. He said that, other than a little tarnish, the ring is exactly as he remembered it!

Nancy (Bailey '76) Jacobyansky contacted Mike to get the story in the local newspapers.

Mike and his wife Kim reside in Marion, IN. Mike has been retired from the Army since 2004; his wife works at a local hospital pending her retirement. Mike occasionally returns to Mt Pleasant to visit his brothers who still reside in the area.

## 1984

**Dr. Jacqueline Cavalier** was promoted to the position of full-time professor at the Community College of Allegheny County. A faculty member there since 2000, she teaches a variety of history courses, such as the History of American Labor, Contemporary United States History, and the History of Women. Jacqui is the Allegheny Campus vice president for the American Federation of Teachers and has served in the past as faculty coordinator of the Labor and Management Studies Certificate program, coordinator of the Tom Foerster Archives and Seminar Room at CCAC, and as the Allegheny Campus coordinator for both the CCAC Honors Program and the Faculty Professional Development Program.

Jacqui received the 5-Star Teaching Award for 2014-15, the 2012 Vanguard Diversity College Award and was the recipient of the 2006 NISOD "Excellence in Teaching" Award. She also was awarded a fellowship with the National Endowment for the Humanities Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshop at the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center in 2009.

In addition to numerous book reviews and articles, Jacqui has published two works, *The Irish in America* and *The Impact of Immigration on the Iron and Steel Industry*.

She holds a doctorate of education with a specialization in higher education and adult learning and a Master of Arts degree in social science from California University of PA.

## 2006

**Brittany (Piper) Eischeid** and her husband Nicholas are residing in Nocona, TX where Brittany works as an ICU nurse. She is also working on her Advanced Practice Nursing degree at the University of Texas in Arlington to become an Acute Care Nurse Practitioner.

## 2006



**Dr. Beth Novotny**, an assistant professor at Eastern Tennessee State University's Department of Counseling and Human Services, presented a talk, "Mindset Matters," as the focus of the first presentation of the ETSU "Women on Wednesdays" lecture series.

The purpose of the lecture series is to raise awareness about the research, scholarship and community engagement that women at ETSU are doing; to provide a venue where women on campus and in the

community can discuss and support each other's work; and to give students an opportunity to meet faculty who could become mentors for their studies.

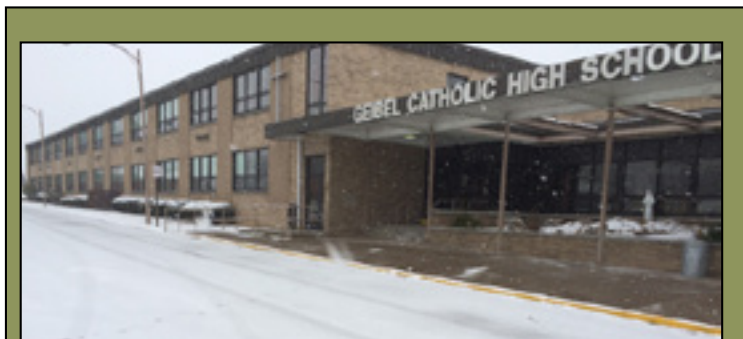
Dr. Novotny discussed a study she performed on grit, mindset and self-efficacy and their application for individuals in helping roles.

## 2007

**Donald Halinka** works as a Data Delivery Engineer in the Clinical Systems Implementation division of the Pittsburgh office of ERT. ERT is a global data and technology company that works to minimize risks in clinical trials through electronic clinical outcome assessment. In the fall, Don was asked to apply for an exchange program for the company's overseas office. He was accepted into the program and spent time in Geneva, Switzerland for this assignment. While in Geneva, he shared office culture and learned the "back end" of the system from his overseas counterparts. He also traveled to Nottingham, England to train a new team there.

## 2007

**Noah Delmar** and his wife, Sara, welcomed their first child, Mason Noah, on February 7, 2017. Congratulations to the Delmar family!



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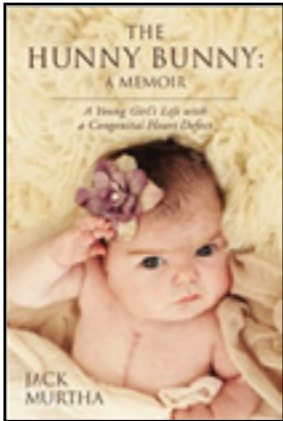
# Alumni Spotlight

## Jack Murtha '93

By

Mary (Ruggieri '79) Dreliszak

It wasn't a road Jack Murtha expected to travel. When his life's journey took an unexpected detour "it was the grace of God," he said, that navigated the course. Moments after Jack and his wife, Krista, experienced the joy of the birth of their daughter Katie, the medical team took Katie for what they said would be a routine exam. It would be anything but routine. A cardiologist informed them an hour later that Katie had a previously undiagnosed, rare heart condition known as Ebstein's



Anomaly, characterized by a malformed tricuspid valve.

