

3131 South 156th Street  
Omaha, NE 68130-1907

**SKUTT**  
CATHOLIC

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## Campus Updates

The Baseball complex is now home to a lovely reflective garden that includes a waterfall, new landscape, and seating. This project was underwritten by Dan and Joanne Avramovich, former Skutt Catholic parents. Their son Daniel, who played baseball for Coach Engelkamp, succumbed to cancer in 1995 following his sophomore year.



Bill Howard's CAD students designed and helped construct the new ticket booth in the Skutt Catholic Athletic Complex. Charleston Homes owner Marc Stodola financed and oversaw the build.

Summer rains slowed the progress of new sand volleyball courts installed directly east of the auxiliary gym. The project was underwritten through donations from volleyball families.



Dan and Joanne Avramovich also underwrote the restoration their son Daniel's memorial. The corpus, crucifix, and plaques were beautifully restored by Tom Koley of Koley's Inc. The new landscape and hardscape were designed and installed by Patera Landscaping. Owner Jeff Patera was a classmate of Daniel's younger sister, Emily.

[www.skuttcatholic.com](http://www.skuttcatholic.com)

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### Mission

V.J. & Angela Skutt Catholic High School forms and educates young men and women to become Christian leaders who empower others, promote justice, and initiate change.

### Magazine Contributors

Alumni News - Sally Brittan, Director of Advancement Events and Alumni Relations  
Contributors - Cynthia Carlson, Mary McGuire, John McMahon, Mike McMahon, Rob Meyers, Sharon Neal, Kelsey Sievers, and Chris Storm  
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Editor - Lucy Smith, Vice President of Advancement

### MAKE A DIFFERENCE

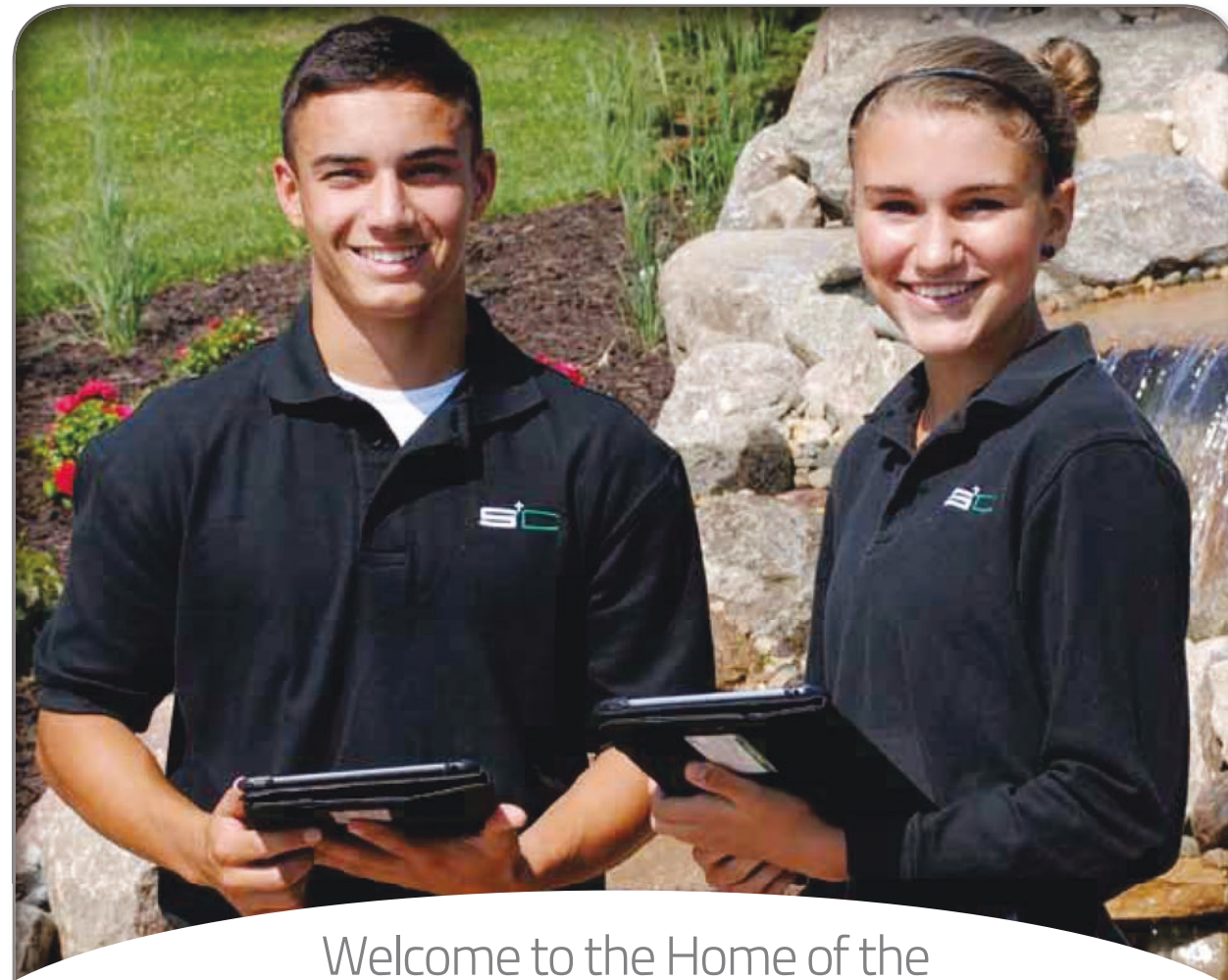
*Skutt Catholic High School admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.*

SUMMER 2014

# OUR Legacy

NEWS OF INTEREST TO THE  
ALUMNI, PARENTS, AND FRIENDS  
OF SKUTT CATHOLIC

**SKUTT**  
CATHOLIC



Welcome to the Home of the

## Sky Hawks!

Skutt Catholic is more than just a college prep high school. We are a vibrant community that encourages each of our 700+ students to develop intellectually, spiritually, and socially.

- Our excellence in instruction is supported through our celebrated U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon designation.
- We are dedicated to helping our young men and women deepen their faith.
- Our extensive course and activity offerings create abundant opportunities for participation, personal growth, and success.

Above all, we encourage our students to **learn together, pray together, and grow together.**





Interim President Mary McGuire with husband Tom and children Katie '99, Tom '97, and Mike '00

## LEGACY MESSAGE

“ Dear Skutt Catholic Family,

As I complete my term as interim president, I thank each of you for your support, encouragement, and trust. Leading the school in its 21st year has been a tremendous experience and affirms my family's belief in Skutt Catholic. This school has always provided a welcoming environment for learning, faith development, and social interaction.

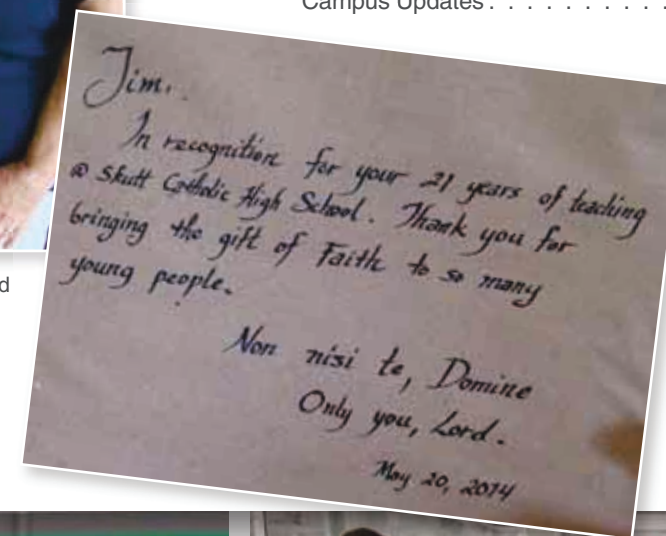
Thank you to all of the faculty members for your professionalism. It is amazing to see how hard you work to help our young scholars succeed. You make a difference in the lives of each and every student. Thank you to the administrative staff. Your ability to run Skutt Catholic efficiently builds and enhances the reputation of our school in the community.

I welcome Mr. John McMahon and will help him transition to his new role as president. God bless you all and may we continue our efforts to make Skutt Catholic High School the best it can be.

Peace and Blessings,  
Mary A. McGuire



Esteemed faculty member Jim Mangimeli and wife Carol at Jim's retirement gathering.



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Skutt Catholic Curling and Chess Teams.





# President’s Letter



John F. McMahon  
President

*John and wife Andrea’s journey from St. Petersburg to Omaha took a short detour through Lake Okoboji in Iowa.*

Greetings Skutt Catholic Community,

May the peace and joy of Christ be with each of you.

