



#### Skutt Catholic Robotics Take on the World

by Tom Jensen

The place was Dallas, Texas. The setting was the 2009 VEX World Robotics Championship. During the closing awards, the announcer challenged every team there to go recruit a new school to start a VEX Robotics team. In response to the challenge issued at the World Championship, current Skutt Catholic parent Tom Jensen sent a note to Mr. Slattery to inquire about starting a robotics team. Beginning in the fall of 2010 the Skutt Catholic Robotics Team was formed under the guidance of science teacher Mr. Kerry Black and team mentor Mr. Tom Jensen.

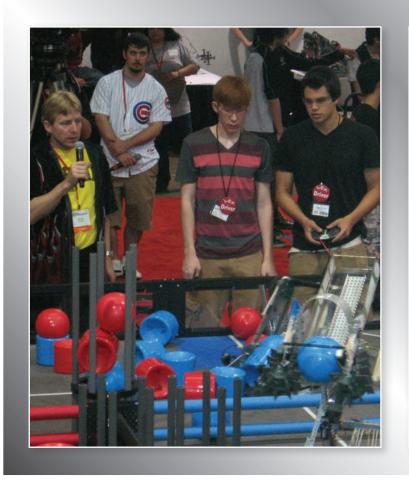
Robotics teaches a STEM curriculum: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. But it also teaches so much more: teamwork, problem solving, volunteerism, giving, sharing, and other life skills are all part of the robotics culture. Adults become involved in Robotics because they believe they are investing in the future, that the students involved will be the scientists and engineers of tomorrow. But they will also be the doctors, business people, tradesmen, and parents of tomorrow. Robotics gives them valuable life skills.

continued on page 2



#### Inside this Issue

Cover Story - SC Robotics Take on the World 2
President's Letter
Alumni Board President's Letter 4
Alumni Updates
Event Updates
Class of 2012
Roots & Wings
Synthetic Turf Project
SkyHawk Sweethearts
Around SC 17





Jon Burt



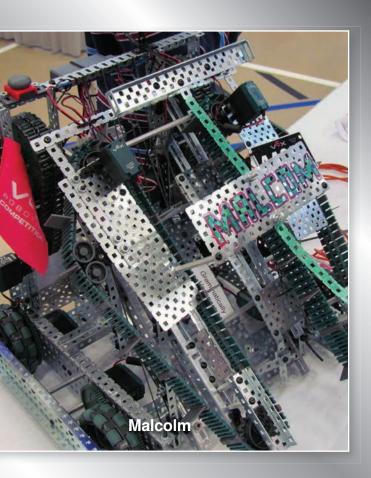
Fr. Jeff Mollner

### Skutt Catholic Announces New Administrative Posts

We are pleased to announce that Patrick Slattery has named Jon Burt as Principal of Skutt Catholic High School. He takes over the position from Patrick Slattery who has served as Skutt Catholic's President/Principal since 2006. Burt, who was hired at Skutt Catholic in 2004, served as Assistant Principal for the past three years. Prior to his administrative role, he taught English and theology at Skutt Catholic. He has 14 years teaching experience and carries a BA in English, Theology, and Art History from the University of St. Thomas, a M.Ed. from the University of Notre Dame, and has his training in Educational Leadership from Creighton University.

Patrick Slattery will remain the President of the school, focusing more of his attention on advancement opportunities. As Skutt Catholic enters its 20th year, Slattery is tasked with ensuring that the high school continues to exist as a vibrant, innovative, and state-of-the art institution for the next generation of students and families choosing to support the Skutt Catholic mission. Slattery has 17 years teaching experience. He received his BA in Mathematics from Holy Cross College in Worcester, and his M.Ed. from Harvard University.

Fr. Jeff Mollner has been named the full-time chaplain at the school. He spent the 2011-12 school year splitting time between Skutt Catholic and St. Stephen the Martyr Parish where he served as assistant to the pastor. In addition to offering daily and all school Masses; Fr. Mollner takes an active role in counseling students, planning retreats, and guest speaking in theology classes. Fr. Mollner also serves as a member of Skutt Catholic's administrative team.



COVER STORY

## Skutt Catholic Robotics Take on the World

Skutt Catholic had 15 robotics students this year and three robot teams were formed. The school also hosted the world's first Skills Only Challenge. Robot teams can earn an invitation to the World Championship by finishing with a top 30 score in the programming skills challenge or in the robot driver skills challenge. Prior to Skutt Catholic hosting the first Skills Only Challenge, skills could only be attempted at a regional tournament. SC was a pioneer in this format, which caught fire and was duplicated all over the world as the season went on. Skutt Catholic also hosted a CREATE Junior robotics tournament for 4th and 5th grade students.

A VEX Robotics tournament consists of a judges interview, five or six qualification matches, and skills challenges. Teams are randomly paired against each other for qualification matches. These matches start with a 20 second autonomous period where robots must move based on a pre-programmed routine (Ed. Note: is it gauche to pre-program your robot to do the robot?) This is followed by a two-minute driver controlled period where robots try to score more points than their opponents. Each year the game objects are different sizes, shapes, and weights, requiring new designs and strategies. Next year, the game objects are beanbags that must be lifted into elevated goals. Past objects have been; balls that had to be put into goals of varying heights, rings that had

to be put on posts, and softball and football-sized foam balls that had to be hurled over a wall. Most games allow de-scoring too, where you can remove your opponents' objects from a goal. This makes for a lot of strategizing and choices.

Teams are ranked based upon their performance during these matches. Then eight top ranked teams invite other teams to join them in a permanent alliance for the 8-team tournament bracket finals to determine the winner. Judges give other awards as well, such as design, programming, and so on. The Excellence Award is given to the overall top robot in a competition. This award carries more prestige than winning the tournament on the field.

#### Do you build the robots?

Students build the robots from scratch each year. Each robot contains thousands of parts, from nuts and bolts to large pieces of metal, to wiring, zip ties, gears, wheels, tank treads, batteries, motors, sensors, the robot brain, and so on. There are restrictions to overall size, number of motors and sensors, but otherwise each robot is very unique.

#### What did the teams name their 'bots? Or is that frowned upon?

The three teams were named **Men of Steel, Grammatically Uncorrect,** and **[insert cliché here]**. Two of the teams named their robots, Maverick and Malcom (Malcom was renamed Malcom II, after a big re-build).

#### What do you do during robotics practice?

Adults guide and advise during practice, but the students do all the work. They also teach each other skills like programming, design, engineering calculations, and so on. Most practices in the beginning of the year are design and then building becomes the focus. Finally, toward the end of the year it is tweaking. The robot process is iterative: design, build, test, re-design, fix, test.... just like in the real world of production.

