

THE LAUNCH PAD

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Dear Parents,
All good things have a beginning. Graduations and retirements may seem to be endings, but we know that neither one is the final chapter of a story. We look forward to what comes next.

This May, the school said goodbye to young men who arrived at the school just as thousands before them had. In August of 2019, neither they nor the best epidemiologist in the world could have predicted that by the second week of March, 2020, these freshmen would be attending virtual school and dealing with isolation and fear. That was just the beginning of their challenge.

The class of 2023 will talk about their high school experience as no other class before them can. They did more than survive: they thrived, and they walked into the gym on May 19 as thousands before them have. It was a beginning of their college or military or work-life careers. It was the beginning of yet another challenge.

On graduation night, Mr. Straessle announced another milestone: three teachers retired after a combined 81 years at the school. We wish them and you and the class of 2023 the best for these beginnings. —the editor



Graduates Andrew Weeks, CJ Onyekwelu, and Ross Maginn share brilliant smiles and last minute conversations as they prepare to walk together for the final time. The class of 2023 overcame many obstacles and formed bonds most say they will never forget.

ADMIN CHANGES USHER IN NEW ERA

When Mr. Steve Straessle scheduled a faculty meeting after the final test day, Wednesday, May 24, teachers had theories about the agenda.

However, none knew details about a change of the school's governance: Fr. Lawrence Frederick remains Rector of the school, but Mr. Straessle takes on a new title as Head of School; Mr. Matt Dempsey is the new principal; and Mr. Steve Aday is vice principal/dean of students.

Fr. Frederick said, "Steve Straessle will be as much of a presence on campus as in the past 18 years he's served as principal, but he will have a new focus on ensuring the Catholic High School mission aligns with the changing dynamics in education across the state and the country. This change makes for an increasingly efficient administrative team."

"Our school exists in a unique time," said Mr. Straessle. "More has changed in the past two years than the 10 before them. This school was created for times like these; we reach our ultimate selves in times like these. We were not created to be steady in a storm. We were created to provide direction in a storm."

Mr. Straessle's catch phrase for the meeting was "We belong to this fight." He said, "We can see some challenges coming on the horizon. To acknowledge these things does not make us pessimists."

He then laid out the school's plan to meet those challenges. "I'm pleased to announce a change that will help us provide direction for years to come." He then announced the leadership changes and addressed each one.

"My focus will shift a bit to new issues," said Mr. Straessle. "I'll be focused on the strategic as opposed to the day-to-day. I'll keep teaching my classes and have more interaction with students. I'm keeping my office."

Known for his quick wit, fair discipline, and attention to detail, Mr. Dempsey has served as vice principal since the fall of 2011. He said, "Being asked to serve as principal is a humbling experience, but we are fortunate to have a community who know what the Catholic High experience means for these young men as the leaders of tomorrow. Each and every day, I wake up grateful to be part of that work."

Mr. Straessle also announced the third member of the administrative team. He said, "Mr. Steve Aday will be the lead in dealing with student discipline, and he'll lead the attendance office. He has a love for Catholic High and institutional knowledge that will provide a foundation for leadership."

"You [teachers] belong to this fight. Steve and Matt belong to this fight. And hear me clearly: I belong to this fight."

Junior Work Day



Junior Ajay Salgaonkar was prepared to work and look cool at the same time for the junior work day held on Friday, May 19.



A legion of juniors wielding various lawn tools tamed the giant hill down to the athletic field.



Meanwhile, another group of juniors set up chairs borrowed from Holy Souls parish and Mount St. Mary. Mr. Steve Straessle then had to make the choice between the field and the gym as graduation venue. The threat of thunderstorms became the winning factor.

TWO SIGN LETTERS OF INTENT



The two seniors who signed letters of intent on May 3 were not headed for a sports career but for a year of discernment to the priesthood. Phillip Zawislak and Nicholas Tarini joined their parents in front of the whole student body to read and sign their letters.

Zawislak, the son of Jon and Vera Zawislak, will live at the Little Rock House of Formation, attend academic classes at the University of Arkansas-LR, and be enrolled in theological studies through Newman University in Wichita, Kansas. Tarini is the son of Michael and Kiernan Tarini. He will attend classes at Notre Dame University; he is also enrolled in Holy Cross College for his seminary studies.

STUDENT JOURNALISTS CONQUER ASPA



Student journalists show off a few of the 50+ awards they won at the Fayetteville ASPA convention.