As I write this, I am watching the sun set over the Gulf of Mexico for the last time before I make my journey from St. Petersburg to Omaha. There is certainly a great deal of sadness as I leave behind all that I have known and done for the past fifteen years, but at the same time there is a tremendous amount of excitement for what lies ahead in my time with all of you as president of Skutt Catholic High School.

There are many words and phrases that come to my mind that spark this excitement: National Blue Ribbon, state championship, National Merit Scholars, Gatorade Player of the Year, Outstanding High School Musical Production, and the list goes on. What strikes me the most about these words is not these accomplishments as ends in themselves, but is rather a word that describes the means by which each of these accomplishments came to be, excellence. One does not have to look far at Skutt Catholic High School to find excellence. It is everywhere and exhibits itself in seemingly everything that bears the name of Skutt Catholic or is touched by those who walk its hallways. The words that excite me the most about Skutt Catholic, however, are that it “forms and educates young men and women to become Christian leaders who empower others, promote justice, and initiate change.” I am honored and humbled to be chosen as the leader of a school with such a noble and Catholic mission and with such an admirable commitment to excellence.

I want to thank Monsignor Gilg and Patrick Slattery, and all those who have worked with them, for their efforts and dedication in bringing Skutt Catholic to this point. My thanks also go to those members of the Board and of the selection committee who have placed their trust in me to lead Skutt Catholic into the future. I want to thank Archbishop Lucas for endorsing that trust and for believing in me. I also appreciate Mary McGuire for her leadership over the past year. Lastly, I want to thank all of you for the warm welcome extended to me and to my wife, Andrea. Your prayers, emails, and best wishes have been touching and inspiring.

I look forward to getting to know each of you and to taking flight alongside you as SkyHawks, committed to both the mission of Skutt Catholic High School and to excellence. As the sun sets on my years in black and gold, I look forward to it rising again with me proudly donning the SkyHawk green, black, and silver.

May God continue to bless you all and to bless Skutt Catholic High School.

Go SkyHawks!

Yours in Christ,  
John F. McMahon  
President

# Principal’s Letter



Rob Meyers  
Principal

I am writing this having just returned home from a World Cup viewing party for the opening game for team U.S.A. As I watched, I kept thinking of the phrase *It is better to be lucky than good*. At least I hoped that was the case as the team struggled mightily, yet won the game in the end. In reflecting on this past year, our success as a school was far from lucky. Any visit to the campus during the summertime shows that our students, coaches, and sponsors work hard in everything that they do.

It was another very successful year for the SkyHawks. The successes on the field, in the classroom, and in all activities don’t happen by chance. The school community has built a culture of success and hard work over the years. A debt of gratitude is owed to all who came before and played a role in the development of this culture. Many state championships were won, we were repeat winners of the NSAA Cellular Cup and the World Herald All-Sports award. Our seniors earned just shy of 15 million dollars in scholarships this year. Our activities programs were also very successful. The accomplishments this year are too numerous to include here.

We are saying goodbye to several valued employees this summer. After serving the Archdiocese of Omaha for 28 years and other districts prior to that, Mr. Jim Mangimeli retired this spring. Mr. Mangimeli is an original staff member and has been instrumental in cultivating our religious program. His teaching has impacted thousands of students over the years, and for that we are all grateful.

Also retiring this year is Mr. Mike McMahon. Mr. McMahon has served Skutt Catholic as a teacher, coach, and for the past 13 years, as our Activities/Athletic Director. While working mostly behind the scenes, most will agree that Mr. McMahon’s leadership has played a major role in our success. I am not sure there has been a more successful program over any 13 year span. During his tenure as leader of the activities department, Skutt Catholic earned an astonishing 38 NSAA state championships, 18 second place finishes, and 19 additional state championships in other activities.

I recently learned that Steve Baxter and Christine Diss will also be moving on. Steve has helped keep our building clean and functioning for many years. Steve is retiring and will now focus on his main passion, art. Christine has served as Campus Minister for the past four years. Christine’s husband, Brian has accepted a position at their alma mater, Notre Dame. The Diss family will be moving to South Bend over the summer.

Mr. Mangimeli, Mr. McMahon, Mr. Baxter, and Mrs. Diss thank you for your contributions to this School. I wish you all the best.

I would also like to thank Mary McGuire, Interim President. Mary came out of retirement to help the school that she loves. As an alumni parent, Mary offered to fill in while the school searched for a president. Her passion for the school and desire to help it has been inspiring.

While saying goodbye to some key members of the community, there is much to look forward to. We are likely to welcome our largest freshman class ever. No doubt our culture of success is having a significant impact on enrollment. We are also implementing a one-to-one iPad program this year. All freshman, sophomores, and juniors will come to school each day with an iPad Air device. This will be expanded to all students next year. Our staff is hard at work this summer preparing for this exciting new initiative. There are many people that had a hand in this coming to fruition. It will be an exciting new chapter in the history of Skutt Catholic.

God bless, and have a wonderful summer.

Rob Meyers  
Principal



# Alumni Board President's Letter



Kelsey Sievers '09  
Alumni Association President

Summer has arrived! The days are longer, the smell of grilled hotdogs and hamburgers is in the air, golf courses are full, and pools are packed with kids. It's the time of year when we see old buddies at summer events, go on vacations with family and friends, and create memories to cherish for years to come.

The Alumni Association has been busy making memories and reliving the old ones through the Annual Alumni Basketball Tournament in March, followed by our *Flight for Excellence* Golf Tournament and class reunions this June.

The basketball tournament was an exciting two-day event. Alumni and their families enjoyed an evening of food and fun while watching nine teams compete against each other. This year the class of 2010 (with the help of two members from the class of 2008) won the tournament.

In June we had the annual *Flight for Excellence* golf tournament at Pacific Springs combined with our class of 2004 10-year reunion. The tournament took place on a Friday afternoon and was followed by a social gathering on the back patio of Pacific Springs. Saturday evening the class of 2004 gathered in the Skutt Catholic Commons for a social, school tour, dinner, and outdoor games. The class of 2009 had a five-year class reunion celebration organized by Derek Hochstein and myself.

It has been a wonderful summer thus far, but fall will be here before we know it. Information about upcoming fall events will be sent out soon. If you're interested in getting involved either in a leadership role or as a volunteer, please email me at [skuttcatholicalumni@gmail.com](mailto:skuttcatholicalumni@gmail.com).

I hope you all have a safe and fun summer.

God Bless,  
Kelsey Sievers '09  
Skutt Catholic Alumni Association President



Jami Thorton, Mike & Michaela Shafar, Kate Major, and Rob Thorton

Chicagoland SC Alumni, with the hope of establishing a Chicago based SC alumni network, met on Fri., May 30 at Kirkwood Bar & Grill in Chicago. They enjoyed meeting up with other SC alumni and fundraising in support of our *Flight for Excellence* Golf Tournament. This group is the first official SC alumni group to be formed and will be named Chi-Hawks.

We thank the founding members of this group **Jami Brink Thorton '98**, **Kate Thomsen Major '99** and **Michaela Moylan Shafar '98** for their vision and leadership. We invite other alumni in cities across the nation to organize in support of Skutt Catholic. If you wish to take on this challenge, please contact Sally Brittan, Director of Advancement Events and Alumni Relations at Skutt Catholic.



**Mike Egermier '97** and his wife Steph are pleased to announce that their new baby, Emma Hope, was born Feb. 3 of this year.

**Ashley Hamilton Salaiz '00** and Mario Salaiz are proud to announce the birth of their second child. Son, Colton Hamilton Salaiz was born on Dec. 5, 2013. Ashley is currently earning her PhD in Management at the University of Houston. Pictured are Colton and big sister Avery Salaiz



**Adam Johnson '01** assisted in introducing Electronic Lab Notebook Technology (ELN) at Midwest Laboratories. In January, Midwest Laboratories Management approved the purchase of 50 licenses and Adam is leading the training and implementation of this new technology in all of their laboratories. Adam came to Midwest Laboratories in 2006 and worked in the analysis of sulfur in diesel. At one time Midwest Laboratories had 30 of the top 50 convenience stores in the nation as clients. This project produced, \$2.5 million in revenue in a two-year period.