It seems like the perfect stage for chaos. Has anything gone terribly wrong or do you have any "only in robotics" anecdotes from competition? Sometimes robot karma is not on your side. During the Nebraska State Championship, two things happened that had never happened before or since (to anyone, not just Skutt Catholic Robotics). First, two game objects were rolling around and happened to come together at the exact second that our robot moved toward a goal. The objects got pinned together and pushed under the robot, which lifted the wheels off the ground, making the robot 'dead' for the match. Second, you must understand that parts and pieces can and do fall off during competition: usually nuts and small pieces, but sometimes bigger pieces. During a match, a piece of zip tie came off another robot and flew in the air, landing exactly where two gears met on our robot. This jammed the gears and made the robot unable to use either of the wheels on one side.

One last thing happened during the U.S. National Championships: when a match ends, you cannot touch your robot until the referee has given the "all clear." This allows points to be totaled and the referees to confer and declare the match "official." After the **Men of Steel** completed their match, but before the all clear was given, a team at the next field realized their battery was dead. They had no time to run back and get another, and were in serious danger of not being able to compete. Our students grabbed the battery from their robot that just finished competing and lent it to the other team so they could compete. The referee had warned our team that if they touched their robot before the all clear, they could be disqualified. The SC boys did not hesitate to pull their battery anyway, risking their own disqualification to help another team. They were not disqualified, and they won the U.S. National Sportsmanship Award for their actions.



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#### President's Letter



Patrick Slattery President

The average Catholic high school in Omaha has more than 80 years of history. Three of those schools can boast more than 100 years of tradition. Their alumni span generations, and their current student body is comprised of a strong number of children of alumni.

V.J. and Angela Skutt Catholic High School will soon begin its 20th year of educating young women and men. We are the youngest high school in the Archdiocese and are years away from enrolling any children of alumni. Yet our enrollment is among the strongest of all schools. Our college-preparatory curriculum is the most comprehensive with more than 150 courses, including honors, AP, and Dual Enrollment courses. Our extracurricular program has won the All-Sports Award six out of the last eight years. Our ACT averages are at an all-time high, and the school is a finalist for the U.S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon Award for exemplary schools, with final determination to be announced in September. Our tuition is the second most affordable and our annual tuition increase percentage is the lowest among the eight Catholic high schools in the metro. More Skutt Catholic students are ordained as lectors and EMHC's every year compared to other schools in the state.

The data person within me could continue with a litany of statistics that evidence the fact that Skutt Catholic has established itself as a leader in Catholic, college-preparatory education in the mid-west. Although statistics do help measure success, the greatest metric of our school's success over the past two decades is our alumni. Although young compared to our counterpart schools, our alumni have accomplished so much in such a short period of time. Over the past several years, "Our Legacy" has highlighted our many alumni that are becoming leaders in the fields of medicine, law, engineering, and the arts, among many others. Our alumni are active in

their parishes and remain faithful to our Church. They are living out our mission of empowering others, promoting justice, and initiating change by continuing to volunteer locally and abroad. It's one thing for a school to promote the statistics of its recent graduates, but a whole other metric of success to show that years later, those former students are serving as productive members of our society.

I am continually amazed to hear of the wonderful accomplishments of our alumni. The number of recent grads that are completing college on time and starting their master's degrees is phenomenal. The number of graduates that are excelling in their profession is tremendous. The number of graduates that are returning to Skutt Catholic each year for Homecoming, Angel Flight, or the *Flight for Excellence* Golf Tournament is continually on the rise. It is the people within this school community that truly serve as evidence to our school's success over the past 19 years. Skutt Catholic graduates are well on their way to becoming a part of Omaha's landscape. They are building a reputation based on intelligence, hard work, and a commitment to their Catholic faith. After all, our alumni are our legacy.

This fall, as we begin our 20th year of educating young women and men, I want to thank the many alumni who have forged this record of success beyond the walls of Skutt Catholic. As much as I like to share "data" of the successes our students achieve today, it's truly those successes that come later in life that should serve as the greater measure of a school's value to students. Carrying our mission forward in the years after commencement, keeping your Faith in God, making a difference in all that you do – these are worthy attributes when it comes to the legacy of an SC education.

Our 20th year promises to be an exciting and accomplished one at Skutt Catholic, and we look forward to including our alumni, SC families, and friends as we celebrate this landmark year. May God bless you in these summer months, and we look forward to the fall when we will welcome everyone back to campus for the 20th time.

Sincerely,
Patrick Slattery
President

#### Alumni Board President's Letter

Greetings from the Skutt Catholic Alumni Board!

Since the last time I wrote to you the Skutt Catholic Alumni Board has been working hard to continue the growth of the association and engage with alumni of all ages. We've also had some exciting changes to our Board: Ashley Rasmussen Hinze '02 is our new secretary and co-chair for the *Flight for Excellence* golf tournament, which was held in June. Ashley has been an active member in the Skutt Catholic community since she graduated, and we are excited to have her as part of our team.

Also, Elizabeth Tulipana '00 joined the Skutt Catholic staff in February as the Director of Advancement Events and Alumni Relations. Elizabeth's experience and creative style has already brought a new perspective and many great ideas to the association.

Since 2007, the Alumni Association has awarded two SC juniors a \$500 scholarship to the college of their choice. Along with the scholarship money these students commit to being their class representative on the alumni board. They attend alumni association meetings, help with alumni fundraisers and events like bake sales and *Flight For Excellence*, and take the lead on planning their 10-year reunion.

Students who are interested go through an application process that consists of submitting two letters of recommendation, a copy of their transcript, and a list of activities they are involved in. Each applicant is brought in for an interview with Alumni Association executive committee members and SC staff. Every year we have a difficult decision choosing from the outstanding students who apply and this year was no exception. It's amazing to hear what these students love about SC (overwhelmingly: the teachers) and how involved they are in this school (they must never sleep!) This year I am happy to announce the 2012 scholarship winners are Austin Evans and Amanda Olson.

In addition to choosing our scholarship winners, the alumni board was busy with the Alumni Basketball Tournament in March and planning the annual *Flight for Excellence* Golf Tournament at Pacific Springs in June. This year we decided to host the class of 2002's 10-year reunion on the same weekend as the golf tournament hoping to raise attendance at both events. It was a fantastic weekend of friends, food, and fun for everyone. I hope those of you who couldn't join us this year can join in on the fun next year.



