



# TROJAN TRADITION

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 8  
MARCH 2018



## Makerspace Grand Opening

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On Tuesday, December 19, Bishop Ahr High School blessed and opened it's new makerspace. The makerspace is the first phase of our science wing modernization project. The blessing ceremony was attended by school leaders, Bishop Checchio, Superintendent Ellen Ayoub, architects, and the donors whose generosity helped make the project a reality. Bishop Ahr High School extend its gratitude especially to Mr. and Mrs. Rasweiler for their generosity, vision, and commitment to Catholic education.

During the ceremony, Sr. Donna spoke to the importance that BGAHS places on keeping up with the ever-changing educational landscape. Bishop Checchio reaffirmed the importance that Catholic education plays in modern society as it strives to form the whole person, starting with academics but also focusing on athletics, arts, spirit, and social opportunities. Mr. Rasweiler addressed the students, stressing how important it is to use what they learn at BGAHS to serve the greater good.

*(Continued on page 2)*



### A message from the Director of Advancement

Check out the 8th Issue of our Alumni Newsletter. Sign up today to be a part of all the great new and exciting things happening with our **Bishop George Ahr/St. Thomas Aquinas Alumni**.

Have any exciting news? A new engagement, wedding, baby, job, sports news, know of an alumni death or need a prayer request?

Tell us, we want to share it and update your contact info at: [dchippendale@bgahs.org](mailto:dchippendale@bgahs.org).

(Continued from page 1)

We look forward to the world-class educational opportunities that the Makerspace and the further science wing enhancements will offer our students in the years to come.

Donations are still being accepted and your support is greatly appreciated. Visit [bgahs.org/donate](https://bgahs.org/donate) to explore giving opportunities. If you wish to purchase one of the items below, please note it in the comment box. If you prefer, you can send a check to:

Bishop George Ahr High School  
 Advancement Office  
 One Tingley Lane  
 Edison, NJ 08820

Science Lab Room	\$150,000
Science Lecture Room	\$100,000
Workbench/Desk Combination (seats 4)	\$50,000
Wall-Mounted Cabinet Unit	\$25,000
Demonstration Table	\$20,000
Demo Table with Fixtures and Side Desk	\$7,500
Mobile Material Storage (steel shelving)	\$5,000
Cascade Mega Tower Open with Casters	\$2,000
Charging Cart (3 shelves)	\$2,000
Tool Box (9 drawers on casters)	\$2,000
Steel Workbench	\$1,500
Industrial Mobile Workbench	\$1,500
Germicidal Cabinet Frey for Googles/Glasses	\$1,500
Top Wood Maple 4 Station	\$1,000
Safety Cabinet	\$1,000
Bench Plate	\$1,000
Hollow Metal Workbench	\$800
Base Elementary 6 Vertical Locker	\$750
Heavy Duty Steel Service Cart	\$500
Revolving Storage Bins	\$500
Desk (Royal 1400 Combination)	\$300
Threaded Rod Storage Cabinet	\$250



**Bishop Checchio, Mr. and Mrs. Rasweiler and Sr. Donna**



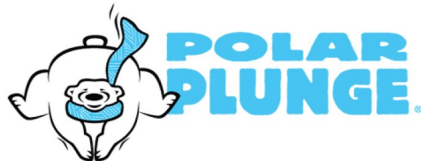
## BISHOP GEORGE AHR HIGH SCHOOL

ONE TINGLEY LANE • EDISON, NJ 08820

Office of the Principal

Sr. Donna Marie Trukowski, C.S.S.F.

March 14, 2018



I am pleased to inform you that we have raised \$51,000 through our Polar Plunge fundraising event, thanks to the generosity of donors like you.

The money will be used to begin the \$1.5 million renovation of our science labs and lecture halls. Our goal is to provide our students with a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment that equips them with the skills needed to succeed at top-tier colleges.

Please know that you remain in my thoughts and prayers as we embark on this exciting new chapter of academic excellence in Catholic education.

With Blessings and Appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Donna Marie".

Sister Donna Maria Trukowski, C.S.S.F.  
Principal



A FULLY ACCREDITED COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF METUCHEN FOUNDED IN 1969.