Football heroes are not the only folks who travel in style to competitions. Twenty-one members of the journalism, yearbook, and broadcast classes traveled by Arrow coach to Fayetteville on April 20 to attend the Arkansas Scholastic Press Association (ASPA) convention. They also arrived ready to compete and to win the equivalent of a state championship.

The student journalists did just that as they took home an All-Arkansas award for their print publication *The Rocket Times*. The *Rocket* yearbook won a rank of Superior as they faced off against every school in the state. They also won over 50 individual awards for writing, editing, and design.

Top individual awards included 11 "Best of

ASPA" awards for writing, design, editing, and photography for *Rocket Times*, the *Rocket* yearbook, and *Liftoffnews.com*, an on-line student news source. Nicholas Tarini was second runner up for newspaper editor of the year; Enqi Wei was second runner up for photojournalist of the year.

Jacob Ellis, Owen Fraley, Nathan Ghidotti, Rett Palacek, and Nicholas Tarini won first place awards for individual on-site competitions.

Advisors for the group Mrs. Gretchen Gowen and Mrs. Deanna McGill were proud of the way the boys represented the school, not just for winning awards. Mrs. McGill said, "I looked around the convention during breaks. Many students from other schools were staring at their phones, but our guys were talking to each and really enjoying being part of the convention."



Surrounded by student journalists from all over Arkansas, senior Nathan Ghidotti works on his first-place-winning media plan. Photos this page: G. Gowen

THE MOTHER SHIP

(A COLUMN FOR MOMS BY MOMS OF CHS GRADUATES)

Dear Parents of [almost, current, and recently graduated] Catholic High students,

After nineteen years, the Mother Ship is finally taking off for new adventures. We moms from the CHS classes of 2002 and 2003 have been collaborating on this column since the fall of 2004, and it's time for us to go. If not, we'd need to rename this section "the Grandmother Ship."

Of course, we love to talk about our grandchildren, but that's a whole different experience than you are having right now. The memories we have of our teenage sons are fading to that sepia color of old photographs. Some moments still stand out in vivid color: the morning we drove our sons to this school for the first time, the first ninth grade football game, Ring Mass, and graduation in a steamy over-packed gym.

Our best memories are probably of times when our sons brought their friends home. They were so funny, so full of bravado, so smart. They sat on back decks on graduation night and revealed all the small acts of rebellion they'd committed over their four years of high school. They also spoke with pride about the problems they'd overcome. They didn't talk about the future on that evening. That was too big a topic for a perfect May night. Laughter filled the soft air but mixed with the unspoken knowledge that nothing would ever be quite the same again.

Our sons were seniors in the year or two after Father George Tribou died. It was an ultimate test for the school. Would it survive? Who would step up to keep the traditions alive? Who would look forward and embrace all that the 21st century had to offer? Who would protect the school against all that threatened its integrity?

You know the answer to these questions, but that answer didn't come easily. We watched as our sons mourned Father's death and looked for weaknesses in what would come after his long and unquestioned rule. They soon found that it wasn't just one man who had held the line. Rector Fr. Lawrence Frederick and the entire faculty stepped up to fill gaps until solid leadership under Mr. Steve Straessle and Mr. Matt Dempsey emerged.

We've kept in touch over the last 20 years or so, and we know everything hasn't been smooth and easy for Catholic High. However, it's a school

full of problem-solvers. You senior parents saw that a few days ago at graduation. A little thing like a thunderstorm or even an F-3 tornado is a problem with multiple solutions. The question now is never "Can we survive?" It's "How many ways can we figure how to survive?" The question is not "Will we survive?" The question is "How will we thrive?"

So what can we leave you with before we go?

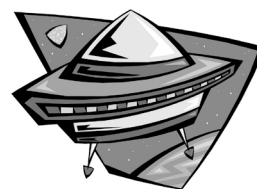
To find advice for current or new parents and even for those of graduates, we looked to the very first Mother Ship column published in the fall of 2004. Here is our ancient advice:

- Rather than rescue your son by bringing forgotten lunches, sports equipment, or books — allow him to solve his own problems.
- Require your son to fill out his own college applications and write his own essays for those applications.
- Resist the temptation to leave town for a few days with your son in charge of your house. That's just too much temptation — and word travels fast.