Alumni Association President Kelsey Sievers '09



Amanda Olson and Austin Evans accept their Alumni Association Ambassador Scholarship at the Junior Awards Banquet in May

#### **Upcoming Events:**

- Angel Flight: "Under Southern Skies" on Saturday, September 15, 2012
- All-Alumni Homecoming Event (free!) on Friday, October 5, 2012

The class of 2003 will celebrate their 10-year reunion next year; if anyone is interested in planning the reunion please let us know. Applications for the Outstanding Alumni Award are available and the 2012 winner will be honored at Angel Flight in September, visit SC's website to find out more. Watch for more information through email, mailings, and Facebook. If you're interested in becoming more involved or volunteering with any of our upcoming events please email me at skuttcatholicalumni@gmail.com

I hope everyone has a fun and safe summer and I look forward to seeing you often during the next school year as we celebrate Skutt Catholic's 20th anniversary.

God Bless, Kelsey Sievers '09 Skutt Catholic Alumni President



## Alumni Ubdates









Alumni Matt Beers '01 sold alumni Adam Engelkamp's '02 house to alumni Genevieve Engelkamp Micek '04 **Jamie Deao Frederick '99** with husband Justin and their two children Clara and William. Jaime is a second grade teacher at Hillside Elementary School.

**Regan Fahey Muhs '00** and husband Gary welcomed their second little girl, Margaret Mary, on December 1, 2011. Margaret joins big sister KC.

**Erin Haller Morain '99,** husband David, and big brother Will welcomed their daughter, Norah Marie, on April 24, 2012.

**Kylee Polsley '10** received an Associate in Arts Degree from Iowa Western Community College where she also played softball. She is continuing her education & softball career next semester at Chadron State College.

**Stephanie Lawton Pestotnik '03** and husband John welcomed son, Henry James Pestotnik, on January 11, 2012.

**Angela Odorisio Grote '01** and husband Aaron welcomed a baby boy, Dominic Michael Grote, on November 15, 2011, at 10:17 p.m. He weighed 8 pounds, 4 ounces and was 21 inches long.

**Elizabeth Gawley Bullington '04** celebrated her first Mother's day with her son, Reese Kolbe. Elizabeth is married to Nick Bullington, from Grant, NE.

Sara Neneman Weller '97 and John welcomed their first child on July 6, 2011, a little girl: Adelaide Grace. They celebrated her baptism at St. Paul's in Westwood, CA on January 15, 2012 with family travelling from Grand Island, NE and Saint Louis, MO to be there. The Weller's live in West Los Angeles, CA. Sara recently completed her Professional Designation in Interior Architecture from UCLA, and is currently the Director of Operations at Savel Architects in Century City. John is the Director of Creative Strategy at Sony Pictures Imageworks Interactive. They will be celebrating their 11th wedding anniversary on September 1, 2012.

**Sarah Stewart '99** was married to Scott Beerbower of Washington, DC on June 2, 2012. The wedding was held at St. Mary Magdalene's Church and Monsignor Gilg presided. The reception was at Field Club of Omaha.

**Carrie Thelen '06** will begin her second year teaching 2nd grade at Skyline Elementary in Elkhorn.























Matt Murno '09 studied abroad during his spring semester at Harlaxton College in Grantham, England. His classes included British Studies, Shakespeare, and International Relations in Film. He traveled to Scotland, France, Poland, Spain, Italy, and Ireland where he celebrated a birthday with Michael Sambol '09.

TRADELLE ...

**Julie Wawers** '08 graduated Summa Cum Laude from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in May 2012 with a Bachelor's of Arts in English and History Education. Julie was a member of Mortar Board while at UNK.

Kalene Pink Stremlau Ferguson '02 and John Ferguson '02 were married May 20, 2011 and welcomed son, Osmund John, on May 4, 2012.

**Katie O'Donnell Loring '98**, husband Jeff and big brother Luke welcomed Drake Marten Loring on April 14, 2012.

**John McMillan '03** married Kathryn Vacek in October of 2010.

Corey Drvol '07 graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in May 2011 with a degree in Nutrition, Exercise and Health Science. He was accepted into the Duke University Doctorate of Physical Therapy Program in Durham, NC.

Stephanie Hughes '06 and Matt Hyland will be married August 24, at St. Vincent de Paul. Stephanie graduated in 2011 from the University of Nebraska-Omaha with a bachelor's degree in English. She is currently a reporter and photographer for the Seward County Independent and the Friend Sentinel newspapers. Matt graduated from Metro Community College in 2006 and received an associate's degree in criminal justice. He is currently a police officer with the Seward Police Department and is a Staff Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps Reserves.

Kristen Drvol '08 graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in May 2012 with a degree in Food Science and Technology with minors in Chemistry and Mathematics. She is employed as an Associate Food Scientist with ConAgra in Omaha.

Steve Schumacher '01 and wife Emily welcomed their first child, Jillian Bea, on August 14, 2011. Steve is a physical education teacher at St. Wenceslaus in Omaha and coaches cross-country for Skutt Catholic. Emily is a pharmacist and they live in Omaha.

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Patrick Kinney '02, Pat Mainelli '02,
Amy Cherko de Mainelli, Kurt Simer, Fay
Cleaveland Simer '02 and Katrin Winther
got together when Katrin visited Omaha
in February 2012. Katrin was a foreign
exchange student from the Faroe Islands
who attended Skutt Catholic from 2000-2001.





# Alumni Ubdates





Michael McCormick '03 and Kirsten Carlberg McCormick '03 were married January 28, 2012 at St. Mary Magdalene, Omaha. Kirsten's attendants were Matron of Honor Sarah O'Connor '03, Allyson Carlberg '05, Ashley Barrow, Jennifer Hansen, Maggie McCormick, Emily McCormick, and Ellen McCormick. Michael's attendants were Best Man Adam Pavelka '03, Austin Miller '03, Nick Corritore '03, Eric Oldenkamp '03, Corey North, Tim Dolberg, and Lucien Lahey. Monsignor James Gilg officiated the wedding. The couple honeymooned in Europe for two weeks before returning to Omaha, where they will reside.

**John Murante** '00 won his primary race in Legislature District 49 and **Patrick Leahy** '01 won his in Papio-Missouri River NRD Sub district 7.

Cathy Buresh Hirsch '02 performed in the Omaha Community Playhouse's *Lend Me a Tenor* and in The Candy Project's "Homemade Fusion" in Omaha Community Playhouse's 21 & Over Series. In 2008 Cathy co-founded The Candy Project, a theatre company comprised of, produced and performed by twenty-something's bringing little known musical theatre to the Omaha area.