Bishop George Ahr/St. Thomas Aquinas High School

Soles for



STEM



Science • Technology • Engineering • Math

Have you cleaned out your closet lately?

**Bring us your SHOES!**

**Who:** BGA/STA Alumni and AHR Student Body.

**What:** Donate your gently worn, used and new pairs of shoes.

**(No roller-skates, ice skates, rollerblades or ski boots)**

**Where:** Donation boxes: Place pairs of shoes in the donation boxes set up by room 107 or in rooms 215, 218 and the bookstore.

**When:** **The Kickoff is Monday, March 19, 2018 and goes to April 23, 2018.**

**Why:** To raise money for our **STEM PROJECT**

BGA students bringing in shoes needs to sign-in in rooms 106a, 215, 218 or the bookstore to receive service hours.

(One hour of service will be given for each pair of shoes)

**Special Night drop off:** Tuesday, March 27, 2018 7:00- 8:30pm

**Special Saturday drop off:** Saturday, April 14, 2018 9:00-11:30 am

**(Bring all shoes to the outside Concession Stand by the football field.)**

**Questions? Email: [dchippendale@bgahs.org](mailto:dchippendale@bgahs.org) or call 732-549-1108 x 605**

## BGA Welcome Newest Members of Ahr Star Family



On Thursday, October 5th, Bishop Ahr High School celebrated the 30th year of its Ahr Star program by hosting its annual Ahr Star Spaghetti Dinner. For the past 30 years, the Bishop Ahr community has adopted two children that are chronically or terminally ill, spending the entire year providing love and support for the families. This year, the Ahr Star Spaghetti Dinner, now in its 20th year, raised over \$9,000 for this year's Ahr Stars, with approximately 800 people attending, including students, parents, community members, alumni, and many former Ahr Stars. "The Ahr Star program is a true representation of the heart and generosity of the BGA community. It is truly love in action," said Sister Cynthia Babyak, Campus Minister and leader of the Ahr Star Program.

In July, the Bishop Ahr High School Ahr Star Committee proudly announced that the Ahr Stars for the 2017 - 2018 school year would be David Santos and Sadie Ally.

David is almost 1 year old. His mom is Jacquelyn Hegedus Santos and his dad is Jeremy Santos, both 2005 BGA alumni. "We feel so blessed by the overwhelming support of the Bishop age community," said the parents. Their son David was born with hypoplastic left heart syndrome and while there is no cure, the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia has provided hope with an innovative surgical approach to this type of heart disease. He has already undergone 2 open heart surgeries and more is to come.

Sadie Ally, the cousin of BGA alumnae Megan '16, Emily '16, and Elizabeth '13 Colagrande, is 4 years old and has a Wilms tumor and spots on her lung. She had one of her kidneys removed and continues to undergo treatment. Her brother Connor is 6 years old and her parents are Katie and Craig Ally. "It's an amazing program and we feel so blessed to be a part of it," said Katie Ally. All of the proceeds from the dinner are given to the Ahr Star's families to be used as they would like. At the dinner, David and Sadie were also presented with many gifts, but perhaps their favorite was a football autographed by the varsity boy's football team that was personally presented to the Ahr Stars.

The Ahr Star program at Bishop Ahr is perhaps the most popular service activity for students and faculty. This year, over 250 students and 50 teachers and administrators devoted their time to volunteering at the dinner. When asked about the Ahr Star program, Senior Kelly Harmon said, "It's a wonderful tradition and I'm proud to be a part of it every year. I'll really miss it when I go to college next year." Freshman Anna Caruso remarked that, "It was a phenomenal experience that I'll never forget." Ahr Star co-chairpersons Alexa Romanella '18 and Jude Roche '18 both stated that being able to run this program means the world to them. "It was the best night of my life and seeing them smile made everything worth it!" said Alexa. "It was a great night, I love Ahr star because it's so great to see our community come together," added Jude.

Members of the local community also got involved, with volunteers from the Woodbridge Knights of Columbus helping to cook the meals as they do every year. Also, past and present members of the BGA community donated their services to the dinner; the Roche, Penny, Dama, and Smith families all donated food to the dinner, which was in addition to the donations made by the student body. In fact, the donations were so great that the surplus spaghetti was donated to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, where many BGA students volunteer their time.