We stick by our final paragraph of that first Mother Ship column. Here it is: "Hey, being the mom (or dad) of a high-school-aged boy is not easy. We feel your pain. It's trial and error. Our message to you is simple: allow your boys to take responsibility for all the smaller things in his life, but don't give up your job of being a parent. He doesn't need you to bring him his lunch money. He doesn't need you to be his pal. He does need you to set realistic limits on freedom now. It's one of those things he'll thank you for — in twenty years or so."

The great thing about getting old is having experience to back up our advice. The oldest of our sons have attended their 20-year reunions from CHS. They have successful careers. Among our sons' CHS friend group there is a pharmacist, two doctors, an entrepreneur, an airline pilot, a financial planner, and an engineer. All of them have children. All of them have faced at least one major disaster or one devastating sorrow in that 20 year — including the death of one of their own classmates. They took the lessons Catholic High taught them, and they even listened to some of the advice we dished out on a daily basis. They survive and they thrive.

We probably don't have to explain our title after all these years. We were trying for a clever riff from the Rocket mascot. But the more we thought about it, the more we know that *mothership* (or *fathership*) is more than a biological relationship. It's an art. It's a journey. We wish you the best on yours.



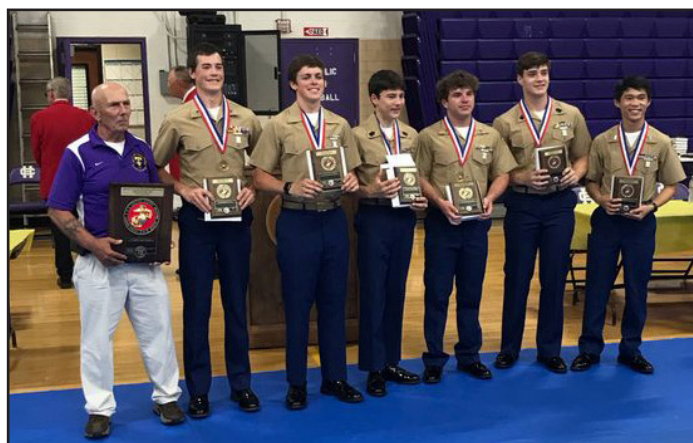
Moms from the CHS classes of 2002 and 2003 contributed to this column.

JROTC PHYSICAL FITNESS TEAM: "SEVEN COME ELEVEN"

Sgt. Major Scott Jernigan may have retired a year ago, but his presence has been required at 6:15 a.m. every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and every Saturday at 8:00 a.m. He showed up to coach the JROTC physical fitness team as they prepared for their seventh consecutive national championship. Sgt. Major Jernigan also received the title of National Coach of the Year.

The boys did not disappoint their long-time mentor on Saturday, May 13. They earned the top score of fitness teams from all over the U. S. This was the second time that CHS hosted the national event sponsored by the US Marines Youth Fitness Foundation. They scored a total of 2288 points, besting a strong regular high school team from South Bronx High School in New York City by 26 points.

Junior Jack Uekman was top scorer for the entire event. Uekman, sophomore Grayson Smith, and senior Brooks Calahan took the top three overall prizes followed by junior Sam Stanley, junior Justin Le, and senior Nate Rousseau.



Sgt. Major Scott Jernigan displays his National Coach of the Year award along with the team who won the national physical fitness championship for the seventh time in a row. Photo: Brother Richard Sanker

BASEBALL AND SOCCER, AND TRACK HAVE SOLID SEASONS

Team Highlights

Soccer: The conference record was 9-1-4, and The final record after the playoffs was 11-5-5. The team finished second in conference play and made it to the quarter finals of the state tournament, but they lost to Springdale High School, who went on to make it to the finals.

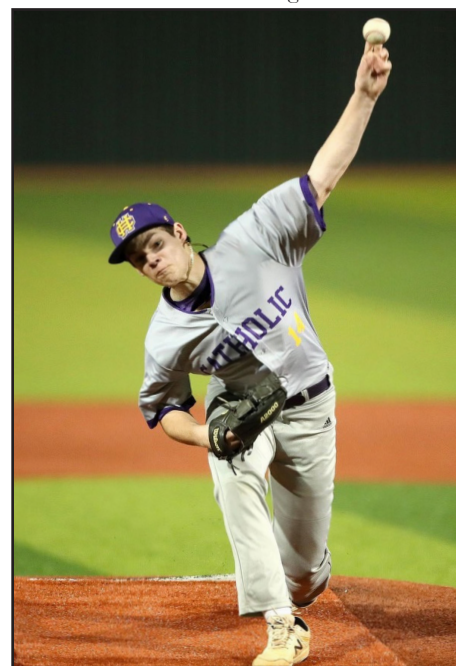
Baseball: The overall record was 16-10; 8-6 in earning fourth place in conference play. Senior Caleb Collins, All-Conference and will play at Lyon College next season. Senior Nathan Freeman is moving in to pitch at Central Baptist College. Junior Brooks Ward was an All-State center fielder and had the second highest batting average in program history. Sophomores Caleb Short and Noel Lewis were also All-Conference.