Photo taken at Emily Strawhecker '05 and Matt Kauffman's '02 rehearsal dinner at the Sebastian Hotel in Vail Colorado. Twenty-three SC alumni and current students made the trip to Colorado to celebrate. The following Skutt alums were in the bridal party – Taylor Irish '05, Jill Sauser '05, Lauren Laferla '09, Sarah Laferla '01, Mitchell Laferla '12, Nick Strawhecker '99 and Mike Strawhecker '00. Marc Laferla '04 was soloist at the wedding. Pictured (from top left): Marc Laferla '04, Brett Ostronic '02, Megan Blaylock '05, Jeff Stokes '02, Ryan Strawhecker '00, John Ostronic '02, Conor Kaiser, Reece Gorman, Mark Carlson '02, Joe Sturm '02, Jill Fischer '05, Lauren Laferla '09, Sarah Laferla '01, Taylor Irish '05, Jess Machacek '06, Jill Sauser '05, Marin Laferla '05, Nick Strawhecker '97, Matt Kauffman '02, Emily Strawhecker Kauffman '05, Mike Strawhecker '00, Mitchell Laferla '12. Not pictured – Jake Behrens '02

**Kyle Hendrickson** '04 and his wife Jennifer are expecting the birth of their first child (a boy) in late August. They are currently living in Fort Walton Beach, FL where Kyle is stationed with the U.S. Air Force. He is currently on his 4th combat deployment to Afghanistan.

**Jennifer Berthiaume** '99 was named a "Top 20 Under 40" professional by Engineering News Record (for Texas & Louisiana.) Jennifer works for ARCADIS (an environmental engineering firm) as a GIS specialist working with teams in water resources, environment and infrastructure to find new ways to collect data and implement geospatial solutions in their projects.



Christina Gawley McMichen '06 was married to Brian McMichen in November 2011. The McMichen's had many SC graduates celebrating with them. Pictured in the photo: Elizabeth Bullington '04, Melissa Letak '06, Samantha Bastian '07, Christine French '06, Christine Pivovar '06, Sarah Wostenberg '06, John Gawley '02. Christina Gawley McMichen '06, Kelsey Koch '05, Mackenzie Wiggs '05, Jeff Kolega '07, Irene Lempke '05, Anthony Lempke '04, Katie Kolega '05, Andy McNaughton '05 and Stephanie Prost '02. The McMichen's currently live in Madison, WI and are expecting their first child in December 2012.







Matthew Muschall '08 graduated Magna Cum Laude from Morningside College on May 12, 2012 with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Physics and a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Computer Science. He will begin employment in June as a Software Engineer with Lockheed Martin in Papillion, NE.

**Jessica Rago '05** and Matthew Crotty (Gross Catholic '05) are engaged! Jessica and Matt are planning a June 2013 wedding in Omaha. They will both be graduating from UNMC School of Pharmacy in May 2013.

Amanda (AJ) Kathol '05 has graduated from College of St. Mary's (May 2012) with a Masters Degree in Teaching. She has endorsements in Social Science and Business, Middle School, and High School

**Zach Spurlock '08** is a senior at UNL majoring in Agricultural Machinery.

Kevin Drew '06 graduated from UNL in December of 2010 with a degree in PGM Golf Management. He interned with the PGA and Castle Pines Country Club in Castle Pines, Colorado. In March, he took the position of PGA Head Golf Professional at Fox Run Golf Course in Council Bluffs.

**Tyler James Sackett** '08 graduated in May from the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland and will be commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corp.

Christian Dudzik '10, is a member of the North Dakota State University Bison football team which won the 2011 NCAA Division I FCS National Championship in January. Christian started all 15 games at cornerback, was fifth on the team in tackles and was named to both the Missouri Valley Conference All Newcomer team and College Sports Journal All Freshman team. The Bison finished the year 14-1.



Taylor Royal '08 graduated in May 2012 with a Masters of Science in Accounting at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. He is taking the CPA exam this summer and will start work at Deloitte in international tax in Dallas this October.



Stephanie Muschall
'09 received the
Oustanding Female
President Award this
past spring from the
Office of Fraternity and
Sorority Life at Missouri
State University. She
is currently working
as a Marketing Intern
at 417 Magazine in
Springfield, MO.

**Zach Ossino** '07 graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in May 2012 with a Bachelors of Science in Aviation: Professional Flight where he delivered a commencement address. He is currently an FAA licensed commercial pilot and is employed as a flight instructor. Zach will begin graduate studies within UNO's School of Public Administration in pursuit of a Masters of Public Administration this fall.

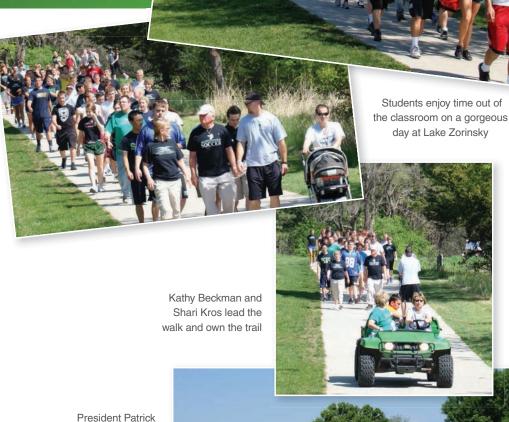


# Event Updates

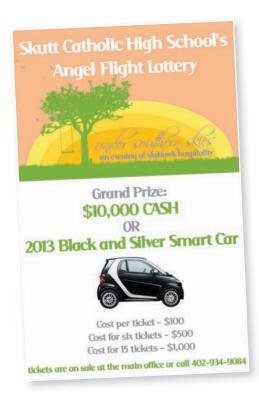
#### **WALK ON!**

This year's HawkWalk was a great success. On Wednesday April 25 the entire school enjoyed a gorgeous Omaha morning as they walked the five-mile trek around Zorinsky Lake. Faculty and staff grilled nearly 800 hamburgers for students to enjoy at a picnic following the walk, and Bart Zavaletta's advisement hosted a water balloon toss in the afternoon to further their fundraising efforts.

Thanks to the generous contributions of SC students, parents, and staff we raised over \$24,000 to support the SC financial aid fund. We're very proud of this vital fundraiser that enables deserving families to give their children a Catholic education and enables those students to make a difference here at Skutt Catholic. It was a great day to be a SkyHawk.



President Patrick
Slattery and
volunteers pass out
water and collect
bottles mid-walk



#### **UNDER SOUTHERN SKIES**

As we embark on our 20th school year, the 2012 Angel Flight committee has ensured we'll celebrate in style. Tom and Kathy Koley, Mike and Maryann Litz, & Charles and Jen Olson are chairing the event, which will be held on Saturday, September 15. At Angel Flight 2012: Under Southern Skies enjoy supper and plenty of sweet tea along with a silent and live auction and a chance to win \$10,000 or a Smart Car in the lottery! Please consider purchasing a table, donating to the event, and/or volunteering for a committee at skuttcatholic.com. Whatever you do, don't miss this event filled with heaps of the finest SkyHawk southern hospitality. See ya'll at the party!