## Joy Resounds at Ahr Star Mass



On Friday, December 15, Bishop Ahr High School celebrated the annual Ahr Star Pre-Christmas liturgy. The mass was concelebrated by Bishop James Checchio and Father Keith Cervine in the gym, which was transformed into a beautiful church for the celebration. Music for the liturgy was provided by Mr. Joseph Cullinan '02 along with the talents of the Liturgical Band and Choir. After communion, the much-anticipated and inspiring rendition of "Mary Did You Know?" was performed by Mr. TJ Reilly '96.

The most important attendees at the liturgies were of course the Ahr Stars and their families. Sadie Ally attended with her parents and brother Connor. And though David Santos was unable to attend due to illness, his parents and extended family were present, and he did make a special appearance during the finale via FaceTime.

After the liturgy, Ahr Star Co-Chairs Jude Roche '18 and Alexa Romanella '18, along with members of Ahr Star Board and the Student Council, presented the Ahr Stars and their families with many gifts and tokens of support. All of the gifts were purchased with the money donated by the BGAHS students and monetary gifts were made possible by the money raised at the Spaghetti Dinner. Connor Ally also received special Christmas gifts!

The parents of both Ahr Stars then got up and spoke to the BGAHS community, thanking them for the Ahr Star program, and the love, prayers and support that has been given to them by the Bishop Ahr High School family. David's dad spoke about how meaningful the Christmas season is to them because that is the time that their son David was released from the hospital. And Sadie Ally's mom shared the amazing news that Sadie had finished chemotherapy, news that inspired a standing ovation and brought the audience to tears.

The Ahr Star families stayed to enjoy a special luncheon after which Sadie and the Ahr Star families spent time with faculty, staff, and students. Jude and Connor even played soccer on the hallway.

The Ahr Star Mass is always one of the most anticipated events of the year, and this year was no exception. It is a humbling and heartwarming experience that emphasize and reminds everyone what Christmas is all about. This year's celebration was no different and proved to be just that - a true Christmas celebration.



## Sr. Donna Celebrates 35 Years as Principal of BGAHS



On Wednesday, November 15, Sister Donna Marie Trukowski celebrated her 35th Anniversary as the Principal of Bishop Ahr High School. The morning liturgy in the school chapel was offered for Sister Donna's intentions and the prayer over the PA during homeroom included a prayer of gratitude for Sister Donna and all of the gifts that God has given to her and how she has shared those gifts with the Bishop George Ahr / St. Thomas Aquinas community. The prayer of gratitude invited everyone to be grateful every day for all the opportunities that God provides for us.

Members of the administration, office staff, guidance, and Christian Social Action Club representatives presented Sister Donna with flowers, balloons, gifts, and a delicious cake for all to enjoy. Stolat was sung and wished to her by the group!

Thank you, Sister Donna, from all of us at Bishop George Ahr High School for always supporting, promoting, and being an example to all of us at BGAHS of what it means to be of service to others.

Congratulations Sister Donna Marie Trukowski for your dedication and leadership as principal for 35 years! We are proud to have you as "AHR" principal!

## Amy Kate Byrne 2017 Hall of Fame



It should come as no surprise that BGA's own Ms. Amy Kate Byrne has been chosen for the Marist College Theatre 2017 Hall of Fame!

The Theatre Hall of Fame honors those who have made outstanding contributions to the history of theatre at Marist College. To be inducted into the Hall of Fame, alumni recipients must have a notable ability to collaborate, exceptional work ethic, commitment to quality, and abundant participation in any variety of positions or leadership roles.

We at Bishop Ahr High School know that Ms. Byrne demonstrates all of the qualities and many more. Join us in congratulating her on this noteworthy accolade.

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## Congratulations to Kristen Welsh '15

Dream, Believe and Achieve!!! That is what Kristen Welsh did as she became a Rockette this Christmas Season at Radio City Music Hall. Congratulations again, we are so proud of you!



