

# Marian Catholic ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



MARCH 2022



## MORE THAN JUST A CHAPLAIN, FATHER BRIAN MILLER HAS TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON STUDENTS' LIVES

The Rev. Brian Miller is a familiar face on the sidelines of sporting events, but his presence is felt in his day-to-day interactions with a student body within the halls of Marian Catholic High School.

Miller, chaplain at Marian for the past five years, is pastor at St. Joseph the Worker and St. Charles Borromeo Catholic churches in Frackville and Ashland.

He says he's doing "what I was called by God to do."

"The chaplain position is so important to our identity as a faith-based Catholic high school, and we are blessed to have a fantastic one in Father Miller," said

Head of School Michael Brennan.

"Father's relationships with our students, staff and school community go far beyond his school duties, as he is often seen celebrating Mass with our athletic teams before games, and rarely ever misses an event involving our students."

"A Reading boy," as he describes himself, Miller graduated from Central Catholic High School in 1999 and was ordained in 2010. "I wasn't a Coal Cracker," he said, "but when I was assigned here in Schuylkill County, I accepted it willingly. I always try to be open to whatever the bishop and diocese want me to do. I never had an assignment I didn't like."

He tells the story that despite having two parishes, the bishop told him he was also being assigned to be the chaplain at Marian "because he (the bishop) said he wanted to give me something to do."

Brennan added, "Father serves as a role model, spiritual adviser and friend to our community, all while juggling his duties as the pastor of two local parishes. His guidance to me as I began my journey as Head of School was so critical in helping me with my transition, and he does so much more for our students, teams, staff and community. We are extremely lucky and grateful to have him here at Marian Catholic."

"Unless you're inside the building, you wouldn't think to realize the great impact Father has had on this school and the people inside it," noted Marian's longtime teacher, AD and coach Stan Dakosty. He added, "Not only is he a great spiritual leader, but he's an extraordinary example for our young adults and our faculty on how life should be lived as Christians, and he has impacted many, many people in many, many ways."

Miller said, "High school is just like a parish, but it has a different set of blessings and problems. It's one demographic. In a parish, you deal with parishioners from age 95 to newborn and they all have their own sets of needs and challenges. In a high school setting, it's a little simpler because you're dealing with one age group."

The door to Father Miller's office on the second floor of the school became a place where students felt comfortable being.

"You'd be surprised how many kids will knock on my door and ask, 'Can we talk?'" he said. The answer is always a resounding, "Yes."

"It feels good that they want to have that relationship," he said, adding, "It's great, actually...I've found teenagers are much deeper than what people perceive. They don't want to be afraid. They don't want to have anxiety in their lives, so sitting down and talking to them is like using me as an instrument in their lives. That's what I was called by God to do."

According to Fr. Miller, he is always ready, willing and able to share time with the students. As a result, he said, "Their lives might be changed, but it's always a gradual process. We often see them making progress in their lives, helping them to see different problems and to learn how to handle them. It feels great to see a young boy or girl growing like they do."

Under his watch and direction, and assisted by faculty member Patrick

Smith, director of campus ministry, Marian plans an entire year of retreats for its students.

A freshmen retreat, Miller said, involves bringing in a group of college students who gear their presentation to high schoolers. The event, he said, helps the first-year students emotionally, "because if you're an incoming freshman, you're moving from being a kid in grade school to the high school setting, and you may need help with the transition. They're basically going from being a young child to more of a grown up."

The priest said the chaplaincy program at Marian includes a "discernment retreat," which allows the students to "discern God's role in their lives."

He described the retreat as being "three hours in which we discuss the art of making decisions with incorporating prayer and God into those decisions."

Similarly, during the Advent and Lent seasons, mini-retreats allow the students to reflect on those seasons, while other retreat opportunities include the students joining Father Miller and three faculty members on a two-day trip to the Malvern Retreat House, where the participants, the priest said, "improve their relationships between themselves, others and God."