#### **SKYHAWK MADNESS**

The Skutt Catholic Alumni Association hosted the Third Annual All-Alumni Basketball Tournament on March 24 and 10 teams showed up to compete. Each team was comprised of at least six people from the same graduating class and teams ranged from the Class of 1997 to the near-graduated Class of 2012 (guest-starring a few SC coaches!) In a double-elimination bracket the Class of 2008 team was crowned victorious during the nail-biting championship game where they beat the Class of 2004 by one point.



2012 Alumni Basketball Tournament Champions: Class of 2008

ANGEL FLIGHT: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2012

ALL-ALUMNI HOMECOMING EVENT (FREE!): FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2012

GRANDHAWK'S DAY: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2012



# CLASS OF 2012 By: Lucy Smith

As far as classes go, the Class of 2012 was a winner, the complete package. They were full of spirit, spunk, and talent; a collection of accomplished, motivated, determined achievers. Skutt Catholic owed this group a first class send-off. And by all accounts, no one was disappointed!

The weekend festivities began promptly at 7:00 p.m. at the beautiful St. Patrick's Church in Gretna, Nebraska. Fr. Mike Grewe, pastor of St. Patrick's and Skutt Catholic board member, welcomed a standing room only crowd. Chris Storm's choir sounded exquisite and never had the church's pristine acoustical sound system been more appreciated. Skutt Catholic chaplin Fr. Jeff Mollner delivered an A+homily. What does one say to a graduating class? His message of choosing love over everything else resonated. Choose love over fear. Choose love over pride. Choose love over ambition. Together we all knew that love was what brought us together for this moment: love for these students, love for this school, love for our families and our faith. After Mass was complete Patrick Slattery, Rob Meyers, and Jon Burt officially delivered the honors, as Kristin Reeves formally read the award winners' names. The most prestigious awards, which were the last to be given, carried the most impressive hardware. Those taking home striking bronze SkyHawk trophies included:

Ryan Drvol V.J. Skutt Outstanding Student Award

Anna Elliott Angela Skutt Outstanding Student Award

Matthew RagoLiving the Gospel AwardAshley SpurlockLiving the Gospel AwardJoshua PudlowskiMale Outstanding AthleteErin McGonigalFemale Outstanding Athlete

Nickolas Turner
SkyHawk Spirit Award
SkyHawk Spirit Award
SkyHawk Activities Award
Catie Zaleski
SkyHawk Activities Award

Saturday afternoon's 2:30 graduation ceremony at the Orpheum was also a lovely tribute to this gifted class. *Pomp and Circumstance* boomed through the theatre's sound system as our 2012 graduates marched in and took their seats on stage. Salutatorian and mock trial state champion Danielle Desa welcomed the crowd. Msgr. James Gilg, (founding president of Skutt Catholic and current superintendent of catholic schools) offered the invocation. Anna Kathol and Emily Pachunka made their final stage appearances as SkyHawks; Anna singing *Ave Maria* with Emily providing the piano accompaniment.

Mr. Kerry Black and Mrs. Paula Lenz were the chosen teachers for the Faculty Commencement address. Both did themselves proud by delivering moving remarks.









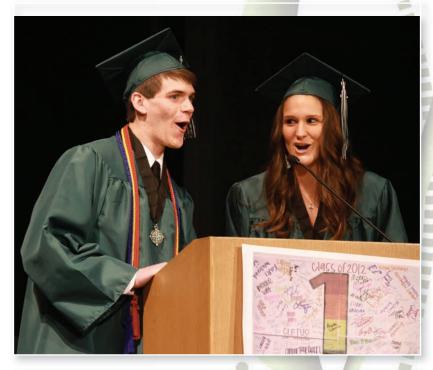
Kerry Black's call out to graduates who will be serving our country next year garnered the most lasting applause of the weekend. The Valedictorian address was made by V.J. Skutt Outstanding Male Student, Ryan Drvol; talk about going out with style! *In Whatever Time We Have*, brilliantly sung by Mr. Storm's concert choir, showcased Anna Elliot's (Angela Skutt Outstanding Female Student) talents on the piano.

Michael Judah and Alli McNeil's Senior Commencement address proved that polish and poise can be learned on the stage as well as on the basketball court. The surprise addition of the "Boler-Coaster," led by Lauren Boler, brought the entire class together for one final well-choreographed performance. Mr. Slattery, Mr. Meyers, and Mr. Burt tackled the presentation of diplomas. Board president Dan Thiele assisted while faculty member/senior class sponsor Candace Higgins meticulously delivered each graduate's formal name.

Bridget Hames, member of this year's state championship softball team, read the *Legend of the SkyHawk*. Cool under pressure, her delivery was masterful. As a special request by the senior class, Mr. Paul Marek, former Skutt Catholic teacher, supplied a few notable observations about the class of 2012. His humor was as evident as his knowledge of historical and current events!

Perhaps the biggest shocker of the afternoon was the return of Sampson the Stallion to the seniors. Taken away by the administration during a friendly dispute at a fall football game, Mr. Slattery (P. Slat for short) left the graduates flabbergasted; first that he returned the stuffed horse and second that he referred to himself as P. Slat! Fr. Jeff Mollner wrapped up the afternoon's festivities with a closing prayer which prompted the Class of 2012 to stand and dismiss. They filed out of the theatre shaking hands and hugging beloved faculty and family members as Rod Stewart's classic, *Forever Young* piped through the auditorium. As families left downtown and drove west, one couldn't help but think, what a great day to be a SkyHawk!







SKUTT CATHOLIC



Merkel and CRS colleague Susan Silveus are warmly welcomed by a family in Tajikistan who smile despite the recent loss of their home to a flood





Merkel visits a kindergarten in rural Shaanxi province

Men and women of Ishoripur Village in Southern Bangladesh welcome me among them during their payday. They are able to earn a daily wage while building up village infrastructure, such as roads and community ponds, during our Cash-for-Work program thanks to support from the Caritas Internationalis Federation.



Village transportation in southern Bangladesh takes many forms

Setting up daycare facilities so that mothers can work to earn an income is part of a Cash-for-Work program in Ishoripur Village in Southern Bangladesh. The project was funded by CRS and jointly implemented with our partner Caritas Bangladesh.