## In my own words....by Christopher Wilton '16

Over the summer I experienced a day that I will never forget. Many people may not know but when I was born I had open heart surgery at 6 days old at CHOP in Philadelphia. I was so young at the time that I have no memory of what transpired. My family would always tell me stories and show me pictures of me in the hospital. One person who was always mentioned in these stories was the man named Dr. DeCampi. My parents talked about how he was tall, skinny, and so kind to my family. He is the man who performed my emergency surgery and essentially saved my life. After hearing so many stories about him I wanted to meet him for myself! I never got to meet Dr. DeCampi because he moved to a hospital in Orlando Florida called Arnold Palmer Children's Hospital. Over the summer my family and I were going on vacation to Disney world in Orlando. During the time we were on vacation I asked if the hospital Dr. DeCampi worked at was far from where we were staying. Fortunately for us he wasn't far at all. We got in contact with his assistant and she said he would be so happy to meet with us after. My family and I drove to the hospital and his assistant met us in the lobby to take us to his office. We walked in and talked to assistant for a little while and then he walks in. He comes walking in tall, and skinny just as my parents described. He shook my mom, my dad, and my sisters' hands and when he came to me we stared at each for a couple of seconds both in shock to finally meet one another. He stops and says, "You must be Christopher" as he extends his hand. The only thing I could say to him was "thank you." I thanked him and told him how without him I would not be here today. It was an amazing feeling to finally meet him after 19 years and let him know how much he means to me and my family for giving me my life. When it was time to go I found myself saying goodbye with a big smile on my face for finally meeting someone who I consider a hero in my life. Dr. DeCampi was so kind to my family and meeting him is a day I will never forget.



## Pamela Graboso Class of '04 takes to Nicaragua



My name is Pamela Graboso and I graduated Bishop George Ahr High School in 2014. I am currently a senior at New York University College of Dentistry studying dental hygiene. The summer before my senior year, I was chosen to go on a dental outreach through the NYU Dentistry Henry Schein Cares Global Outreach Program. This past September, I spent ten days in Granada, Nicaragua to improve oral health through service, education, and research. My dental team and I visited four different schools throughout Granada and gave oral health education to over 2000 school children. We also examined and put Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) on over 600 school children for research purposes to see the caries prevalence rate in the area. The purpose of Silver Diamine Fluoride is to arrest or stop the growth of caries, also known as cavities. During my two weeks there, I was alternating between giving oral health education and examining and putting Silver Diamine Fluoride on children. We were also able to partner with Colgate Latin America to help with replenishing the toothbrush supply for these school children.

We worked very hard during this outreach, which means we were able to play hard as well. On our days off, we were able to sight see and do tourist things around Granada. We hiked up around the inactive volcano called Mombacho. The sights were breathing taking. Next to Mombacho was Laguna de Apoyo, which was a volcanic crater that turned into a lake. We were able to swim and kayak around for the afternoon. Another day we did a boat tour of the Islets of Granada, the lake contains various islands. Some of these islands have animals such howler monkeys. We were able to see some of them as the approached our boat. After clinic one day, we went to see the active volcano, Maysa. We waited until it was very dark so that we could be able to see the lava. I have never seen an active volcano up close so it was a sight to see.

Being able to be immersed in Nicaraguan culture for ten days really make an impact on me. Upon returning back to New Jersey, I realized I took a lot of things for granted. There was no air conditioning or Wi-Fi. The plumbing is very sensitive and electricity is very expensive in Nicaragua. One of the big things I took for granted was the access to dental care. Access to

dental care is difficult for majority of the people in Granada. There are very few people that have money to spare to seek dental care. If they have a toothache then they will go to the hospital and most likely the tooth will be extracted. Majority of the children that we examined had at least a cavity and has never seen a dentist. When these cavities are not taken care of with proper oral hygiene, it can cause pain and swelling. Sometimes we can save the tooth by cleaning out the decay and filling it with composite material or put Silver Diamine Fluoride, other times we have to extract a tooth or two.

Granada, Nicaragua has left a mark on my heart. I am forever grateful to be chosen to partake in this global outreach. This trip really helped chose that I wanted to have my focus in pediatrics for dental hygiene It really was a once in a lifetime experience. Granada will see me again.