**Kelly Barth '01** graduated this spring from Creighton University with a MA of Theology and a 4.0 GPA. He also has had two pieces of music "We Go In Peace" and "Easter Alleluia" accepted for publishing in the upcoming church contemporary hymnal *You Are Holy* by ILP Music out of Nashville, Tennessee. Kelly has composed other liturgical pieces including a Catholic Mass setting, "Mass of the Gathered Assembly," and several psalms which are being used by parishes here in Omaha. He is currently working at Creighton Prep as a Theology teacher and Campus Minister.



**Brenda Peters Weidner '01** has two children, Addison (four) and Joshua (one), and a very supportive spouse, Dan. On May 10 she graduated with distinction from UNMC's medical school. She will be doing her residency in the field of Pediatrics at UNMC. Brenda Peters Weidner at the hooding ceremony with her husband Dan Weidner.

**Lena Ciglaris '02** appeared on the television show *Law and Order* on March 26 of this year.



**Regan Fahey Muhs '00** and her husband Gary Muhs are happy to announce a new addition to their family. William Walter Muhs was born on March 26, 2014. He weighed 9 lbs. 14 oz. and measured 23 ½ inches long. Regan, Gary, and sisters KC and Maggie are very excited to have him here!



**Angie Odorisio Grote '01** and Aaron Grote are proud to announce the birth of their daughter. Julia Rose Grote was born on March 18. She weighed 7 lbs. 12 oz. and measured 21 ½ inches long. She was welcomed by Aaron, Angie, and big brother Dominic.



# Alumni Updates



**Kathleen Fitzgerald Folkerts '04** graduated from Creighton University Law School in May with her Master of Science in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution.

**Laura Bacino Magnusson '04** and her husband Chris Magnusson welcomed the birth of their son, Tyler, in June of 2013. They recently celebrated his first birthday. The Magnusson family currently reside in Las Vegas, NV where Laura works as a Sales Manager for ADP, Inc.

**Genevieve Engelkamp Micek '04** and Nathan Micek are pleased to announce the birth of their son, Grady Charles, born on April 2, 2014. He weighed in at 10 lbs. 3.3 oz. and measured 22 ¾ in. Pictured are Nathan Micek, proud Grandpa, with his 1st grandchild, Keith Engelkamp, Grady Charles, and Genevieve Engelkamp Micek

**Rachel Balkovec '05** was named earlier this year as the Cardinals' minor league strength and conditioning coordinator. She is the first female to hold this job, which is occupied by men in the other 29 baseball organizations. She decided to pursue a career as a strength and conditioning coach while playing softball at New Mexico. Balkovec's relationship with the Cardinals began in 2012 when she worked as the strength and conditioning coach for the rookie-level Johnson City Cardinals. She has also worked for a team in the Dominican Winter League and in the Arizona Fall League for the Chicago White Sox. She will be based at the Cardinals' facility at Roger Dean Stadium but will travel to each of the minor-league affiliates during the season, as well as make three trips to the team's academy in the Dominican Republic.

**Liz Bartak '05** married Mike Fossenbarger on Aug. 30, 2013. Liz is a Marketing Associate at Lincoln Financial Group, and a realtor for NP Dodge. Mike is a Senior Claims Consultant at Lincoln Financial Group. They reside in Omaha with their three dogs.



Pictured L to R: Kim Fitzsimmons (President of the ETA Board of Directors), Mike Strawhecker, Jason Oxman (CEO of ETA)

Electronic Transactions Association (ETA), a global trade association representing the payments technology industry, has named Skutt Catholic alumnus **Mike Strawhecker '00** its 2014 "Member of the Year." Mike is Vice President & Director of Metrics at The Strawhecker Group (TSG), a management consulting firm based in Omaha that provides services to companies in the electronic payments industry.

Mike received this award as a result of his actions and achievements that greatly contributed to the overall success of the association and its more than 500 global member companies during the past year. He was announced as winner and given the award at the President's Dinner & Star Award Gala presented by Visa in Las Vegas on April 9 during ETA's TRANSACT conference, the world's largest payments industry event.

At 32 years old, Mike is the youngest recipient to ever win the award, joining his father Kurt, who also won ETA's "Member of the Year" in 2009. They are the first father and son recipients of this prestigious honor. Kurt is the founder and Managing Partner of TSG; he also had an integral role in the founding of Skutt Catholic.

McFarlin and Brokke, P.C. announces the promotion of **Michael Smith II '03** to partner/shareholder.

Mike joined the firm in 2009 as a senior accountant and most recently was a manager. In his new role, he will have expanded leadership responsibilities and continue to be responsible for all areas of client satisfaction and staff mentoring.



**Jessica Rago '05** graduated with high honors from UNMC School of Pharmacy in May of 2013 with her Doctor of Pharmacy degree. Jessica completed a first year residency at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. She will be completing a second-year program in solid organ transplantation at Barnes Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Mo.

**Kevin Drew '06** has recently been named Head Pro at the Field Club of Omaha. He formerly served as the Head Pro at Fox Run in Council Bluffs. Kevin graduated from UNL through the PGM program.

**Amanda Kettle '05** married Sean Murphy (Omaha) on Jan. 17, 2014 in Mexico on the beach surrounded by 40 of their closest family and friends. Their wedding party included two Skutt Catholic alumni, Kelsey Koch and Madilynn Kettle. Sean's father was in the hospital with failing health when they got married. They had a courthouse ceremony here in Omaha so he could be in attendance. Amanda is currently employed at Gavilon as a Logistics Specialist and is working on her Masters in Business Administration and Supply Chain Management. Her husband works for Cox Communication as a Field Service Tech and will graduate this summer with his bachelors degree. The couple purchased a home in Southwest Omaha and live there with their three rescue dogs.

**Kayla Kutilek '06** received a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2010. She earned a Master of Perfusion Science from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in 2013. Currently Kayla is employed at the University of Texas Health Science Center. She is a Cardiovascular Perfusionist at Memorial Hermann Heart and Vascular Institute at the Center for Advanced Heart Failure in Houston, Texas. Kayla operates the Heart-Lung Machine during cardiac surgeries which includes heart transplants, mechanical assist devices, and valve and bypass procedures. She is also on the Life Flight team which is part of a ground breaking program. The team transports critically ill patients in cardiogenic shock that are in need of further medical intervention. Kayla Kutilek is pictured with her chief and two pilots from the Memorial Hermann Life Flight team.

**Kaitlyn Brittan '07** just completed her third year as a medical student at UNMC. She coordinated the 2013 biennial Residency Symposium for over 400 medical students from the region, the largest in the country. Over this past year she served as the president of UNMC's chapter of the American Medical Association as well as president for Phi Rho Sigma, a medical society. She currently holds the position of Nebraska Medical Association Delegate and is serving on the Board of Directors for the Nebraska Medical Association.



**Corey Drvol '07** received his Doctorate of Physical Therapy degree from Duke University this May. Corey is planning to work in Charlotte, NC following his PT Licensing Examination. Corey is pictured with his sister, **Kristen Drvol '08** and brother, **Ryan Drvol '12**.



**SKUTT CATHOLIC**



# Alumni Updates



**Justin Setlik '08** and **Jessica Healy '07** got engaged in November of 2013 and are getting married at St. Vincent de Paul Church on Aug. 1, 2014. After this summer the couple will be living and working in Kansas City.

**Andy Morris '08** is pleased to announce his engagement to Kelsey Renee Bryant. Kelsey will graduate in May of 2015 with a Doctorate in Pharmacy from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Andrew is a Sales Engineer with Mechanical Sales in Kansas City. A July 19 wedding is planned in Omaha at St. Robert Bellarmine Church.

**Turner Vollmer '08** married Sarah Abels on May 31, 2014 at St. Robert Bellarmine Catholic Church. Their reception was held at the Durham Museum. The couple met at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Turner is currently working for Nebraska Machinery Company as a coordinator and Sarah is a kindergarten teacher for Millard Public Schools.

**Alyssa Johnson '08** married Cameron Meredith of Huntington Beach, CA on March 29, 2014 in a ceremony at St. Johns Catholic Church at Creighton University. The reception followed at the Hilton downtown. The couple honeymooned in Kauai. Alyssa and Cameron met and graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where Cameron played football. They plan to live in Southern California.

**Stephanie Muschall '09** was awarded Outstanding Marketing Student, Dean's Distinguished Scholar, and finalist for the top two College of Business Awards (Joseph Daniel Delp Award and Virgil Cheek Memorial Award) at the Missouri State University College of Business Spring Awards Dinner. She is employed as an Account Services Intern at SKAR Advertising Agency in Omaha this summer.