In the Skutt Catholic 1998 yearbook, there's a picture of me as a chubby-cheeked toddler wearing a pair of homemade angel wings. The quote that my parents wrote for me begins, "Our gifts to you are two: roots and wings." In retrospect, their words of support sound almost more like a premonition, because if there's one thing I've been doing a lot of lately, it's flying around.

Even in high school I knew I had the travel bug and a sort of nagging, undefined idea that I wanted to "help people." Then, with good reason in the years that follow, I did what most of us do and started making decisions that favor practicality and sustainable income and some semblance of a "life plan." By our ten year reunion, I had a couple of degrees, was living in Omaha, had a nice stable job at a nice stable bank (we still thought banks were stable at that time), a 401(k), and a car that was paid off.

For all intents and purposes, I was "on my way." Then a meek little voice inside of me had the nerve to ask, "On my way to where, exactly?" All it took was that one tiny question – then the rest of them wouldn't stop. I began to wonder who exactly I had helped besides myself and who's the jerk who squashed my travel bug? A long hard look in the mirror showed me a lady in pinstripes with a fly swatter. It was time to do a little soul searching.

So I searched. And questioned. And hesitated. And asked for help. And searched some more and came to the conclusion.... drum roll please... "I want to travel and help people." Hmm. Pretty sure I knew that 10 years ago. But I suppose there's a lot to be said for searching, because re-defining my dreams shook something loose, and by a series of uncanny events, I found myself working for Catholic Relief Services, an outstanding organization whose mission "carries out the commitment of the Bishops of the United States to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas." In short, my job description pretty much reads, "travel and help people."

This summer marks my fourth year of working with CRS, and in that time, I've had the incredible privilege of working alongside some of the best minds in the humanitarian relief and development industry. I get to see teams of people from all different religious, cultural, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds pulling together to lend a hand in communities' own efforts to improve the lives of their children, neighbors, and themselves. I've lived in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Kyrgyzstan and traveled to Thailand, China, Laos, and Myanmar (not bad for an Omaha girl!) Each place I go, I've witnessed a side of the Catholic church that I hadn't seen before

 clergy and lay people that are open-minded, relevant, and fiercely committed to defending and bettering some of the most vulnerable communities on this earth, regardless of their creed or background.

I'm a program manager who supposedly advises local organizations on best practices in management of humanitarian programs. But really I'm the one just soaking it all in — it's the learning experience of a lifetime. Anyone in the "helping people" business quickly learns that to describe it as such is pretty much the height of arrogance, in addition to being wholly inaccurate. I'm the one who is the beneficiary from finally getting a glimpse of how the majority of the world lives. The people who invite me into their communities are usually the ones who wind up taking care of me, ensuring that the tall foreign lady who can't speak the language is safe, protected, and well fed. No matter how hand-to-mouth some people live, the families that I've met have always made a place at their table for me.

Sometimes it's tough to understand the journey until you've come back home, and paradoxically, perhaps I needed to be away from home for a while before I could appreciate coming back to it. I've got this summer to spend here in Omaha with my husband, family, and friends – most of whom I've known since we went to Skutt together. As we re-connect over grilled steak, a few cold beers, and stories old and new, I've never been more grateful to the city and the people who gave me roots and wings.

#### Skutt Catholic Synthetic Turf Project

As we celebrate our first 20 years, *Back Our Mission, Support Our Vision* looks forward to the next 20 years. To kick things off Skutt Catholic sought the support of football and soccer families to jumpstart our campus and building renovation process. Garnering financial support and enthusiasm for a synthetic field turf elevated interest and enthusiasm for our broader plans for school improvements. To kick-off our 20th year celebrations Moylan Field will welcome the addition of a brand new synthetic playing field.

The need for a new field arose after careful analysis determined that the current field was not meeting legal playing standards. On a recent field survey, it was revealed that the crown of the field was over 24 inches. The maximum recommended legal height for a football field crown is 18 inches. With its successful football team, the SkyHawks alone average about 14 games on the field. By the end of the playoff season, field conditions were poor and it took the maintenance staff almost nine months to repair the all-grass field.

The new playing field will be made from a synthetic surface called Ram Turf. It is the only surface of its kind on a high school football field in Nebraska. It features synthetic, grass-like fibers with rubber infill highlighted by a "thatch root zone system." This thatch system mimics natural grass and will feel like playing on a natural grass field but with superior drainage capabilities so that little maintenance will be needed.

In addition to hosting football games, the new turf will allow Moylan Field to host soccer games. Currently soccer has its own playing field, but game times are limited because there is no ancillary lighting on the field. Having a synthetic turf field enables both football and soccer teams to practice and play no matter the weather conditions or time of day, as well as provides a reliable outdoor surface for marching band practice and multiple physical education classes. On average, 20 games a year are played on Moylan Field, but with the new turf over 40 will be played annually, plus it will be used for soccer and football practice every day. This turf can withstand the constant wear and tear of games and practices played on the same field requiring very little, if any, annual maintenance. The field and base is guaranteed for eight years but should last 12-15 years before any replacement has to be done. Synthetic turf reduces field maintenance costs, provides access to a field with lights for evening soccer games, enables SC to sponsor tournaments on campus, and reduces the chance of injuries to players by 60 percent.

Once completed, Skutt Catholic will be the only private school in Omaha and only private Class B school in Nebraska with its own synthetic turf field capable of hosting both Varsity football and soccer games. This will serve as a major recruiting advantage and continue to raise Skutt Catholic's competitive edge allowing the school to remain at the forefront of athletic success in the state of Nebraska. In the past eight years, Skutt Catholic has won 26 state titles and 17 State Runner-up trophies, while winning the combined World Herald All-Sports trophy six of the past eight years. The addition of this state-of-the-art playing surface ensures Skutt Catholic will remain a destination for the top student-athletes in the state and continue its status as an innovator and leader amongst all high schools in the city.

Construction on the new field officially began on May 22 at the conclusion of track season. Three hundred truckloads of grass and dirt were removed and the leveling of the field was completed on June 4. To celebrate the completion of the field, synthetic turf donors will be invited to an outdoor evening reception on the track surrounding the football field the night before the first football game. Guests at the Surf and Turf event will be treated to ice-cold beverages, delicious appetizers, and plenty of SkyHawk pride as we thank those who have generously donated funds to make the synthetic turf a reality. During the evening festivities we will also unveil a new archway that will welcome fans to the Skutt Catholic Sports Complex. The archway (designed, built, and donated by Skutt Catholic parent Marc Stodola/Charleston Homes) will be situated at the entrance of the complex and will carry the names of all who have donated to our athletic fields improvements.