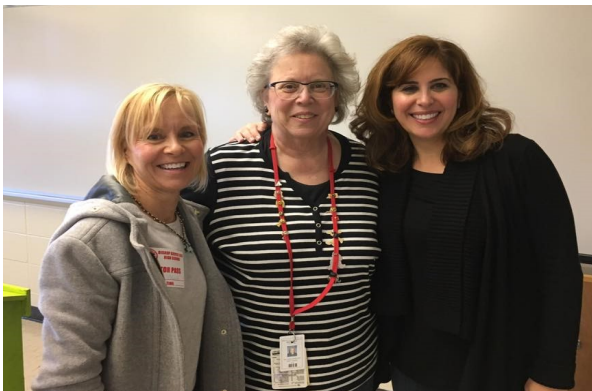
## Karen Angelo Fortunati '82 speaks to English students



On Friday, BGAHS welcomed back alumna Karen Angelo Fortunati '82 to speak to Junior and Senior English students about the path that led her from accounting and law degrees to eventually become a writer.

Her Young Adult book, "The Weight of Zero," is a story of hope for teens who struggle with mental illness. It was published last year and has since earned accolades including the NYPL The New York Public Library's 50 Best Books for Teens 2016, International Literacy Association's Young Adult Honor 2017, and 2016 Cybils Awards Finalist.

Karen said....I Had honor of speaking at my high school Bishop George Ahr / St Thomas Aquinas yesterday! Loved seeing so many of my teachers: Sisters Donna and Cyndi, Ms. Savner, Fay, Stancik, and Mr, O'Connor. And of course, the amazing Ms. Nice! Paul Denk - you were missed! A huge thank you to Susan Paluskiewicz for the invite! Loved every minute of it!



## BGA Teachers Celebrate Milestones of Service

At the conclusion of Catholic Schools Week Mass, we honored the teachers who celebrated milestones of service to Bishop Ahr High School. Join us in congratulating and thanking:

Mrs. Melissa Collazo - 10 years

Mr. Joseph Cullinan - 10 years

Mr. John Karabin - 10 years

Dr. Wojciech Mrozek - 10 years

Mr. Terence Reilly - 15 years

Mrs. Sharon Taub - 15 years

Mr. Harry Ziegler - 15 years

Mrs. Carol Restaino - 20 years

Ms. Cora Medley - 25 years

Mr. Dennis O'Keefe - 25 years

Ms. Marlene Soncuya - 25 years

Ms. Lilly Acab - 30 years

Mrs. Dorothy Machovic - 30 years

Ms. Carol Luzhak - 35 years

Mr. Scott Runkel - 35 years

Mr. John O'Connor - 40 years

Mr. Richard Wicke - 40 years

Ms. Michelle Nice - 45 years



**Mr. John O'Connor**



**Mr. Richard Wicke**



**Ms. Michelle Nice**

# Class of 1987 celebrates 30 years







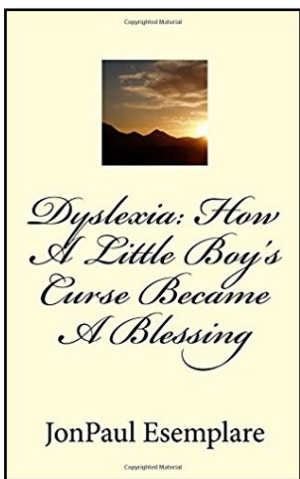
## BGA'S Young Alumni Reconnect At The End of 2017

It was great seeing all of the recent graduates who attended the Young Alumni Social in December as well as the many alumni who have come back to visit this year. The BGAHS faculty always looks forward to seeing our graduates and you are welcome to stop by anytime!



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## Congratulations to JonPaul Esemplare '94 on having your book published.



JonPaul was classified with Dyslexia at a young age during a time when learning disabilities were not widely understood as they are today. There were minimal resources to assist me, unlike today. I asked myself why would God allow a child to go through the struggles like I did at such a young age. It wasn't until I reached my adult years that I understood why. God had made me experience these struggles so that one day I may assist others that may be going through what I did and to share inspiration and basic steps I followed to allow me to succeed.

## Alumni News & Announcements!



Brittany and Michael Kerwin along with their son Logan welcomed Sean Michael Kerwin to their family on November 1st, 2017. Sean weighed 7 lbs 9 oz.. Brittany (Kearns) is an alumni from the Class of '06.