Track: Conference individual champions included juniors Jack Uekman (400m), Thomas Duch (high jump and long jump), and Michael Krause (triple jump). Earning All-Conference honors were Uekman, Duch, Krause, senior Elias Found (3200m), and freshman Asher Found (3200m). The five listed above qualified for the state meet along with senior Luke Robbins and sophomores Mick Kline and Joseph Moellers.

Elias Found (pictured below), Duch, and Krause scored in their state events. Elias Found won a place in the Meet of Champions and placed fourth in the state. He is the second fastest CHS 3200m runner behind the school record holder, 2014 graduate Brendan Taylor.



Senior night celebrated soccer players Cross Lasley, Nick Tarini, Connor Thompson, Essa Kassissieh, and Adam Thornton. Teammates hoist their big head cut-outs behind them. Nick Tarini provided this photo.



Standout varsity baseball players pictured above: top left, senior Hayden Mercer; top right, sophomore Caleb Short; bottom left, junior Brooks Ward; and bottom right, senior Caleb Collins. Baseball photos: Nelson Chenault



Photo: Track coach Mrs. Jennifer Found

SUCCESS STORY: SENIOR FINDS A TUTOR AND LIFE COACH



Senior Trey Cole and Mrs. Dianne Mitchener go over Cole's study plan for his final exams. The two have a good working relationship that has taken Cole from a seventh grade reading level to eleventh or twelfth grade level in less than two years. Mrs. Mitchener said, "Trey is exceptional. He's bright. He's going places. Photo: G. Gowen

At graduation on May 19, anyone who asked Mrs. Dianne Mitchener about senior Trey Cole, would hear her say: "Trey is exceptional. He's bright. He's going to go places." Mrs. Mitchener should know. She's spent over two years working with Cole as his reading tutor and life coach. Trey calls Mrs. Mitchener "really, my second mom." Proof of this relationship came in the form of an invitation Cole sent to Mrs. Mitchener along with one of the four graduation tickets allotted to his family.

Cole is the first to admit that he struggled in school during his first two years here. "I wasn't motivated inside of school because I knew I wasn't the greatest student," he said. "I turned my focus to working outside of school. I did landscaping and mowed lawns. I was paying for the things I wanted to do by doing work on the weekends and after school."

Even though he didn't often like being inside a classroom, Cole has always cared about the school. "I love Catholic and always wanted to graduate from here. I love the people and the teachers. I definitely feel that if I would have gone [to another school] I probably would have dropped out junior year when I found out I could make a lot of money on my own."

The summer before junior year was a turning point in Cole's school life. After going through extensive testing, he and his parents learned that he needed a different kind of help than he'd been getting. He was comprehending and retaining what he read only at a seventh grade level.

Cole's father, Mr. Robby Cole said, "We asked [the CHS] teachers every year if Trey really needed to be at a college prep school. At no point did his teachers ever say, 'No, he isn't good enough to be here at Catholic High.' [During a meeting with Mr. Straessle], he suggested that maybe we were missing something, and further testing might need to be done. We just want to express how much Mr. Straessle, all of Trey's teachers, and the staff have put in to make sure Trey became a success story."

Cole soon met Mrs. Mitchener who has moved all over the South and has taught everything from the young children of highly motivated foreign dignitaries to teenagers with severe learning problems who inhabited the "self-contained" trailer classroom of a 1970s public high school.

Cole and Mrs. Mitchener didn't immediately find a connection. Eventually, they began to understand each other. Mrs. Mitchener said, "He figured out that I wasn't stupid. When he realized that what we were doing worked, he began to trust that what I was saying about preparation was true."

Cole said, "After football practice in the summer after my sophomore year, I basically had to re-learn how to read. I had to retrain my brain how to read. It actually took until the beginning of this year until I really saw results. I realized that the tutoring was actually helping. We started it at my reading level."