Students are required to participate in two retreats per year. One of them is on Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, when all students, faculty and staff pause to honor Mary, the patroness of the school. The daylong event includes speakers, Mass, adoration and confessions.

Father Miller said the retreats "allow the boys and girls as persons to grow and mature." He said, "When I see where teens are hurt, my approach is to provide them an opportunity for healing when they are dealing with self-esteem issues, fear, loneliness and other problems."

And while Marian's enrollment includes non-Catholics, Father Miller said his goal



as a Catholic priest is to "adhere to teachings of the church." "But," he added, "I respect the beliefs of non-Catholics and honor their pursuit of God. I have nothing but respect for their beliefs. My purpose is to inspire and motivate the young lives before me."

"Father oversees the spiritual growth and development of our students," Smith related. "He celebrates Mass for our students once a week, and offers opportunities for confession, spiritual direction and guidance." The priest's work, Smith said, "offers our students opportunities for spiritual and personal growth."

He added, "In addition, Father takes time out of his busy schedule to teach our senior theology classes and he is always available for all of our students. He can be found in the hallways and cafeteria, checking in on our students and at games cheering on our student-athletes, and even celebrating pre-game masses for many of our athletic teams."

Smith said Father Miller is "a dynamic chaplain who goes above and beyond for the spiritual and personal growth of each and every one of our students here at Marian."

With two parishes, Miller's day is a hectic one. He describes some days as "Mass, a funeral and high school, during which time there are a wide range of emotions."

"To be a good student and to excel, you have to be mentally, physically and emotionally ready. ... I kind of provide the spiritual part of that. God called me here," he said.

## DISTRICT 11 TO ENSHRINE COACH DAKOSTY

District 11 of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) will honor our own Coach Stan Dakosty in April when the legendary coach is inducted into its Hall of Fame.

He will join 1985 Marian Catholic graduate Diane Decker in the District Hall of Fame. She was inducted in 2018.

The induction ceremony is long overdue, as it was postponed due to COVID-19.

When the district enshrines Dakosty, it will be inducting the coach with the most wins as a head coach in the entire district.

Head coach from 1977-2016, and currently the man in charge since 2020, Stan has compiled a record of 315-166-3. He has a .650 winning percentage, 35 .500 or better seasons and only 7 losing seasons.

Of course, during his career, the hallmark of the Colts program is the PIAA Class A State Championship we won in 1990. Dakosty also guided the Colts to an undefeated season (13-0 in 1986) and a 25-game winning streak (1985-87).

One of only 12 coaches in Pennsylvania to win 300 or more games, his teams appeared in 46 playoff games, recording a 29-17 record



(56.5% winning percentage).

In addition to these accomplishments, he piloted our teams to three PIAA Eastern runnerup finishes (93-88-00); seven District 11 championships (85-89-93-98-00-07-15); 6 District 11 runnerup finishes (88-96-97-06-14-16); 4 Eastern Conference championships (80-86-92-13); and 2 Eastern Conference runnerup finishes (81-02).

Dakosty was inducted into the Schuylkill County Coaches Hall of Fame, the Pennsylvania State Coaches Hall of

Fame and the Carbon County Sports Hall of Fame.

In 1990, he was named Associated Press Pennsylvania Coach of the Year

He was head coach of the 1992 Pennsylvania team in Big 33 Classic (38-0 win over Maryland); is a past president of Pennsylvania State Coaches Association; and is a past High School Advisory Committee member of the American Football Coaches Association.

Between 250-300 of his players went on to play college football.

## CONGRATS COACH PATTON

Current Marian Catholic High School boys' basketball coach John Patton became the winning coach in Marian history in terms of "wins" this year, passing the record of immediate past coach Mick Stefanick.

Patton, who has been at the helm of the Colts since 2010, won his 166th game on January 13 against Schuylkill

Haven, taking over the top spot in his 13th year on the job. His record to date is 175-105.