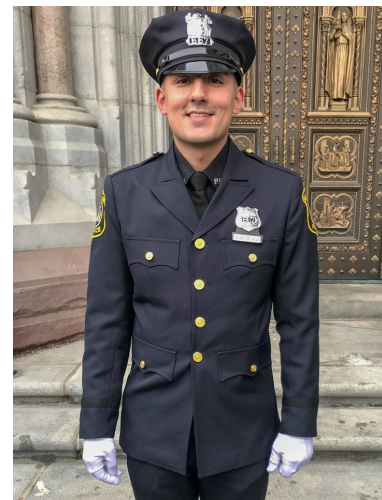


Jillian and Eric Zimmerman are happy to announce the birth of their daughter, Tenley Rose Zimmerman. Tenley was born on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, weighing 7 lbs 13 oz. Jillian (Butvilla) is an alumni from the Class of '03.

### Happy 1st Anniversary!



Deb and James D'Amico were wed on September 24th, 2016 at Saint Bartholomew Church in Scotch Plains, NJ. The wedding reception was held at the Berkley Plaza in Berkley Heights, NJ. The couple had a "mini moon" and spent a week driving up the coast of California. A few months later, they traveled to Thailand for their honeymoon. They currently live in Pequannock, NJ. Deb (Lagano) is an alumni from the Class of **2000**.



Congratulations to Bishop Ahr High School 2010 alumnus Derek Dela Cruz who has become the latest in many BGAHS graduates to join the noble calling of law enforcement. He was sworn in as a Newark officer at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart this past December at Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart.

# Recently Deceased Alumni



Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

**Davis Stanislawczyk - Class of 1981**

**Daniel Wojciechowski - Class of 1980**

**Kathleen Graham - Class of 1974**

**Jennifer Luzhak - Class of 1990**

**Jordan Madsen - Class of 2008**

Visit the website for a complete list of deceased Alumni, Faculty and Benefactors.





## BISHOP GEORGE AHR/ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL

ONE TINGLEY LANE • EDISON, NJ 08820  
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Dear Bishop George Ahr/St. Thomas Aquinas Alumni,

My name is John Roche, a member of the Class of 2006, and I have been asked by Sr. Donna to serve as the Chairperson of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning Committee of Bishop George Ahr/St. Thomas Aquinas High School.

In case you have not yet heard, we will be celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary during the 2019-2020 academic school year. We will be celebrating the fact that Bishop George Ahr/St. Thomas Aquinas High School has been providing a strong Catholic Education in central New Jersey for 50 years. But in order to ensure the word about our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reaches as many alumni as possible we wanted to get the word out now.

I invite you to save the date for the following events which will happen during our anniversary celebration. Additional events will be celebrated throughout the anniversary year.

### Welcome Back Mass and Meet and Greet

Bishop George Ahr High School  
Saturday, September 28, 2019  
from 2pm-6pm  
Mass will begin promptly at 4pm

### Family Christmas Mass

Bishop George Ahr High School  
Saturday, December 28, 2019  
Mass will begin promptly at 6pm

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala and Awards Celebration

Sunday, April 26, 2020  
from 1pm until 4pm  
Location to be determined

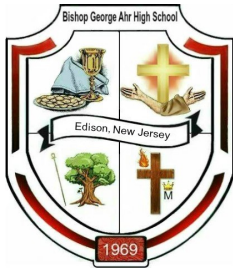
Since we are still in our early planning phases – I am looking for your input and suggestions. If you have any ideas for ways to celebrate our rich history, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am also asking for your help to get the word out to our 10,000 plus alumni. If you are able to assist us in getting the word out – would you please consider being a Class Representative. Please email me at [jroche@bgahs.org](mailto:jroche@bgahs.org) if you are able to help.

Please take this as your personal invitation to reconnect with us and to celebrate the fifty years of Catholic Education that has been provided at One Tingley Lane. I hope to see you at one of our celebrations.

Sincerely,



John Roche '06  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee Chair



# “Infinite Possibilities”

## Upcoming BGA Events

April 17th - Open House

April 25th & 26th - Spring Concert 7:30 pm

April 27th - Pocketbook Bingo

May 3rd - Annual Golf Outing

May 31st - Baccalaureate Mass - 3:00 pm  
St. Helena's Church

June 2nd - Graduation 12 noon (Ticketed event)

## Office of Advancement

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**Editor-In-Chief: Marie Smith**

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