Trey began doing several of the things Mrs. Mitchener had suggested such as keeping a planner and visualizing the things he was reading. On one occasion, Mrs. Mitchener helped him prepare for a book test, a task he often put off because it was frustrating to him.

Mrs. Mitchener recounted a breakthrough. "He comes in to me that day and he says, 'I can't believe we spent all that time and did all that work. It was just so easy.' I said, 'Trey Cole, listen to yourself. That test was not easy.' That was the first time that he realized that he had to follow through with the preparation [we had talked about] to be successful. He had not done that in the past."

Mrs. Mitchener and Cole worked on organizational skills, memory devices, and reading programs. One program named "Visualizing and Verbalizing" helps students picture exactly what it is they are reading, a skill many people do automatically; however, those with certain learning differences have to undertake this mindfully. Cole's reading proficiency went from a seventh grade level to close to twelfth grade in a little over a year's time.

The reading tutors work in a quiet but busy area on the second floor. Three of four qualified reading specialists work with students with a wide variety of reading issues. Mrs. Mitchener not only helped Cole with reading skills; she also served as a kind of life coach. Cole and Mrs. Mitchener found they had visited the same places and that their families owned farms in the same part of one of the states where Mrs. Mitchener had lived.

"We just found many things they had in common," said Mrs. Mitchener. "He could take criticism from me. I would be talking and he would not be listening. He would say, 'I'm sorry.' I would say, 'What were you thinking about?' He would say, 'Cabo.' I just laughed with him. When he would zone out, I would say, 'Cabo again?'"

Outside of school, Cole continued finding lucrative part time jobs. He has worked with two construction companies over the past two years and currently has a mentor who hired him to work full time after graduation. It's plain to teachers and other adults who have been around Cole that he will be a successful adult.

He also has a plan: "I am definitely not done with school but ready to start the next chapter. I may take a finance or business management class at Pulaski Tech to get the business experience"

[My construction industry mentor] is a really good teacher," said Cole. During spring break, I was working 10-11 hours a day. We'd get done about 5:00 and we'd just sit there and we would talk about work and family. I plan to be on my own in a few years. I'm still figuring out what specifically I want to do, but I really like the custom side of building."

Mrs. Mitchener acknowledges that the school's reading program does not work miracles on its own. She said, "If you get a kid who really wants to work at learning what we have to offer, then he can succeed."

RITES OF SPRING: ROCKET 5K, TIE BURNING, FIELD DAY



Freshman Zachary Greenway leads the pack of Rocket Boys as they make their way up Fr. Tribou Street to the Rocket 5K finish line.



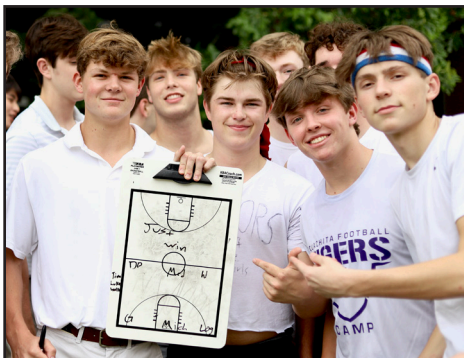
Cross country and track coach Mrs. Jennifer Found (center front) takes a knee to celebrate with members of her team and others who finished the Rocket 5K race on April 15.



The secret formula produced by physics and chemistry teachers worked perfectly for the April 13 tie burning.



Seniors celebrate Fr. Lawrence Frederick's announcement that they could leave campus early after the April 13 tie burning. An elaborate skit featuring "ultimate warriors" followed the annihilation of 700+ ties.



The third annual field day took place on Friday, May 5. Teams chosen by each class battled each other in games of basketball, volleyball, kickball, and a secret event that combined lots of running with solving math and grammar questions. At the end of the planned events, the seniors and sophomores were tied. A literal run-off between sophomore sprinter Mick Kline and senior long-distance runner Elias Found ended with a win for the sophomores. Fr. Patrick Friend, who organized the event, presented the huge trophy to the class of 2025. Photos this page: G. Gowen



CHS CALENDAR:

AUGUST 7, 2023 TO MARCH 9, 2024

- ◇ Monday, August 7: Registration for incoming freshmen
 - ◇ Tuesday, August 8: Registration for sophomores
 - ◇ Wednesday, August 9: Registration for juniors
 - ◇ Thursday, August 10: Registration for seniors
 - ◇ Wednesday, August 16: First day of school
 - ◇ Monday, September 4: School closed for Labor Day
 - ◇ Friday, September 15: Senior Ring Mass (mothers of seniors attend)
 - ◇ Friday, September 29: School closed for Professional Day
 - ◇ Thursday, October 19: Alumni Dinner
 - ◇ Friday, October 20: Homecoming Football Game and Tailgate Picnic
 - ◇ Wednesday, November 1: Senior Father-Son Mass
 - ◇ Saturday, November 4: Ties That Bind Dinner and Auction
 - ◇ Monday, November 20 to Friday, November 24: School closed for Thanksgiving Break
 - ◇ Christmas Break: TBA
 - ◇ School Reopens: TBA
 - ◇ Sunday, January 28: Open House for incoming freshmen
 - ◇ Saturday, February 3: Entrance Exam for incoming freshmen
 - ◇ Saturday, February 10: ACT
 - ◇ Saturday, March 9: SAT
- Be sure that the office has your current email address to receive updates and details for all events.

MR. MASSERY'S MACRO AP TEAM WINS AGAIN



Mr. Dave Massery and his Arkansas Personal Finance Challenge team accept accolades from the student body. Team members were (l to r) seniors Morgan McGeorge, Mason Walsh, William Thomas, and Michael Esbaner. Photos this page: G. Gowen

When the student body has a chance to be together, students and teachers make the most of the moment. After Brother Richard Sanker extinguished the candles at last All-School Mass on April 25, it was time to celebrate a win. For several years, Mr. David Massery has sponsored a team of students in his AP Macro Economics class for Economics Arkansas's Personal Finance Challenge.

This year's team included seniors Morgan McGeorge, Mason Walsh, William Thomas, and Michael Esbaner who took the third place award in the state competition. The competition required the students to consider a fictitious family in financial distress. The team put together a practical plan based on things they had learned from Mr. Massery.

MORE RITES OF SPRING: THE PLAY

Mrs. Carrey Reynolds once again held audiences spell-bound with her production of a dramatic adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Audience members complimented all aspects of the play including Mrs. Reynolds and Mrs. Deanna McGill's set and costume design, the lighting by Mr. Demp Dempsey, and actors' professionalism.



Count Dracula (Owen Fraley) meets *Lucy Seward* (Anna Polk) as her fiancé *Jonathan Harker* (Garin Forcier), *Professor Van Helsing* (Matthew Lamb), and *Dr. Seward* (Jett Holbert) observe.



Miss Wells (Maya Johnson) shares a light romantic moment with *Renfield's attendant Butterfield* (Miles Tillemans).



Harker, *Professor Van Helsing*, and *Dr. Seward* track down *Dracula's last resting place* and prepare to end his reign of terror.

THREE TEACHERS: 81 YEARS OF CHS EXPERIENCE



Mrs. Gretchen Gowen poses with the group she called her “dream team,” the 2022-23 seniors in her journalism class and leaders of the *Rocket Times* and *Liftoff News* staffs: Connor Thompson, Essa Kassissieb, Jake Jansen, Nate Ghidotti, Drew Dillman, Nick Tarini, Phillip Zawislak, Ian Draeger, and Owen Fraley. Photo: Deanna McGill

After a combined 14,985 days in classrooms throughout the school, three teachers gave the last final exams of their CHS careers on May 24. Ms. Bitsi Bonner, Mrs. Gretchen Gowen, and Mrs. Jennifer Wilcox are retiring. They all expressed their love for the school and for their faculty friends, but each feels that the time is right to move on.

Mrs. Wilcox has done many things at the school including leading the school’s lacrosse team and Mu Alpha Theta chapter. In her 16 years here, Mrs. Wilcox has also served as the chair of the math department and an after-school tutor for math students.

With the graduation of her second son, senior Whit Wilcox, Mrs. Wilcox will move on from the classroom. She said, “I’ve always known I’d retire [in 2023],” she said. “The administration always knew I’d be leaving when Whit graduated. Covid has helped me stick to that.”

“I’ll miss my coworkers, interacting with students daily, and those relationships you build with students throughout the year. I love teaching, and I love being in the classroom. I’ll miss that the most.”