**Zachary Peterson '09** earned a Bachelor of Music degree in Collaborative Piano and Voice Performance, graduating with distinction from Hastings College. During his tenure at HC, he served as a collaborative artist for many student recitals, a faculty recital, several ensembles, and for the 2012 NMEA All-State Chorus. He was named the 2013 HC Theodore Presser Scholar, the 2014 Outstanding Performer, and the 2014 Outstanding Senior in Music. In addition, he was named to the 2014 *Who's Who* at Hastings College, along with 22 fellow graduating seniors. In the fall, Zachary

will pursue a Master of Music degree in Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music at the Eastman School of Music, under the guidance of Jean Barr, the first keyboard artist to be awarded a doctoral degree in accompanying. While at Eastman, he will serve as a graduate assistant in Studio Accompanying.



**Chrystina Rago '09** graduated Summa Cum Laude from Texas A&M University in May of 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication with a minor in Journalism. Chrystina spent the summer and early fall of 2013 as an intern at both MWW and MM2 Public Relations in Dallas, TX before accepting a job as a Marketing Coordinator for History Maker Homes in Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX.

**Kiley Eccker '10** graduated Magna Cum Laude from the Heider College of Business at Creighton University in May with her Bachelors of Science in Accounting. Kiley is currently sitting for the Certified Public Accounting tests this summer and will start at KPMG LLP in the Omaha office in August.

**Ally Finochiaro '10** graduated from UNMC with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and will be working at Bryan LGH on the Vascular Surgery floor in Lincoln, NE.

**Kat Kavan '10** was recently honored at the Creighton University Alpha Sigma Nu induction ceremony and luncheon for her scholarship, loyalty, and service to others. She is planning to attend UNMC to become a Nurse Practitioner.

**Matt Meyer '10** graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Aerospace Engineering. He accepted a job at Lockheed Martin in Orlando, Florida.

**Matt Warren '12** earned All-American honors from Collegiate Baseball/Louisville Slugger. Warren was named to the second team. He posted a 10-1 record with a 2.03 ERA – third best in the Big East – in 12 starts. He appeared in 14 games, tossing a team best 84 1/3 innings.

**Nathan Beran '12** participated in the National Championship Tournament with his wheelchair basketball team. His team was an underdog this year, so they were thrilled to have made it into the semifinals of the tournament.

Three SC alums were on the Creighton Softball Team that played in the season opener against Wichita State. The team went on to win this game 2-1. **Ellen Homan '10** hit the first pitch out of the park and started in left field. **Jen Daro '13** started at first base. **Erin McGonigal '12** supported her fellow teammates in their victory.

**Nicole Gottschalk '13** is attending Iowa State, one of the top engineering schools in the nation, majoring in Mechanical Engineering.



**James Hajek '10**, a redshirt Junior on the Weber State Men's Basketball Team, recently played in the 2014 NCAA Tournament against No. 1 seed Arizona in the second round of the tournament in San Diego, CA. The Weber State Basketball Team was both the Big Sky Conference Tournament Champion and the Big Sky Conference regular season title winner this year. Though knee surgery sidelined James for most of this past season, he was able to play in his team's last six games. James recently graduated with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Business Administration. He will begin his graduate studies this coming school year pursuing a MBA while playing his final season on the men's basketball team.

**Kylee Polsley '10** has always let her pitching do the talking since high school. She shined on the mound in her two years at Iowa Western. She had a career record of 43-8 and in her final year had an ERA of 2.31, while striking out 144 batters. In her first year at Chadron State College she excelled on the mound. She maintained a 4.15 ERA while pitching 82 innings and compiling three shutouts, the second most in school history. However, the Eagles failed to make the RMAC postseason tournament. Now, well into Polsley's senior season, the Eagles' are sitting seventh in the RMAC standings with an 11-7 record, and 11 conference games remaining. With already 80 innings pitched, Polsley has collected eight wins, while holding opposing batters to a .310 average. She has 62 strikeouts and only 26 walks.



# Around Skutt Catholic



Zach Pohlman, Katie Pohlman, and Andrew Wright perform at the Omaha Performing Arts Theatre Awards Showcase

Mark Schnitzler (Theatre Director), Chris Storm (Music Director), and Bill Howard (Set Director) had to have been beaming as bright as the Holland's stage lights on the night of June 12, when Omaha Performing Arts hosted the Nebraska High School Theatre Awards showcase. This was the first year for the event and 22 schools participated. Next year they are increasing to 40 schools with the hope of eventually expanding to the entire state. The red carpet event was held at the Holland Center

for Performing Arts and allowed all of the 300+ students to put on the glitz and enjoy their "Tony" night.

**Zachary Pohlman** was named one of the five outstanding lead actors. **Grace Eliason** was named one of the five outstanding supporting actresses. Skutt Catholic's *Les Misérables* was named one of the five outstanding productions.

**Zachary** performed as a member of the leads medley singing *Who Am I*. Our *Les*



Grace and Ben Eliason on the red carpet

*Misérables* cast took the "save the best for last" spot in the production, performing *One Day More*. **Courtney Riedmann** and **John Martinez** were members of the Showcase Ensemble that worked with a Tony Award nominated director and choreographer the last 10 days to put together an opening and closing number.

It really was a wonderful evening to celebrate high school theatre.



International High School Student Making His Mark in the Investment World

**Sunny Huang**, a 16 year old international student at Skutt Catholic High School, is already making his mark after a year in Omaha. As founder of Skutt Catholic's first investment club, Sunny has already hosted local business leaders to speak at school about their backgrounds, careers in finance, and investment strategies. Club members also actively invest in the market. Sunny, for one, has posted a 16% gain since November, 2013, in trades on Boeing, Nokia, and Blackberry.

Sunny's background is truly international: born in China, he moved to England at the age four, and then on to Canada until the age of 11, when he returned to China. With profits from an English tutoring business he created with friends from school, he began his investment career.

Plans are now underway to create an investment club alliance with other schools abroad, as well as a club website, a blog, and eventually webinars. The prestigious Finance Club of Shenzhen is already on board to share experiences with the Chinese market and to learn from their counterparts in Omaha via webcam.

Summer plans included research work under the guidance of an analyst at a Lincoln-based investment banking firm. In early July, Sunny headed to China with **Nick Girard**, Co-Director of the Skutt Finance Club, as delegates to a conference on social innovation sponsored by the International Young Pioneers Union of Shenzhen. High school students from around the world presented their research on current deficiencies in various social welfare programs, and offered up proposals for correcting them. Talk about *Making a Difference*!

Cynthia Carlson

## WINTER

Over the years, Skutt Catholic has been extremely fortunate to have great athletic and activity programs. **We are very proud of each and every one of them.** Every year students, coaches, and sponsors are challenged by the classes that came before them and this year was no different. This is a salute to those people.

### Wrestling

It was a banner year for SC athletics with seven NSAA State Champions. The wrestling team won its 16th state championship under the direction of Head Coach Brad Hildebrandt. Along with the team's success, there were four individual state champions - **Korbin Meink** (106), **Jeff Heinz** (113), **Brian Peska** (120), and **Jake Walker** (152). There were several other medal winners: 2nd place - **Bailey**

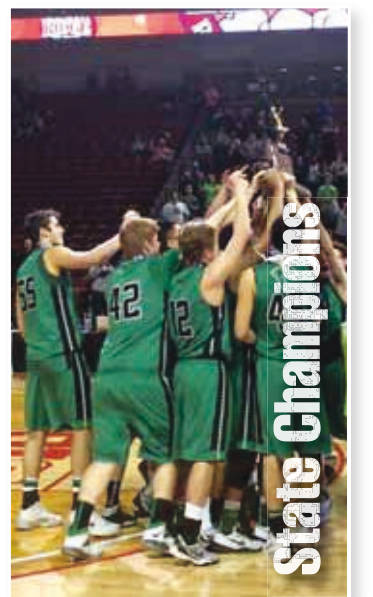
**Vanderpool** (138), 3rd place - **Landon Gotschall** (160), **Nick Hollins** (170), and 5th place - **Frank Deloa** (132).

The team also won the Dual Meet State Championship (Class B) held the week after the individual State Meet in Kearney. On the way to the title, the SkyHawks defeated Lexington, Nebraska City, and Bennington (49-21) to win the title.



### Basketball

Basketball season began and ended with championships. The SkyHawk boys and girls traveled to Western Nebraska to play in the Western Athletic Conference BKB Tourney. Both teams came away with championships with the girls defeating Torrington, WY 49-34 and the boys taking home the trophy with a 65-49 victory over Gering. The girls (15-9) led by Coach Marty Plum, had a resurgence near the end of the year and defeated Mercy in the district opening round but then lost to Gross Catholic to end their season. The boys (22-6) were led by new coach, Kyle Jurgens. After a district final loss to Elkhorn South, the SkyHawks took full advantage of a wild card berth in the State Tournament. They defeated Scottsbluff, Elkhorn South, and Beatrice on their way to the state championship. **Wills Wallrapp** was named to the Class B All State team.