Many people asked Jack what parenting a critically ill baby was like. *The Hunny Bunny: A Memoir - A Young Girl's Life with a Congenital Heart Defect* is his answer. During Katie's life, Jack searched unsuccessfully for a book that dealt realistically about caring for critically

ill infants. He gives the unvarnished experience of life inside a children's hospital, including the joy of miraculous recoveries, the despair of setbacks, and the daily grind of a caregiver.

The image of his daughter inspired the title. "The staff placed a tubular pillow around Katie while she was intubated. Puffy from retained fluids, typical of babies with cardiac issues, she looked like a little bunny. That turned into the 'Hunny Bunny.' Soon, [my wife] and I began referring to her as 'The Bunny' in private conversation." (Hat tip to Sarah Hollowood, '93, who suggested to Jack that he spell it "Hunny" rather than "Honey" because the former was visually more attractive.)

### *The Grind*

He added, "I've heard from many people who have gone through serious issues with their kids. They resonate with the grind like fluid issues, medication, insurance, not being able to get a line. It's comforting to them, just as I felt a fraterni-

ty with others sharing their stories." For Jack and Krista, "the grind" also included "open heart surgery on one day, a cerebral bleed the next, and a fever the next day.

That was our normal for ten months." With such diverse medical issues happening in any one day, Jack said he was surprised that no one doctor was in charge of the overall care: "The parent fills that role. You keep it all together. You have that global perspective. You become an active partner in the medical care. Having a sick kid is not a spectator sport."

### *True Grit*

This view gave Jack a unique perspective of Katie, including all that she was going through and how she responded. He commented, "Katie had sheer grit. There were days she wouldn't be able to breathe on her own, and then she did. She would tough it out. This internal drive to push through these obstacles was inspiring to the hundreds of people following her story." By nature a happy baby, Katie seemed to mature from her ordeals, developing a wisdom that far exceeded her years. Jack said he saw this same kind of strength in the babies of the NICU "where some were so small, being born at just 20 weeks."

Despite her medical struggles, Katie's life was one of triumphant joy. She loved playing with her stuffed animals and listening to The Beach Boys. The nurses would play the band's songs to calm her. Moreover, she was an accomplished hand holder.

### *A Faith Community*

"Katie gave us a better appreciation of what was important," Jack says looking back on his daughter's life. "I wasn't a very spiritual person on the day she was born.



On that day, though, I prayed, 'I won't ask for a healing, just give us the strength to get through it.' The request was answered. A grace came over us and never left, which is why, I believe, I never felt bitter or angry. That was very important, like we were going with the current and not against it. When you go through this, ev-

everything else drops away – jobs, careers. There was such clarity from a spiritual standpoint. [The connection] was so visceral."

Jack said he and Krista moved to Indianapolis before Katie was born but never officially joined a church. On Katie's second day of life, Jack left a message for the local church's pastor, a complete stranger, to arrange an emergency baptism. Despite having a congregation of more than 1,600 families, Fr. Jim Farrell arrived at the hospital to baptize Katie within two hours. His church, St. Pius X, adopted the family. Jack said he "learned then that the church is both noun and verb. The priest would brief people on how Katie was doing. Parishioners brought food to the hospital. A physical therapist offered to volunteer her time. Kids at the grade school sent cards." When Fr. Jim announced that Katie had passed before the Sunday mass, the congregation let out a collective gasp, a testament to how close they had grown to their tiny fellow parishioner.



### 313 Days

The cardiovascular surgeon gave Katie a 50/50 chance on reaching adulthood on the day of her birth. Despite her grit and a team of physicians and caregivers, she lived just 313 days. Jack finds solace in knowing the majority of those days were happy ones. She was able to spend 77 days at home in two visits. She loved music, so the piano held a special fascination for her. "I would sit at the piano with her in my left arm while playing with my right hand. She loved it. She became entranced. It helped that she was a forgiving audience." Fittingly, Katie's nighttime included music. Jack's wife, Krista, began the practice of singing "Goodnight Sweetheart" while still carrying Katie. "We continued the practice every day of her life in addition to praying an Our Father and Hail Mary." He added, "Katie made me a better father to our two other children, Elizabeth, who was born in 2014, and Hannah, born in 2016."