“My plan is to run the lacrosse team until another faculty member steps up in the next couple of years,” said Mrs. Wilcox. I’ll also still lead the Europe trip for two more years because there will be students I taught



Mrs. Jennifer Wilcox and her son Wade celebrated both Wade’s 21st birthday and senior Whit Wilcox’s graduation May 19. Photo: G. Gowen

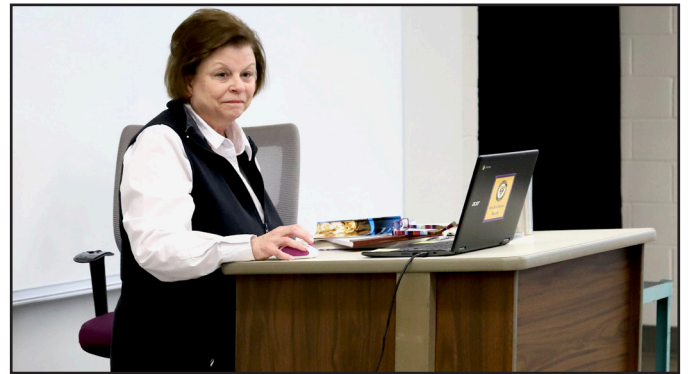
going on the trip. It’s been a great run teaching. I don’t think I’ll ever leave.

“I hope to continue tutoring students outside of school. I’m in no way leaving Catholic High; I’m just leaving the classroom,” said Mrs. Wilcox.

Another of the school’s stalwarts, Ms. Bitsi Bonner, is retiring after 38 years of teaching here. “It’s just time,” she said. “I need to move on and start really enjoying retirement. I want to travel with my kids and spend some more time with them.”

While Ms. Bonner will miss a lot about the school, her fellow teachers are those she will miss most. “I’ll miss my colleagues,” said Ms. Bonner. “I really, really love the people I work with. It’s going to be an adjustment not seeing these people every day, whether that be a faculty meeting or seeing them on a day to day basis.”

Ms. Bonner started as a communications teacher here. “English wasn’t my major, but I had a lot of hours in it. Fr. [George] Tribou asked me if I would teach sophomore English, and I said yes.”



Ms. Bitsi Bonner presides over her honors sophomore English class. Over her 38 years here, Ms. Bonner took on many roles at the school including Quiz Bowl coach, communications teacher, and attendance officer. Photo: Phillip Zawislak

Ms. Bonner is looking forward to retirement, but there are things she will miss. “It’s going to be a big adjustment not to get up and come to teach. I’ve enjoyed my time here, and I’m so glad my teaching career was at Catholic High School; it’s been a blessing for me to teach here.”

Mrs. Gowen taught English and journalism and also served as head of the English department. She is finishing her 27th year at the school. “I wouldn’t have stayed so long if it hadn’t been fun,” she said. “There’s always something interesting going on, and there’s always some crazy random thing to laugh about.”

Some of Mrs. Gowen’s most rewarding experiences were those she spent with journalism students. “I really got to know them well,” she said. “I have had the privilege to be advisor to some very talented writers, some excellent problem-solvers, and a great group of editors over the years. When we go to competitions, everyone knows the Catholic High guys. I’m pleased when some come back to tell me how being a part of the journalism staff has helped them in some way — even if they don’t become journalists.”

Mrs. Gowen agrees with Mrs. Wilcox and Ms. Bonner about friendships among the faculty members. She said, “Catholic High is more than a place to work. It’s more than a school. It’s been our home. The people here will always be our family.”

This article by senior Nathan Ghidotti was reprinted from the May *Rocket Times*.

BEHIND THE SCENES ON GRADUATION NIGHT



Seniors of 2023 sing the Alma Mater for the penultimate time together as they wait to line up. The mood in the library was predictably bittersweet. This would be the last time this group was ever all together talking and laughing.

The last meeting of the class of 2023 officially occurred in the school gym at 7:30 p.m. on May 19. However, beginning around 5:30, boys arrived one-by-one in the school library. They helped each other correctly adjust graduation regalia, gathered in small friend circles, laughed at Brother Richard's carefully prepared joke, listened carefully to last-minute instructions, and refused to say good-bye to one another.



Fellow National Merit Finalists Drew Dillman and Owen Fraley prepare to look great for graduation.



Andrew Weeks entertains his friends Nathan Peacock and Riley Mathionetz as they wait for the graduation ceremony.



Brother Richard Sanker takes his boys for a short walk.



Principal Mr. Steve Straessle shares a moment with Ian Draeger, Nick Tarini, Luke Beall, and Garret Jones. At right: Aidan Moses and John McNally



Photos this page: G. Gowen