## Misoatra Betsaka Skutt Catholic!

"Thank you Skutt Catholic!" came through loud and clear from the children of Kiarjavato, Madagascar. For the past several years, faculty member Dawn Fuelberth and her A.P. Biology classes have been supporting the Madagascar Biodiversity Partnership and learning more about conservation in the process. Funds raised by Skutt Catholic students and others helped the people of Madagascar plant 78,000 native trees back into the landscape.

These reforestation efforts create additional habitat for the critically endangered black-and-white ruffed lemur and the greater bamboo lemur that live in the forest.

The project also gives incentives like clean burning rocket stoves to the Malagasy natives hired to plant and maintain trees. **The children who raise saplings from seeds they find are rewarded with soccer and volley balls.** The project

encourages sustainable and improved quality of living while maintaining the country's rich biodiversity. From the looks of these pictures, it is a "win-win" initiative.





# Around *Skutt Catholic*



## Mock Trial

Skutt Catholic Mock Trial, coached by Mary Meyer and Patrick and Judy Borchers, represented Nebraska and finished 13th in the nation (46 states and territories represented). In the last five years of representing Nebraska in the national championship Skutt Catholic has assembled a 16-4 record. In the six total times SC has represented Nebraska (all since 2007), the SkyHawks have never lost to a team who didn't finish in the top 10, has always had a 3-1 or 4-0 record, and have never finished lower than 14th.

In the really good news department, **Brianna Desa** was named for the second year in a row one of the top 10 lawyers in the competition and **Nathan Jensen** was named as one of the top 10 witnesses in the competition – all among several hundred competitors from the event.

It's a bittersweet departure to seniors **Nathan Jensen, Brianna Desa, Rachel Zwiener, and Taylor Gibson** – all of whom have meant a tremendous amount to the program. Along with these seniors, **Marie Wagner, Brittany Margritz, Grace Smith, Mary Bean, and Jacob Koperski** also are integral members of the team.

## Speech

The SkyHawk Speech team (Coach Matt Eledge) captured their 3rd straight State Championship. State Results: **Zachary Dinslage, Mitchell Distefano, John Grigaitis, Nic Peterson, Cole Scott** (State Champions Oral Interpretation of Drama) - **Catherine Elliott, Taylor Lofdahl** (State Champions Duet Acting) - **Samantha Turco** (State Champion Entertainment Speaking) - **Zachary Pohlman** (State Champion Humorous Interpretation & Informative Speaking) - **Kathleen Pohlman** (State Champion Persuasive Speaking) - **Abigail Hoffman** (State Champion Poetry Interpretation)



## Poetry Out Loud

She became intrigued with poetry after reading a few written by her older brother Zachary. After seeing videos of Poetry Out Loud (Sponsor Sherri Hoye) contests, Amanda thought it was something she could do because she has a performance background in dance, show choir, and speech. **Amanda Pohlman**, (9th grade) is this year's Poetry Out Loud state champion. She competed with 52 students from across the country in the Poetry Out Loud National Championship in Washington, D.C. April 29-30.

## Vocal Music

The Skutt Catholic Concert Choir (Sponsor Chris Storm) has had a very successful year this year. They have grown to 68 members in the non-auditioned choir. This year they performed and competed very well. Not only did they offer four home concerts through the year, but also sang at the Blair High School Choir Invitational with high school choirs from Blair, Bennington, and Millard South. At District Music Contest they again wowed the judges, bringing home another Superior rating, including a perfect score.

Vivace, Skutt Catholic's Varsity show choir began their fourth year as a coed ensemble, with 42 members, a band of six, and a crew of two. They competed well at Westside High School in early February and then things really got going in mid-February and March. On Feb. 14, they earned their 3rd consecutive NCDA Gold Trophy, and then competed in the evening finals for the first time ever at Elkhorn South HS on Feb. 15. That taste of success pushed them to first place in their division and finals performances. They ended the year at Sioux City East where they were named First Runner-Up overall, and were also awarded Caption Awards for Best Stage Crew, Outstanding Female Soloist (**Grace Eliason**) and Outstanding Performer (**Keanu Mendez**). It truly was a great year for Vivace and we are looking forward to continuing the legacy next year with the 50-member 2014-2015 Vivace ensemble!

## Cheerleading

After a fantastic fall season cheering the football team to a state championship and placing first at the Hawkeye Championships in Des Moines, Iowa, the cheerleaders and Coach Beckie Rago finished out the year busier than ever. After finishing third in the UCA's Spirit of America Regional in January and competing in the state tournament in February, they cheered on the boys basketball team to a state championship! They capped off the season with the spring sports pep rally, and then took a short one-week break before try-outs began for the upcoming season. The new squad was selected in mid-April and started practicing at the beginning of May in preparation for UCA summer camp at Northwest Missouri State. The girls have been working hard to learn new skills and make the upcoming season even better than the last!



## Bowling

The SC Bowling (Coach Wayne Stockwell) season with the Omaha Metro High School Bowling Leagues ended on Feb. 3 with playoffs at Leopard Lanes in Bellevue, where over \$5,000 of scholarship funds were awarded to top bowlers.

After the regular 10 weeks of League Bowling almost all teams improved. The JV girls finished 1st and 2nd. Our three JV boys teams finished 5th, 7th, and 9th place. Varsity boys started out by having a team total score of 1,189 in the first weeks of bowling. That beat the high team score for five member teams from across the country of the previous year.

## Dance

The Skutt Catholic Dance Team (Coach Maggie Burbach) exceeded what were already high expectations with major success amidst challenging competition. Starting the competitive circuit by earning 1st Place in Jazz and 3rd Place in Pom at Minnesota Regionals, it quickly became evident that this was a special group of girls. Thereafter, the SkyHawk squad soared into UDA Nationals at Disney World where they performed at an unprecedented level, qualifying for the finals in Jazz and semi-finals in Pom.

The stunning achievements at nationals gave the team the confidence and experience to return to Grand Island and defend their state titles in Jazz and Pom. The 2013-14 season is most accurately described as a cohesive group of girls, supporting each other through hard work and perseverance, resulting in well deserved success and long lasting friendships.

## Swimming

The swimmers this year qualified 15 individuals for the state meet. Led by Coach Kellie Harris, the boys and girls saw times lower (several new school records set). At state, the girls placed 21st but the boys DNP. **Anna Capoun** placed 11th - 50 Freestyle and 15th - 500 Freestyle.

+  
**SKUTT CATHOLIC**



# Around Skutt Catholic



## Color/Winter Guard

The Color Guard coached by Allison Goodman, performed in the fall with the marching band and performed to a Michael Jackson theme.

During the winter performance season, the team expanded their competitions into the state of Missouri for a unique experience with different judges and teams. The team also helped welcome a new Winter Guard team to the competitions this year, Millard North. Allison also coached them. The girls cheered each other on and helped with set up and take down of show props. Overall the team finished first in their competition category with their beautiful show, **Letters to God**.

## SPRING

There were a couple of warm breezes this spring, but many games were either played in winter-like weather or lost to cold and rain. However, through it all the Girls Tennis programs captured a State Championship.

### Girl's Soccer

The girl's soccer program, coached by John Carlson, finished off their season with a crushing 2-1 OT loss to Hastings. With many post season honors going to both seniors and underclassmen, the future remains bright.

### Girl's Tennis

Girl's Tennis, coached by Sheryl Vaughn, captured its third straight team championship, and eighth in nine years, by winning all four individual titles at the Nebraska Tennis Center. The SkyHawks were the second team to sweep the No. 1 singles, No. 2 singles, No. 1 doubles and No. 2 doubles titles at the state tournament, matching Omaha Duchesne in 1985. The SkyHawks were led by State Champions: **Teresa Kaiser** (11) - #1 Singles, **Johnna Lowe** (9) - #2 Singles, **Bianca Lowe** (11) / **Alexandra Rieke** (11), - #1 Doubles and **Jamie Healy** (12) / **Elia Healy** (9) - #2 Doubles. The future looks very promising for Skutt Catholic Tennis.



State Champions

### Boy's Soccer

Out of character, the boy's soccer program (10-9) had a difficult season. Due to injuries, sickness, etc. many players saw significant loss of playing time. The team, headed by new coach Justin Zabawa, ended their season at state losing 3-0 to eventual State Champion, Columbus Scotus. **Joe Brown** was named to the Class B All State Team.