During his tenure, the Colts won two District 11 championships, in AA in the 2016-2017 season and in A in the 2010-2011 campaign. They also won Schuylkill League Division III titles in three seasons (2010-2011, 2016-2017 and 2019-2020).

Stefanick piloted the Colts from 1999-2010 and compiled a record of 165-124.

Other head boys' coaches at Marian Catholic and their records are:

Hugh "Wink" Gallagher, 149-170 from 1954-1969; Dave McAndrew, 136-35 from 1993-1999; Bob Fulton, 127-54 from 1969-1976; Sid Llera, 114-90 from 1982-1990; Tom Sheehan, 52-29 from 1976-1979; Bob Schlosser, 50-15 from 1979-1981; Joe DeAngelo, 39-21 from 1990-1992; Neil Kennedy, 20-6 from 1992-1993; and Bernie Forgetch, 19-19 from 1981-1982.



Marty Cichowic, front, with his family, from back, daughter Heather, wife Lori and son Marty III.

## **CLASS OF '79 MEMBER IS CONTINUING LEGACY STARTED BY HIS GRANDFATHER OVER 100 YEARS AGO**

The tradition of continuing a business started by your ancestors might be considered somewhat normal, but when a particular business celebrates its 100th anniversary, that's special.

It's what Marty Cichowic Jr., MCHS Class of 1979, is feeling these days in the Borough of McAdoo where the company he owns and operates, Ace Rug Works, is celebrating its centennial anniversary.

"I'm proud to be part of this history and I'm only hopeful that the previous generations are looking down at us with pride as well," Marty said.

Cichowic and his family continue the art his grandfather Peter began way back in

the 1900s, producing durable throw rugs on looms he crafted in his small shop in the Schuylkill County community.

And he credits is Marian education with helping him set the stage for a productive and meaningful adulthood. "Marian was the building blocks for life," Marty said. "My education there taught integrity and social morals that could be taken to everyday life as well as business environments, patience and perseverance to deal with life's difficulties, and of course diplomacy."

Marty added, "The fact that we're celebrating 100 years is special. When I think about it, an average age of death is 79 years old here in 2022, and in the past

years it was much less - 1962 it was about 70. I can only guess what it was when the business was when it was started in 1921.

"With that in mind, it shows the tenacity of the Cichowic Family in continuing what our grandparents started. I would love to hear what they think about 100 years!"

Cichowic is well-known in the area. As a businessman, he sells the throw rugs in a wholesale manner from the East to West coasts, and points in between, including at a seasonal stand at the every-popular Hometown Farmer's Market, craft shows and at the family's floral shop in their hometown.

Ace Rug Works had its start when Peter Cichowic, then a maintenance employee at the former Duplan Silk Mill, Hazleton, created the looms his grandson still uses today. A self-taught machinist, he was fascinated with machines, Marty said, and developed the looms to use in the carpet-making business.

He recalled how people would bring their scraps of old clothing and sheets to his grandfather, asking him to make rugs out of the material. It was the beginning of what is now known as "rag rugs."

Marty said the rugs became a popular household item, and still are today.

Cichowic grew up working in the shop. His duties included preparing shuttles with long strips of material to run through the loom for a couple of hours a day. When his dad, the late Marty Sr., who died in 2011, continued the business his grandfather started, Marty would spend his off-time and weekends in the shop with his father.

Cichowic said the business saw many changes through the years, including its number of employees, and material they were able to use. Because of regulatory concerns, the family, for instance, was no longer able to accept clothing and material from families. Labor regulations, Marty said, also prompted them to continue their operations on a "family-only basis."

The shop once employed over 60 people from the northern Schuylkill County area through the 1960s, he said, but those government regulations resulted in the Cichowics going to an "in-house workforce" that keeps the business small.

Marty said, "My father always said 'the bigger you get, the bigger your problems are going to be.'"

He said the words of wisdom of his later father helped him to learn the hard way what happens when a small business grows and spreads itself too thin.