Construction began on May 22 and 300 truckloads of dirt was removed from the field and deposited at Zorinsky Lake



# SkyHawk ) WEFI

by Elizabeth Tulipana (with a little help from her friends)

Some say love, it is a river; or a razor, a hunger, a flower. We disagree. From marrying your high school sweetheart to meeting years later only to realize you both went to Skutt Catholic, love is most definitely a mythical green and black bird. This semester, we got up close and personal with some SC alumni who married each other and asked them to share their stories. Perhaps it's having similar beliefs, values, and morals, or finding someone who shares your faith and goals in life. Whatever it is, we're just glad to know the class of 2025 will be chock full of SkyHawk Sweetheart teenagers who will endure four years of anecdotes like "this was the exact spot where I met your father..."

"Great mom, and then you walked to school, uphill both ways in a snowstorm."

#### Chris Wolfe '99 and Jaime Ammons Wolfe '00

"Chris and I met in the fall of 1998, my junior year and his senior year of high school at Skutt Catholic in Mr. Zeplin's weight lifting class. To be honest, I always thought he was kind of full of himself and in fact; I'm not really sure why I said 'yes' when he asked me on a date, but I am so thankful I did! We are so blessed to have grown-up and matured together: the 'cool kid' I dated in high school turned out to be a hardworking, loyal, amazing husband and father! We were married in June of 2004 and just celebrated our eighth year of marriage. We have been blessed with four amazing children who keep us on our toes! Sharing similar Catholic beliefs has strengthened our marriage and drawn us closer to each other and God. We feel very fortunate that we found each other at such a young age!"



#### Lowell Ferguson '00 and Nicole Zych Ferguson '00

"It was through disciplinary measures that I met Lowell Ferguson for the first time and I have Mrs. Kathy Beckman to thank for that fateful meeting in freshman health class. Despite warnings from Mrs. Beckman, Lowell continued to balance his chair on the back two legs and wobble back and forth. She finally resolved the issue, soothing her nerves by placing him at the desk with a reclining chair (no legs to wobble on!) next to me. So began our story: I was focused on learning and Lowell was focused on distracting me. He spoke of joining the Marines and I promised to write him at bootcamp if he joined.

Although we never dated at Skutt Catholic, we had a lot of mutual friends. Upon graduation, Lowell left for Marine Corps bootcamp and I went off to college but kept my freshman year promise and wrote him often. History must repeat itself because when I saw him after bootcamp, I found myself distracted from studying all over again; same person, just four years later. Our first kiss was at midnight on New Year's Eve 2001. Lowell proposed on the fourth of July the next year in Washington, D.C. We were married in September of 2004 and now have two children, Evelyn and Vivian. That is our love story: written on the walls of Skutt Catholic High School thanks to Mrs. Beckman, my husband's balancing act, and a promise I made freshman year."





#### Brian Sauser '00 and Amy Moylan Sauser '00

"When people find out that Brian and I both went to Skutt Catholic for high school, the usual reaction is 'How wonderful to marry your high school sweetheart!' However, that isn't exactly the case for us. Brian and I weren't even in the same group of friends in high school so there are very few memories from my SC days that include him. We remember being in the same zoology class with Mr. Engelkamp, power lifting

with Mr. Zeplin, and we were both on the track team senior year, but our paths didn't really intersect until the summer after freshman year of college. We were both lifeguards at South Pacific Pool that summer and started to become friends as I showed him the ins and outs of teaching swim lessons. About midway through sophomore year of college we began to date long distance (he was at UNL and I was at Simpson College) and I ended up transferring to UNL junior year because we felt like our relationship was going to be the final one for the both of us.

We got married in the fall of 2006 and are now parents to Julia (2), Tony (1), with another little one who will arrive in late October. As we were moving into our first house in 2006 we spent time sorting through pictures and came across one that my mom must have snapped on the day of our 2000 graduation. The two of us are smiling and have our arms around one another. Neither of us remembers taking that picture, but I guess it was a sweet foreshadowing of what was to come. We still make it back to Skutt Catholic occasionally for sporting events, Angel Flight, and to watch my sisters

perform with the show choir and chorus. We hope that our children will have as wonderful of

a high school experience at SC as we had."

#### Charles Olson '98 and Jen Nelson Olson '99

"It was 1997 and my sophomore year at Skutt Catholic. My good friend and classmate Melissa York Hunter and I were in gym class when she decided that Charles Olson (a junior at the time) should go to the upcoming Valentine's Day Dance together. That was the first Skutt event we attended together but it was definitely not the last. Of course, none are as memorable for either of us as the 2004 Homecoming football game. That's where, during half time, Charles took me to the fifty-yard line and asked me to marry him in front of a crowd full of SkyHawk fans. I said yes, and we have been blessed with seven wonderful years of marriage and three beautiful children.



While we can never fully repay Skutt Catholic for what it has given us, we will continue to try. We've enjoyed being involved with an institution that has given us so much and it's easy when the people in charge are so great to work with. We are truly blessed with the life we have and just want to say *thank you* to the place it all started."

Did you marry your high school sweetheart? Did you fall in love with a SC alumni years after you graduated? Then you have a SkyHawk Sweetheart story to share! Email your story to eptulipana@skuttcatholic.com.



#### Mary Lou Garrett

by Candace Higgins

When the 2012-2013 school year begins, most of us will miss a familiar face: Mary Lou (Wirth) Garrett. Mary Lou grew up in Nebraska City and attended Nebraska City Lourdes. Her teaching career began at Wahoo Neumann where she spent 17 years teaching English, Speech, and Sacred Scripture. While working on her master's degree in Theology, Mary Lou returned to Nebraska City Lourdes and worked half time.

Fast forward to 2012 and Mary Lou has now been a part of the Skutt Catholic community for 16 years. Unfortunately for all of us, she has decided to "hang up her ruler and spend some time enjoying life." On July 30, Dave and Mary Lou will celebrate seven years of wedded bliss and can now take the time to really celebrate.

We all had a chance to say good-bye at a variety of luncheons held in her honor and the entire Skutt Catholic community recognized her on the final day of school with a standing ovation for extraordinary service to the school and its students.

On a personal note, Mary Lou was one of the very first teachers that I worked with at Skutt Catholic as she mentored me through freshmen Theology my first year. That was fourteen years ago and she has been my hero ever since. Mary Lou - have the best and most blessed retirement ever - you've earned it. Good luck from all of us at Skutt Catholic High School.