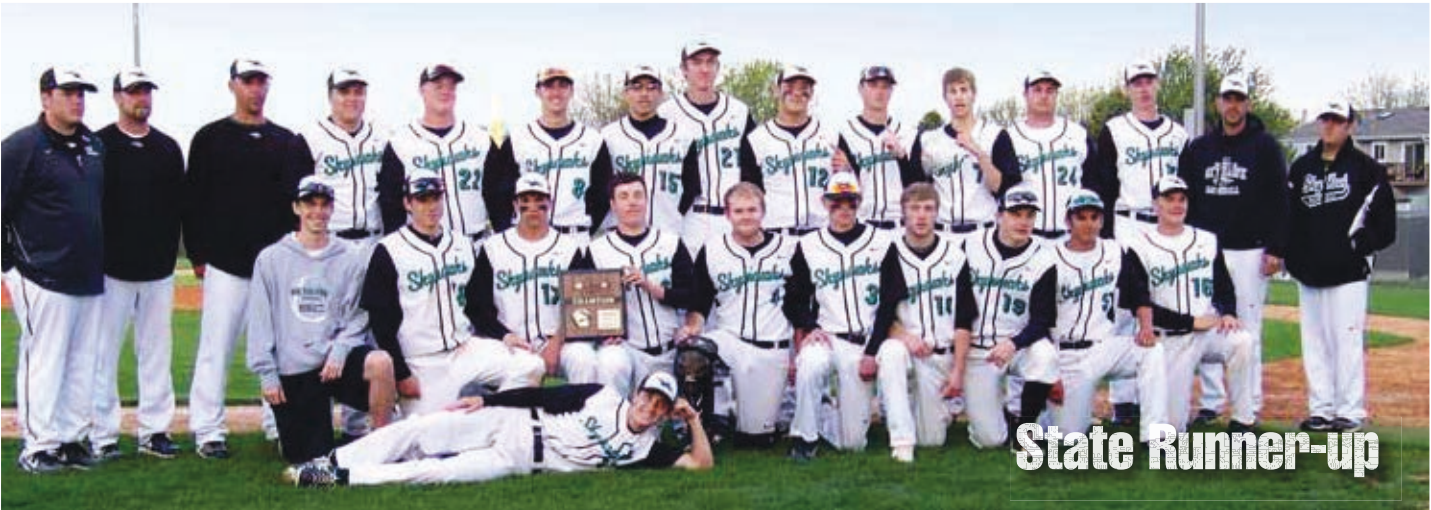
### Trap Shooting

The Skutt Catholic Trap team finished their 12th season with Lee White-Hamilton as head coach. It was a rebuilding year as we had no seniors returning. **Francesca Romano** started the team out at the Papillion Gun Club Invitational taking runner-up for Ladies High Handicap. **Cameron Carney** tied for runner-up for the 24/25 yard handicap round and was three rocks from the high over all. **Nathan Schmidt** placed as runner-up at the 22/23 yard handicap round at the Fremont Invitational meet. **Nathan Schmidt** also took second place for his class A3 at the 24 yard line at the Eastern Cornhusker Trapshooting Conference Meet.

Hard work is rewarded when you go to the Cornhusker State Meet in Doniphan, NE. The Skutt #1 squad - **Nathan Schmidt, Francesca Romano, Noah Mueller, Cameron Carney, and Garrett Geisler** placed 31 out of 333 squads in overall competition. **Zach Epperson** began his handicap round by shooting 25 straight at the 18/19 yard, his score of 69/75 put him in fourth place.

### Boys Golf

Again it wasn't great weather when the Boys Golf team teed it up in the State Tournament. Coached by Duane Baylor, the guys looked ahead with anticipation after an RCC Championship. After all the great shots, the team finished in 5th place - a great end to their season. **Benjamin Meschede** (11) finished in a tie for 15th.



State Runner-up

### Baseball

The traditional national pastime rang in the new season with the crack of the bat (or ping of the metal) as the SkyHawk baseball team, coached by Shawn Exner, belted out a district championship and a state appearance.

Although the weather did not cooperate the entire spring, the SkyHawks defeated Gretna, 3-1 in the district final. The local nine advanced to the state tournament and Skutt Catholic finished state runner-up. The SkyHawks lost a tough 7-5 game to Pius. **Jake Barton, Spencer Meduna, and Kyle O'Neill** were named to All-State 1st Teams.

### Track

Running much like those spring winds, this year's track team qualified 13 athletes. Coached by Matt Turman, here are state results:

**Alexander Christen** (12) - 3200R (13th), 800m (24th)  
**Andrew Heithoff** (11) - 3200R (13th)  
**Dakota Krejci Smith** (12) - 100m (4th), 200m  
**Evan Meduna** (11) - 3200R (13th)  
**Jacob Schmit** (10) - Discus (17th)  
**Trevor Schulte** (11) - 100m, 200m  
**Andrew Wright** (12) - 3200R (13th)

**Madison Hasz** (11) - 100m Hurdles, 300m Hurdles, 400R (16th)  
**Mikaela Lenz** (11) - 3200m (22nd)  
**Katherine Lynch** (12) - 3200m (19th)  
**Kristin McGonigal** (11) - 400R (16th)  
**Natalie Prucha** (12) - 400R (16th)  
**Emily Sunderland** (12) - 400R (16th)

Mike McMahon

SKUTT CATHOLIC



HIGHEST HONORS

Skutt Catholic Baccalaureate and Graduation ceremonies are truly grand affairs, full of pomp and circumstance with a fair amount of laughter and tears. Both events showcase the incredible accomplishments our senior class. Although, there are hundreds of awards, accolades, and scholarships presented; there are some that stand out as the school’s most prestigious honors.

**NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION** - More than one and a half million students took the 2012 PSAT test which entered them all into the National Merit Scholarship Competition. Skutt Catholic High School was honored to have three National Merit Scholarship finalists this year. These finalists were among the top 1% of all Nebraska seniors and the top 15,000 students in the nation:

Samuel Howard, Michael Pieper, and Hannah Richstein

Skutt Catholic High School was also honored to have two Commended Scholars in the National Merit Scholarship Competition this year. These scholars were in the top 50,000 scorers on the 2012 PSAT:

Joe Bloomingdale and Nathan Jensen

**VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIAN** - The top two students of the graduating class of 2014 were:

Valedictorian - **Hannah Richstein**  
Salutarian - **Samuel Howard**

**SKYHAWK ACTIVITIES AWARD** - The SkyHawk Activities Award recognizes one outstanding male and one outstanding female who have excelled in multiple, non-athletic, extracurricular activities throughout their careers at Skutt Catholic. The recipient must be a multi-activity letter winner or one who held significant roles in non-lettering Skutt Catholic activities and also a positive representative of the school in and out of the classroom.