Marty and his wife, Lori, also own who manages Floral Creations in McAdoo, a flower shop started by Marty's mother Dolores in 1971. That business is now over 50 years old and spans two generations.

The couple has two adult children, Heather and Marty III. Both helped Ace Rug when they were younger and continue to do so as adults, assisting there on breaks from school or work.

The company sells standard rag rugs in a simple stripe, which they believe Peter may have fashioned after an old Mennonite pattern. The rugs are 27 inches wide and come in three lengths - 26-, 54- and 72-inch.

The shop also does a "Hit and Miss" multi-colored rag rug made from the odd



*The art of rug-making is displayed by the late Marty Cichowic Sr.*

pieces and colors of fabric that are left over, and a shag rug crafted from heavy-weight, fringed upholstery material. Both are 27 inches by 42 inches in size.

The business, Marty said, has helped keep the family together. "It's been great to expose the next generation to the business our family has maintained since the 1920s. Will it continue with our children? I can only say, 'It's up to them.' We might have to wait until the 150th anniversary to see what their decision will be."

As Ace Rug moves from the third to fourth generation for now, "It's all family," Marty said. "It's all about working together as a family."

## '22-'23 ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN IS UNDERWAY

The Marian Catholic Alumni Association membership campaign for '22-23 is underway. Joining the association is just one way in which alumni can express their pride in the education they received at Marian Catholic. Join our Alumni Association today for a nominal membership fee of \$10 per year. In an era when Catholic schools are facing continuous challenges that have prompted many to close their doors, our alumni strive to be there for the next generation and for years to come. If each of us can do just a little, together we can do great things for our Alma Mater! Learn more at [www.mariancatholic.org/alumni](http://www.mariancatholic.org/alumni).

## MARIAN STUDENTS CONTINUE TO SHOW THEY CARE FOR OTHERS

At Marian Catholic High School, we're proud to offer our students "an exceptional education rooted in faith, family and tradition," as our motto suggests.

We're also proud of how our students rise to the occasion and throughout the year show how they care for others and have a willingness to help the less fortunate.

The latest example is how students in our Catholic Relief Services club are raising money for the Ukraine through the Rice Bowl project, a fundraiser launched every year during Lent.

"We normally don't advertise it a lot," Marian's Head of School Michael

Brennan said of the effort, which the students completed in light of the tragic circumstances the people in Ukraine are facing with the invasion there of Russian forces, and in consideration of there being a number of Ukrainian churches in our area.

Brennan pointed to St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church in McAdoo. The church has been open around the clock since the Russian invasion, and it recently began broadcasting its prayers to the people of Ukraine.

Marian draws some students from McAdoo, where, according to an Ancestry Map of Ukrainian Communities, 5.9% of residents

claim Ukrainian heritage.

For the Rice Bowl program, students use small cardboard boxes shaped like bowls to collect change and bills throughout the Lenten season.

Brennan said students in the club tossed around a few ideas, then decided to donate everything to Ukrainian causes.

The Rice Bowl project was created by Catholic Relief Services, the official relief and development agency of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Donations support the work of CRS in more than 100 different countries each year. Since its inception in 1975, CRS Rice Bowl has raised nearly \$300 million.

## IN MEMORIAM

*Marian Catholic High School alumni and friends are asked to keep in their thoughts and prayers the families of the following:*

**Mrs. Catherine Amant**, 73, of Lower Macungie Township, passed away on March 2, 2022. She was the wife of Joseph Amant. Raised in Jim Thorpe, she was a daughter of the late John and Gwen (Hill) Gillespie and graduated in 1966 from Marian Catholic High School.

**John J. Horvath Sr.**, 74, of Summit Hill, passed away on March 6, 2022. He was the husband of Cheryl Anne (Castle) Horvath. He was a 1965 graduate of Marian Catholic High School.

**Patrick J. Love**, 60, of Tamaqua, passed away on Feb. 21, 2022. He was the husband of Sheralee Wilson. A son of Patrick and Barbara (Puchinsky) Love of Tamaqua, he was the brother of Sean Love, 1987 graduate of Marian.