### The Gift

Jack, an attorney for the U.S. Army who serves weekends with the Air National Guard, credits his Geibel Catholic teachers for his ability to tell Katie's story. "One of the things I benefitted from was the strong foundation in writing thanks to my teachers Arlene Severin, John Riley, and Deidre (Dee Dee) Manack." Katie's illness confined her to a hospital or her parents' house. Jack's writing enabled her story to spread from the Pacific Northwest to the Mediterranean Sea. (One who followed Katie's story stopped at a fifteenth century church, St. Catherine of Sienna, in Malta to say a prayer for her when she was a few weeks old. After relaying her story to the pastor, the priest dedicated the next day's mass to "Katherine of Indianapolis"). Jack didn't appreciate his writing instruction until his first year of college. "I sailed through my first composition class while others were struggling. The mechanics helped me write and edit this book. Because of this gift, I can give my children something that is entirely mine." Jack said he hopes the book will inspire everyone who reads it. "The first time anyone met Katie, they expected to see this sick kid and there she would be, playing with a stuffed animal." Her short life will continue to impact the lives of others for years to come. In addition to the book, Katie's legacy continues at the Peyton Manning Children's Hospital and St. Vincent Women's Hospital with The Hunny Bunny Project, which supports patients with rehabilitation equipment and quality of life items. ([www.hunnybunnyproject.org](http://www.hunnybunnyproject.org))

*The Hunny Bunny: A Memoir - A Young Girl's Life with a Congenital Heart Defect* is available at Amazon in print and Kindle editions.

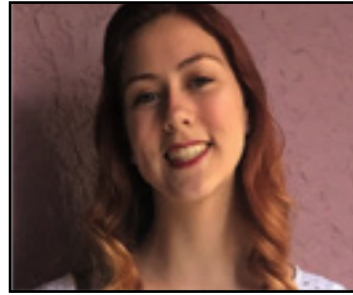
# Student Spotlight

## Echo Shaffer, Class of '20

*The following is an article posted by Mary Dreliszak in her May 30, 2017 blog "MaryMotivates."*

### Strong Kids

#### Echo Shaffer on finding her focus



Echo Shaffer has a smile that lights up a room. And a voice that lights up a stage. The Geibel Catholic fifteen-year-old, whose middle name is Wren, has kept a song in her heart since before she was born. Her mom, Brenda, sang to Echo

and then watched the tables turn as her toddler, with microphone in hand and captivated by the songs of Disney movies, serenaded her mom.

But by the time she was seven years old, Brenda noticed she was doing something more. "As Echo would sing along to Disney music, she would say, 'There's a really pretty buzz that's happening in the song. 'My princesses and I are buzzing together.' That buzz was the harmony.

Echo's sensitivity to sound made it difficult to tolerate loud noises, including chatter in her elementary school classroom. At times, she would stand up and tell her classmates to be quiet. She also couldn't stand the sound of a baby crying.

Brenda knew something was wrong.

At first brushed it off as a behavior issue, the family got a second medical opinion and received a diagnosis of SPD (Sensory Processing Disorder).

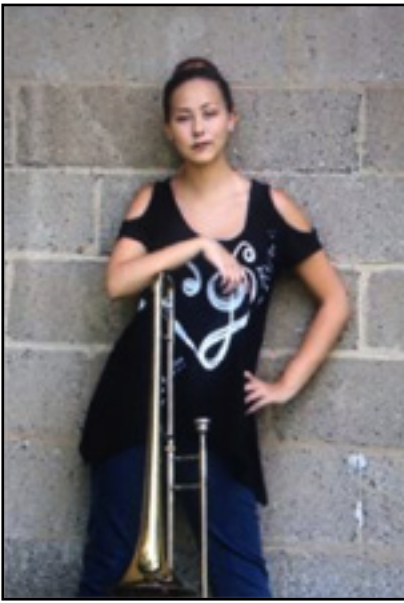
### A Mountain to Climb

Like the sound of an echo that bounces back from a mountain, so it does for this teenager. And this is her mountain to climb.

"When there's a lot noise around me, I can't focus on just one sound. I hear the pen clicking, the whispering, the person talking – every sound all at the same time. I'm also sensitive to touch." Echo added, "Having tags on my clothes and even combing my hair hurts. I used to wear my socks inside out so that the seams weren't touching me."

Echo was prescribed occupational therapy and listening to classical music through headphones for one half hour before going to school was part of her treatment.

"She handled the day better if she had this music therapy before school. It was amazing what a difference it made. She was better equipped to handle the noise



surrounding her in class and better able to tolerate how her clothes felt on her body," Brenda said.

### *Coping through Music*

At Geibel Catholic, where Echo is a sophomore, music is still a big part of her coping regime. "I hum a lot. I always have a song in my mind. When I'm studying, I blast some music. In class, I doodle. All of these things help me to focus."

Her love of music is helping her overcome the diagnosis of SPD.

Since the age of eight, Echo has performed in more than a half-dozen productions at California University of PA, Geyer Performing Arts Center, CGlee at the Carnegie, as well as Conn-Area and Geibel Catholic schools.