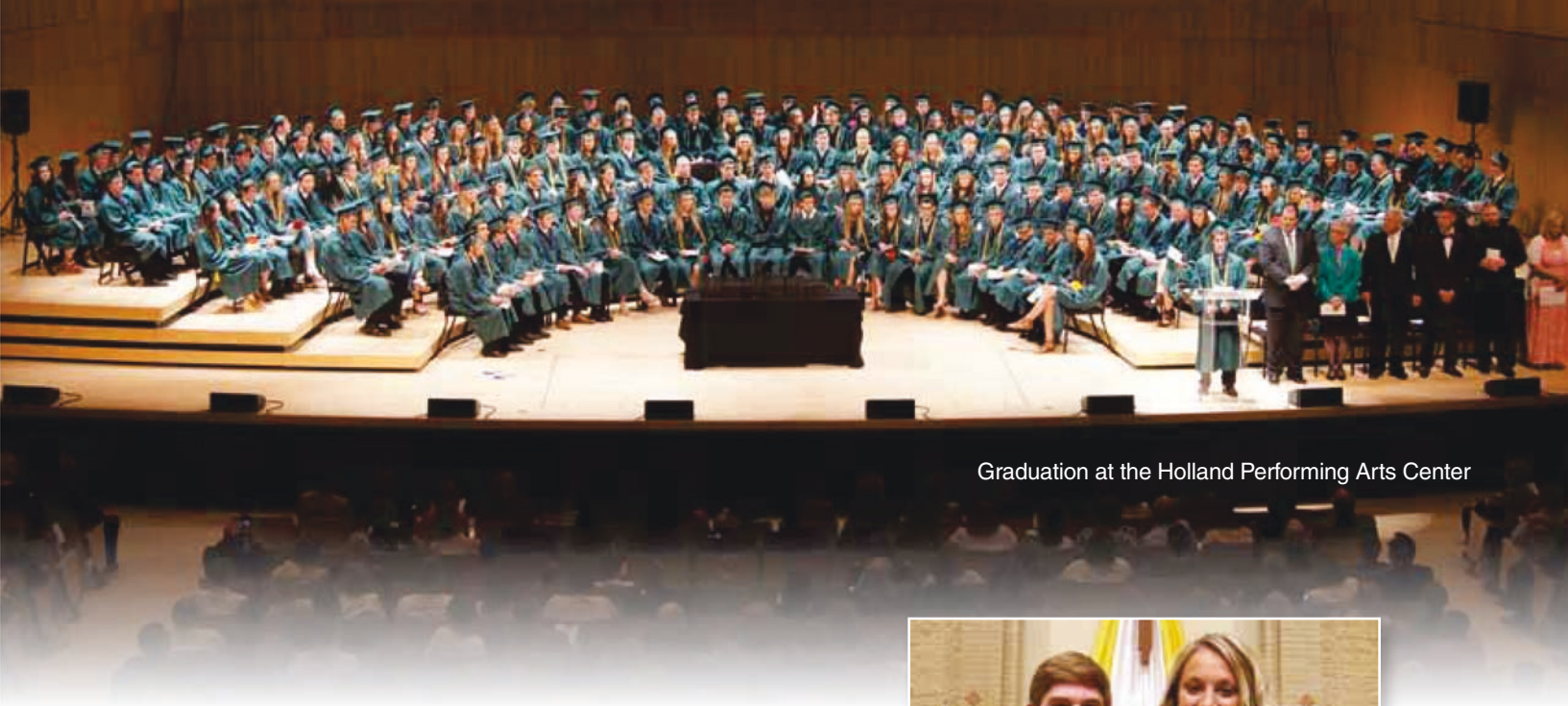
Male Recipient of the SkyHawk Activities Award  
**John Martinez**  
Female Recipient of the SkyHawk Activities Award  
**Hannah Richstein**

**STUDENT ATHLETE OF THE YEAR** - The Skutt Catholic Athletic Committee started the tradition of naming one outstanding male and one outstanding female athlete of the year from the senior class. Several senior athletes were nominated by our coaches with the following criteria: multi-sport letter winner, a positive representative of the school in and out of the classroom, and someone who earned conference or state honors in at least one sport.

Male Student Athlete of the Year - **Tynan O’Brien**  
Female Student Athlete of Year - **Kaylan Jablonski**



Male Athlete of the Year Tynan O'Brien with his parents Chris and Shayla. Ty was one win away from accomplishing a phenominal feat; he played on the state football, state basketball, and state runner-up baseball teams.



Graduation at the Holland Performing Arts Center

**SKYHAWK SPIRIT AWARD** - The seniors nominated for this award were positive representatives of the school and of SC activities, maintained good academic standing, and contributed to the enhancement of overall school spirit.

Male SkyHawk Spirit Award - **Joseph Zach**  
Female SkyHawk Spirit Award - **Ashley Malloy**

**LIVING THE GOSPEL AWARDS** - Each year, Skutt Catholic honors two graduating seniors with the Living the Gospel Award. These students, in particular, demonstrated a commitment to serving others.

Andrew Johnson and Catherine Elliott

**JESSE GRIESE AWARD** - This award was created in memory of Jesse Griesse who graduated from Skutt Catholic in 2001. Jesse died tragically in the summer of 2004. During his life, with his many acts of kindness and his positive spirit, Jesse touched the lives of countless people. The criteria of this award were established based on Jesse’s admirable qualities and include: being a student who brings joy and comfort to all, adults as well as peers; is viewed as a best friend to many; enjoys the beauty of nature; exemplifies the pursuit of excellence in many activities; rejoices in the success of others; brings out the best in others; and displays respect and loyalty to Church, family, and school.

Jesse Griesse Award Recipient - **Sarah Johnson**



V.J. and Angela Skutt Award winners  
Zachary Pohlman and Taylor Lofdahl

**V. J. AND ANGELA SKUTT AWARDS** - The V. J. and Angela Skutt Awards are the highest awards given at Skutt Catholic and are intended to honor the most outstanding male and female graduates based on the charisms of Skutt Catholic High School. Our charisms, which are defined as special gifts of the Holy Spirit that characterize an individual and that are used to contribute to the common good and glorify God, were established based on the lives of V.J. and Angela Skutt. These charisms are: personal success with integrity and responsibility; fairness to all; care and concern for individuals; service to those in need of help and healing; loyalty to religious faith; and joy and wonder in the beauty of all God’s creation.

V. J. Skutt Award - **Zachary Pohlman**  
Angela Skutt Award - **Taylor Lofdahl**

*We congratulate these students and all those from the class of 2014.  
It was an incredible year for a very dynamic group of students.*



# Event Updates



Class of 2004 2nd Place



Class of 2010 Team Champions

## Alumni Basketball Tournament

The Skutt Catholic Alumni Association hosted the Fifth Annual Alumni Basketball Tournament on March 28-29. Eight teams showed up to compete. Teams ranged from the class of 1999 to the class of 2011. The class of 2010 team, with a little help from two members from the class of 2008, was crowned victorious during the championship game where they beat the class of 2004.

The two-day event was anchored by a social on the first evening that included a pasta dinner and a beer garden. President-elect John McMahon spoke to the alumni and alumni parents in attendance. The Skutt Catholic State Champion Boys Basketball Team and Coach Jurgens were honored. The event is fast becoming one of our community's favorites.

## Alumni Soccer Social

The Skutt Catholic Boys Soccer team hosted the first Alumni Soccer Social on May 3 of this year. The registered players were divided into two teams. The *Young Guns* team was comprised of any alumni that graduated in 2007 or later, and the *Not So Young Guns* for those who graduated before 2007. In the end the Young Guns were victorious but all the participants were winners.

It was a spirited match on the pitch. Many of the alumni welcomed the chance to play on the synthetic turf. Water breaks were instituted for the second half as the heat and the free refreshments for the event took their toll. Attendees enjoyed burgers and beer served by parents of the SC Boys Soccer team. We invite you to dig out those cleats and join us next year for this social, which we hope will become an annual event.

## HawkWalk 2014:

### *Walking on Sunshine*

HawkWalk 2014 – Walking on Sunshine! took place on Wed., April 29. The students, faculty, and staff raised over \$21,000 in support of SC's Financial Aid Program. On the day of the event sunshine was a hope and a prayer. We overcame the challenges of the weather and completed our five-mile trek around Lake Zorinsky. Upon returning to school 800 hamburgers were served to a chilled but energetic group of students, faculty, and staff. Thank you to everyone who made the day a success.

## Flight for Excellence

Skutt Catholic's annual alumni sponsored golf benefit, Flight for Excellence, was held on Sat., June 27 at Pacific Springs Golf Course. The event had 106 alumni, alumni parents, current parents, and friends of Skutt Catholic in attendance. FFE Event Chair Mark Scholz and Alumni President Kelsey Sievers organized a day full of golf, friends, food, and fun.

The money raised from the event funds two \$500 scholarships for current SC students as well as supports other alumni events throughout the year.



Angel Flight General Chairs Steven & Chris Mendlik and Brent & Michele Pohlman

## Angel Flight 2014

Angel Flight 2014 is scheduled for Sat., Sept. 27. This year's theme is *Expect a Masterpiece!* General Chairs Steve & Chris Mendlik and Brent & Michele Pohlman are working to bring together a collection of brilliant minds, hearts, and talents to create an evening that will highlight all the masterpieces that are created at Skutt Catholic. Honorary Chairs Paul and Patty Mendlik have been longtime supporters of the school and past chairs of the event.

We hope you will consider joining us for this annual event that includes dinner, silent and live auctions, and lottery ticket sales with a chance to win \$10,000! Please consider purchasing a table, donating to the event, and/or volunteering for a committee at [SkuttCatholic.com](http://SkuttCatholic.com).

## Skutt Catholic Gave!

### OMAHA GIVES!

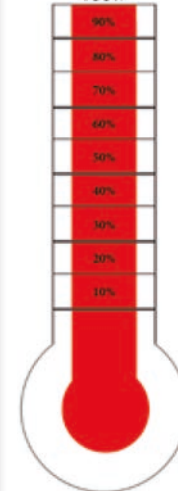
*powered by the Omaha Community Foundation*

Skutt Catholic had 95 donors participate in Omaha Community Foundation's 24-hour online fundraiser *Omaha Gives*. The school appreciates the generosity shown during this event. Your gifts helped garner over \$10,000, in one day, for our internal building fund. This is only the second year for the fundraiser, with over \$6,000,000 raised for area non-profits. Adding excitement to this particular event:

1. Cash awards are given to non-profits with the greatest number of donors.
2. Distribution of matching funds (\$750,000) are made to every non-profit based on their percentage of funds raised.