**Jean Ann Matweecha**, 63, of McAdoo, passed away on Feb. 17, 2022. She was the mother of Megan Jean Majetsky, our Class of 2002 representative.

**Michael W. Papesh**, 71, of Coaldale, passed away on Feb. 11, 2022. He was the husband of Catherine (Keer) Papesh and was a 1968 graduate of Marian Catholic High School.

**Michael F. Pogwist**, 53, of Tamaqua, passed away on March 8, 2022. He was the husband of Cari (Corneliussen) Pogwist and a son of Michael Pogwist of Tamaqua and the late Patricia A. (Heller) Pogwist. He was a 1986 graduate of Marian Catholic High School.

**Mary Marcella Rigotti**, 80, of Tamaqua, passed away on Feb. 8, 2022. A daughter of the late Onorato and Madelene (Jasper) Rigotti, she was a graduate of Marian Catholic High School.

### ***We know our alumni are proud about the education they received at Marian Catholic!***

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Go [www.mariancatholic.org](http://www.mariancatholic.org) and click on "Alumni" and "Join" to become a member today!



## ANNUAL POLAR PLUNGE IS SUCCESSFUL AGAIN; 'BE COOL FOR OUR SCHOOL' RAISES FUNDS FOR MCHS

*Note: the following article providing coverage of the annual Polar Plunge sponsored by the Marian Blue and Gold Club appeared in the Times News, Lehighton.*

"Sometimes you just gotta challenge yourself."

Those words by Anne Riotto of Barnesville explains why she and others jumped in the Mauch Chunk Lake Saturday during the ninth annual Polar Plunge to benefit Marian High School of Hometown.

She later posted on Facebook. "The air was so cold and, even though the water was significantly warmer than the air temp, it didn't matter because about 2 seconds after you pop your head out of the water and tell yourself, "OK, that was OK. That was the worst of it."

Then she said, "You start the swim back to shore and realize, "No ... no, that doesn't seem to have been the worst of

it. This part is definitely the worst of it."

But then you get out of the water, into the wind, and you're like, "Do I even recognize the concept of 'worst' anymore? And why don't I have feet? I think I left my feet in the water."

Riotto and her daughter were two of 31 people who took part in the plunge. Sixteen chickens supported them from the lakeside beach.

The thermometer on the wall read 16 degrees, and it did warm up a bit, but the wind chill factor made it much worse.

While not for everyone, this type of event does bring out the adventurous.

"I actually started this for St. Joe's (Jim Thorpe)," said Kathy Goff, organizer and coordinator. "It was my neighbor's idea, Bob Shaninger. When St. Joe's closed, this event was near and dear to my heart, so we decided to bring it over to Marian. I'm a Marian grad, both my kids ... one is

a Marian student, the other graduated in 2020."

Normally the event is held the last Saturday of January to coincide with the start of Catholic Schools Week. However, due to the extreme cold and wind that Saturday, it was postponed until Feb. 5.

The Blue and Gold Club, the fundraising arm of the school, will use the money at Marian where needed. Some areas where previous donations were used include scholarships, sports uniforms and equipment, and for the high school band.

Those who braved the cold water were awarded a T-shirt and of course, bragging rights for making the jump.

Afterward, Jenna Goff and Lauren Reaman, both students at Marian, explained why they took part.

"We did it last year," Goff said. "The adrenaline's great!"

"Why not?" Reaman added.

## LET US HEAR FROM YOU

We're interested in hearing from alumni and would like to share news about your families, careers, etc. with your classmates and friends. Whether you are planning a reunions or just want to locate a classmate, send us an email at [alumni@mariancatholics.org](mailto:alumni@mariancatholics.org) and we will be more than happy to help you reunite with the Marian Catholic family.



[WWW.MARIANCATHOLICS.ORG](http://WWW.MARIANCATHOLICS.ORG)    

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