In her first high school musical production this year,



Echo played the role of Sister Mary Stephen in "Sister Act" and was thrilled to have a chance to sing for this signature school event.

### *Lessons Lived*

Echo credits Mr. Nick Bell, Geibel Catholic musical director, for

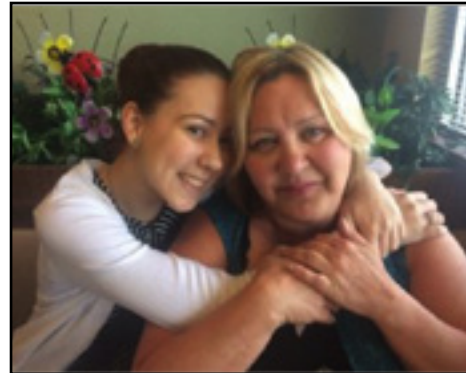
being instrumental in her musical pursuits. "He's my favorite teacher. He really cares about all of the students and is so uplifting." She added, "Mr. Bell was the first to suggest lessons to bring out the best of my voice." Over the past year, Echo has been taking those lessons from Merle Stutzman, a retired musical director in the Connellsville Area School District. "He teaches me theory and how to take care of my voice. He gives me techniques on how to make it easier to sing and to find that line in my voice to make it sound nicer. Mr. Stutzman taught me to belt out a song."

### *I Will Do*

Those songs cover a wide genre of music, including, Opera. Performing in events like the recently held, "Talent on the Mountain", in Markleysburg, PA, gives her the opportunity to showcase what she can do. The singer also plays the trombone, ukulele, guitar, and piano. Echo already has her sights set on majoring in vocal performance and ultimately performing on Broadway

or in musical theater around the world. She's looking at schools that include Julliard and CMU. And she's not afraid to share that goal.

"Music is my past, present and future. I can't imagine doing anything that doesn't involve music. Mr. Stutzman tells us, 'Don't say, I will try. Say, I will do.'"



### *My Best Friend*

If there is one person who is doing everything she can to help Echo reach those goals, it's her mom. Some days making multiple 40-minute round

trip commutes to get Echo to school, lessons and activities, the two spend quality time together in the car. And they talk.

"When I was in sixth grade at Conn-Area Catholic, I told my mom about all the cool things we were learning in the Bible. We became Catholic together and now we're active in our church at Immaculate Conception. I use my voice to spread His word as a cantor and member of the choir." My mom has supported me through all of my endeavors. She is my best friend. She gives all her time to support what I want. I love her so much."

### *A Gift from God*

With abundant love and faith, Echo radiates joy. And like the echo that bounces back off the mountain, no obstacle in her path will hold back her beautiful sound.

"I know that my voice is a gift from God. When performing, I just let myself go. I'm nervous before I go on, but once I'm on stage, I'm completely calm. I'm home."

## **Geibel Catholic Annual Giving Campaign for 2017-2018 is Underway**

Your gift to the Annual Fund makes an immediate and important impact upon our students by supporting education, spirituality, technology, student activities, and building improvements. In addition, the Annual Fund supports our Tuition Assistance Program, helping more students to attend Geibel Catholic who are in need of financial aid. Geibel Catholic is a member of an elite group of national Catholic high schools, and to keep a Geibel Catholic education affordable requires a commitment from all present and past stakeholders of the school. We are forever grateful for your generosity and we are most appreciative for your support.

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## **The Bridge Builder**

An old man, going a lone highway,  
came at the evening, cold and gray,  
to a chasm, vast and deep and wide,  
through which was flowing a sullen tide,  
the old man crossed in the twilight dim –  
that sullen stream had no fears for him;  
but he turned, when he reached  
the other side,  
and built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,  
"You are wasting strength in building here,  
Your journey will end with the ending day;  
you never again must pass this way.  
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide,  
why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head.  
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,  
"There followeth after me today  
a youth whose feet must pass this way.  
This chasm that has been naught to me  
to that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.  
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

*Will Allen Dromgoole*

## **Stay in Touch.**

Please use this form to update us about yourself so that we may add your information to the upcoming issue of the Geibel Alumni Newsletter, or email your updates, births, weddings and news to [newsletter@GeibelCatholic.org](mailto:newsletter@GeibelCatholic.org).

Name (include maiden name) \_\_\_\_\_

Class Year \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Is your Spouse a Geibel Alum?  yes  no Class Year \_\_\_\_\_

News for the Class Notes section of the next newsletter (attach separate sheet if needed).

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Print and mail to:

Mary Dreliszak,  
Director of Advancement  
Geibel Catholic High School  
611 East Crawford Avenue  
Connellsville, PA 15425

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March 23 to 25 at the State Theater in Uniontown*



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