Look for Skutt Catholic's presence in *Omaha Gives* next May.

**Annual Appeal**  
**GOAL Reached!**  
**100%**



### Annual Appeal Update

Our 2013-2014 Annual Appeal came to a close at the end of the school's fiscal year on June 30. \$145,299.63 was raised. 427 constituents contributed and we reached 116% of our budgeted goal. Monies collected through the Annual Appeal support the general operating expenses of the school, as well as Skutt Catholic's Financial Aid program. In an effort to keep our school's financial future robust, we determined at the onset of this appeal that monies brought in over our budgeted goal would be directed to Skutt Catholic's Endowment Fund. We are quite pleased to be able to make a substantial donation to this important fund. We thank Brian McGrath for serving as the 2013-2014 Annual Appeal chairperson. Brian's enthusiasm and strategic thinking were valuable and appreciated assets in helping us reach our goal.

### Sand Volleyball Courts Update

The Skutt Catholic volleyball community recently raised over \$24,000 to fully fund new sand volleyball courts. The courts are being installed near the west entrance of the football field. According to varsity volleyball Coach Renee Saunders, "These courts not only allow the volleyball team but all teams to exercise in the sand for agility, speed, and plyometric training." Other benefits of the new courts include:

- PE classes can participate in sand volleyball
- More volleyball practice space during times when the gyms are being refinished or used for other events
- Additional court space for summer camps
- Fundraising opportunities: summer sand volleyball leagues and tournaments

**SKUTT CATHOLIC**





# Leap of Faith

It took a leap of faith, and 18 months of fund-raising and planning, but taking 49 choir students and parents to Rome for a week was definitely worth the effort. This summer, members of the Skutt Catholic Concert Choir participated in the 2014 International Choral Festival in Rome. The 28 singers combined with choirs from Santa Barbara, California; Dearborn, Michigan; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Stillwater, Minnesota; to form the 2014 Festival Chorus. In addition to a great deal of sight-seeing, the chorus of over 120 singers rehearsed together under the leadership of Dr. Z. Randall Stroope for three days. It culminated in a performance at the Basilica Santa Maria sopra Minerva, as well as singing for the Feast of St. John the Baptist at the Basilica of St. Peter.

Our tour started off on Fri., June 20, as we flew from Omaha to Minneapolis, through Amsterdam, and finally arriving in Rome on Saturday. We met our tour manager at the airport and checked in at our hotel. Before our evening dinner with the combined choirs, we bussed to Parrocchia Sacra Famiglia and attended the Saturday Mass. This was the students' first immersion experience, but it got them quickly acclimated to the culture, and what to expect during their Sunday afternoon Angelus and Papal Blessing on St. Peter's Square.

"Going to Rome and singing in some of the oldest, holiest churches in the world has been a life changing experience," said SC senior **Rachel Podraza**. The concert choir members spent Sunday afternoon touring ancient Ostia, a coastal trade city and military colony founded in the 7th century BC and only re-discovered in 1850. They were able to see the apartment building, bath houses, taverns, grocery shops, and holy spaces built and used more than two centuries ago by more than 100,000 citizens. The city used to be at the mouth of the Tiber river, but due to silting and flooding, it is now more than two miles from the coast.

Rehearsals with the festival chorus continued on Sunday evening and Monday morning. On Monday afternoon, the students were treated to guided tours of Religious Rome, including the Vatican Museum, Vatican City, St. Peter's Basilica, and the Sistine Chapel. Junior **Matthew Pohlman** said, "Being in the Sistine Chapel, where so many Popes were seen for their first time in the papacies, was so amazing, it gave me chills." This was not an uncommon sentiment among our students and their families. It was truly amazing to be in

places that hold so much significance in the history and future of the Catholic Church. There was even a little extra time in the day, so we squeezed in a short trip for gelato at the Piazza Navona, where we were also able to take in the Four Rivers Fountain, and a little shopping.

Tuesday, our busiest day, was filled with a concert dress rehearsal, Mass in the Vatican, and the final International Choral Festival Concert. We started our day with a guided tour of the Coliseum, Roman Forum, Palatine Hill, the Pantheon, and Baths of Caracalla. The singers worked hard during their dress rehearsal and all the details came together with the addition of the Basilica Organ and



String Ensemble. Following the rehearsal we headed back to Vatican City to take our places for the 5 p.m. Mass at the Basilica of St. Peter. Many of the students commented that, even after seeing Pope Francis on Sunday, this Mass was the highlight of their tour and truly life-changing. Recent graduate **Zachary Pohlman** said, "Although I did not understand the Latin, I knew I was participating in the fundamental act of Catholicism in its holiest place. I broke down and cried tears of thanksgiving."

Our final concert on Tuesday evening was the ultimate culmination of the students' work through the year, and even through the past five years that I have been teaching at Skutt Catholic. When asked by Dr. Stroope for our choir to join the festival, I was humbled. I now share a feeling of great joy because I was able to help open up the eyes of our students to the world around them. Senior **Lauren Gehrki** stated, "This trip is something I will never forget. Everything was just so unreal. I had to keep reminding myself that it was actually happening." "It was more than just a trip, it was a life changer," added senior **Grace Tritsch**.

I would like to offer a heart-felt thank you to everyone who participated in our fund-raising through the past 18 months to make this tour a reality. It doesn't matter if you contributed a little or a lot, or even just offered up prayers for our singers and families, it has meant the world to me and to these students. They truly have encountered a life changing experience.

Chris Storm

## In Memoriam

*The following names are friends of Skutt Catholic who have passed away since Jan. 1, 2014. If you have an immediate family member who has passed way recently, please contact the Advancement Office. We would be honored to include them in the Skutt Catholic Book of Remembrance.*

**Michael Adamowicz** - paternal grandfather of Natalie Adamowicz '16

**Bonnie Anderson** - mother of Sheri Kros (faculty member), maternal grandmother of Jessica Kros '05, and Michael Kros '08

**Peggy Burnham** - aunt of Shannon Mettling '11 and Sydney Mettling '14

**Nick Hines** - friend of Skutt Catholic

**Anne Jensen** - paternal grandmother of Daniel Jensen '07, Cecelia Jensen '09, and Nate Jensen '14

**Margaret Kacirek** - maternal grandmother of Jared Wagner '15

**Bernice Kreikemeier** - maternal grandmother of Zachary Legband '13

**Don Lowe** - paternal grandfather of Bianca Lowe '15, Skylar Lowe '15, and Johnna Lowe '17

**Robert Mannino** - uncle of Natalie Hahn '14 and Rachel Hahn '17

**Alyce Matulka** - paternal grandmother of Lexi Matulka '13 and Grayson Matulka '16

**Donna McGrath** - paternal grandmother of Andrew McGrath '12, Allison McGrath '14, and Meghan McGrath '16

**Pedro (Pete) Cruz Padilla** - father-in-law of Isela Padilla (faculty member) Charles Patlan - stepmother's father of Macy and Jarrett Damewood '16

**George Boris Riedmann** - maternal grandfather of Father Jeff Mollner (faculty member)

**Ted Ridgway** - maternal grandfather of McAllister (Alec) Zajicek '16

**William Robinson** - father of Rachel Robinson '08, Samuel Robinson '10, and Aaron Robinson '13

**Kara Shainholtz** - mother of Barrett Shainholtz '09

**Hector Vela** - paternal grandfather of Jacob Vela '08

**Joan Wilcox** - mother-in-law of Joan Koneck-Wilcox (past faculty member), grandmother of Robert Koneck-Wilcox '02, Joan Koneck-Wilcox '03, Joseph Koneck-Wilcox '05 (faculty member), Peter Koneck-Wilcox '07, Mary Koneck-Wilcox '11, and Clare Koneck-Wilcox '13

**Mary Wolk** - mother-in-law of George Pauchalk (faculty member)

**Theresa Zadina** - stepfather's mother of Amanda Gum '09, and paternal grandmother of Allison Zadina '13, and Lucy Zadina '14

**Robert Benedict Zielinski** - father-in-law of Kevin Kleinsasser (faculty member), Mary Kleinsasser '11, and Sara Kleinsasser '13