## Around Rull Catholic

Seniors Colleen Wooten and Kacie Hughes are overwhelmed with emotion as they are announced the state champions in Duet Acting for their whimsical, quirky, and psychological performance where the psyche of one woman is split in two as she tackles issues of power, friendship, love, and most importantly, a sense of self





Senior Bridget Hames is all smiles as she wins two state championships in Informative Speaking and Persuasive Speaking



Michael Judah receiving the Wilber Award for "Best Supporting Actor"



Kate O'Brien and Ashley Spurlock after receiving the Wilber for "Best Student Directors" for the Fall musical "Aida"

Junior **Brian Carmody** has been chosen by the Omaha Jaycees as one of the *2012 TOYO* (*Ten Outstanding Young Omahans*) Teens. Brian was recognized for having 100+hours of volunteer work, primarily with the Special Olympics Tennis Buddies program. He will be a doubles partner with a Special Olympics tennis athlete and compete in the Summer Games.

Congratulations are in order: the Varsity Dance Team won the State Dance Championship in the Pom division. The team also took second in the Jazz division. Seniors **Molly Ahrens** and **Sarah Diego** led the team to its fifth state title run for the Dance Team since 2008.

The SkyHawk cheerleaders took 1st place in the non-building tumbling division and were the overall grand champions at the Hawkeye Class Cheer Competition and took 1st place in both the non-building tumbling and non-building non-tumbling divisions at the Worldwide Spirit Association, both held in Iowa.

At America's Best Cheer & Dance Championships Nationals they won 1st place in the non-building tumbling division and were the runner-ups in the non-building non-tumbling division at the Nebraska State Cheer & Dance Championships.

Freshman **Kristen Sumrell** will be spending the month of July dancing with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Sophomore **Sam Vanderheiden** competed in the National Field Archery Association's Midwest Indoor Sectionals (includes the states of Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and South Dakota). He placed 1st in the Freestyle Bow competition.

Congratulations to Band Director **Joe Homan** for receiving the "Jack R. Snider Young Band Director Award" by the Nebraska State Bandmasters Association! At the NSBA Conference in March he was presented with the award along with the "NSBA Band Director Scholarship" and the "Excellence in Academic Achievement Award" on behalf of the entire Skutt Catholic Band due to their strong performances and high academic achievement in the classroom. This is the second year in a row that the band has earned this award. Of the seven awards given out at the NSBA Conference, Skutt Catholic's name was mentioned during three of them!



The 2012 State Champion SkyHawk Speech Team

The Skutt Catholic Speech Team celebrated their very first State Championship win in a very big way. As a team, they scored 184 points while the state-runner up, scored just 82 points. Led by Speech Coach **Matt Eledge**, the SkyHawks had 11 events advance into finals and four state champions.

Senior Bridget Hames won 1st place in Persuasive Speaking and 1st place in Informative Speaking. Senior Catie Zaleski took 1st place in Poetry Interpretation and Seniors Kacie Hughes and Colleen Wooten won 1st place in Duet Acting.

Congrats to **Monica Baxter** for being named the "Teacher of the Year" by the Omaha Summer Arts Festival. The same group also selected Skutt Catholic's entire Arts Department, (**Monica Baxter**, **Johnna Eck** and **Jennie Wilson**) as the "School and Arts Department of the Year" in Omaha.

At the 2011-12 Scholastic Art Awards of Nebraska Skutt Catholic won 44 awards selected from over

2,100 entries from across the state. Gold Key Winners include **Devin Christensen, Libby Kane, Taylor Lofdahl, Alicia Margritz, Rachel Perzinger** (2) and **Kelsey Stratman.** 

Kelsey Stratman's batik was chosen for the Omaha Summer Arts Festivals' 17th Annual Young Artist Exhibition. It was featured on posters and print materials advertising the event.



The Wilber's are the theatre department's end of the year awards ceremony and were held in May. Students put on their best red carpet outfits, have mocktails, and socialize before indulging in dessert. Thespians are nominated and voted by their peers in 14 different categories and winners are announced in true award show fashion. Theatre letters, participation certificates, and announcements of the theatre season for the following year round out the star-studded event.

#### Olympic-Sized Heart

by Coach Brad Hildebrandt

On April 22, 2012 I had the pleasure of accompanying and coaching Todd Meneely '02 at the Olympic Wrestling Team Trials at Carver Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City, Iowa.

Todd qualified for the trials at the 66-kilo weight class (145.5 lbs.) by wrestling in the Dave Schulz International Classic in Colorado Springs five weeks earlier. He had been training for this tournament for a year including six months spent at an Olympic Training Center with his wife Tara and young son Truin. At the tournament, Todd wrestled for third place against a 2011 world medalist from India. During the late stages of the second period, Todd's ankle fell into an awkward position and he broke the small bone in his lower leg. He had surgery the next day; ten screws were put in to secure the fracture and he was staring down a five to six month recovery period. Despite all of this, he still placed higher than any United States wrestler who had entered the tournament, and he was determined to be back on the mat five weeks later in lowa City for the Trials.

Todd went through a rehab program at lightening speed and was able to return to training and focus on completing his life long dream of becoming an Olympian. Five days before the trials Todd reinjured his ankle but pressed on.

The Olympic Trials venue was everything you would imagine it to be: the best athletes of our discipline attended, there was massive media coverage and unbelievable fanfare, and former Olympic and World Champions mingled with the up-and-coming athletes who were all vying for their chance at gold. It was an experience I will never forget. As I sat in the holding area with Todd I couldn't help but think back to the meager beginnings of our Skutt Catholic Wrestling program. Just 20 short years later I was sitting at Carver Hawkeye Arena about to watch one of the most decorated wrestlers in Skutt Catholic history wrestle in front of 15,000 people on one of the biggest stages in amateur wrestling. I was simultaneously completely humbled and jumping out of my skin with excitement. I was so proud of Todd and also proud of all those who had put time, faith, and trust into our program and in Todd Meneely as an individual. It was truly a breakthrough moment for Skutt Catholic and awe-inspiring to get to be there as Todd fought to make his dream come true.

Todd was unsuccessful in the match that day, but by no means does that diminish the accomplishment of qualifying for this prestigious event. In a follow-up x-ray later that week doctors discovered that the main screw that had reattached Todd's small leg bone to his anklebone had broken in half. I have great admiration for Todd; obviously in a great deal of pain but fighting to complete his journey knowing that he was not at his healthiest and best. He is a true champion and he makes me proud to be a SkyHawk.



3131 South 156th Street
Omaha, NE 68130-1907

#### Skutt Catholic Synthetic Turf Project

SEE PAGE 14 FOR STORY



An aerial shot of Moylan Field



Rendering of the completed field

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Skutt Catholic High School 3131 South 156th Street Omaha, NE 68130-1907 p: 402-333-0818 f: 402-333-1790

