



ST. NORBERT CATHOLIC SCHOOL

ALUMNI NEWS

instagram: SNCSHawks

saintnorbertschool.org/alumni

January 2023

Returning to their ROOTS

McNamara. Ernst. Conway. Nichols. Purpura.

These are surnames alumni and current families may be familiar with. Chances are they attended St. Norbert Catholic School together. Or maybe their children graduated from the school or grandchildren are now enrolled.

These days it's not uncommon to find generations of families who have walked the halls of the school since it was founded by the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and opened in September 1965.

Current kindergarten teacher **Patty (Ward) McKimmey** (1980) and 7th grade homeroom teacher **Lisa (Signaigo) Stephens** (1986) both sent their combined six children to St. Norbert.

Michael Ernst graduated from SNCS in 1972. His three kids followed and now two of his grandchildren, Campbell and Jameson, are in second and fourth grades, respectively.

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Ashley Avalos is one of at least seven alumni who have kids enrolled in pre-kindergarten, including daughter Lyla at right.

ALUMNI in the NEWS

1980s

Orv Mohler (1981) graduated from Servite, attended UC Irvine and is now regional sales consultant for the financial services company, Producers Choice Network, in Orange County.

Jim Vanderpool (1985), a graduate of Servite and Purdue University, is city manager for Anaheim after serving the city of Buena Park in the same role for eight years.

Dominic Clesceri (1985) owns and operates DC Arms Co. in Westmoreland, Tennessee.

Wendy Blanda (1986) graduated from Rosary and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, continuing on to University of Michigan for her PhD in macromolecular science and engineering. She is currently launching her Tustin-based consultancy business, providing chemistry and manufacturing controls solutions for the pharmaceutical industry.

Debra (Corti) Patriquin (1986) went on to graduate from Rosary, attended UC Riverside and now works as a financial advisor for Merrill, a Bank of America Company, in Newport Beach. Last year Debra was named Forbes "America's Top Women Wealth Advisors—Best in State."

1990s

After 10 years as a school teacher, **Alicia (Ramirez) Westphalen** (1998) switched

Parent turns pain into inspiration

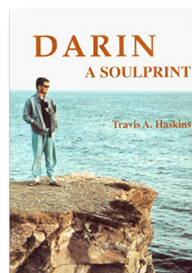
In the late 1980s, 21-year-old SNCS alumnus Darin Haskins (1981) was driving his Jeep on the 57 freeway when it drifted off and he became pinned beneath the roll bar.

It was a day his family would never forget.

To cope with Darin's untimely death and the overwhelming pain and grief that followed, his father, Travis Haskins, eventually penned "Darin: A Soulprint," that was published in 1994.

This is the story of the last two months of Darin's life, his death and the after-death experience that changed his father's life. It's also the story of a father/son relationship—often awkward and difficult, often uniquely loving—that died and was reborn in a parent's pain.

Darrin had freckles, curly black hair and beautiful blue eyes and was "fun,



very kind, helpful," shares SNCS classmate Sheri (Schia-vo) Gomez.

"I remember hearing about his death; I felt terrible for his parents," says Sheri. "Darin was smart, creative, loved to draw. I can still see him in my mind. We spent many years together in school."

Darin's mother, Maureen Haskins, worked in the learning lab and taught science at St. Norbert School 1983 to 2004. Darin went on to graduate from Villa Park High School. In addition to his parents, Darin is survived by two brothers.

Travis Haskins is a retired high school English and journalism teacher who left the classroom in order to write books.

"Darin: A Soulprint" is available on Amazon.

WHERE I AM TODAY

I thought I should send in an update on what I've been doing. I graduated in 1976 (Mrs. Frisk's classroom).

After one year at Mater Dei, our family moved to Chicago and I graduated Northern Illinois University and began a journalism career with Copley Press. In 1990 I joined the psychedelic Celtic folk rock band, the Drovers, which appeared in the movies "Backdraft" and "Blink."

When the band dissolved I served seven years as communications director for a consultancy to the



David Callahan (1976) now resides in Sweden.

Chicago Department of Transportation, after which I moved to Sweden with my family and became an international media representative responsible for KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, where I work today.

I took my children to see St. Norbert's a few years ago, on a summer day, so it was empty. It brought back lots of good memories. I'll never forget

Sr. Kathleen, Father Fergus, Mrs. Dillon and so many other wonderful people who served the children there so well.

—David Callahan



St. Norbert School recently adopted a Planned Giving program to ensure the school continues its mission in educating students.

Laying a Strong FOUNDATION

Last April, St. Norbert Catholic School's bookkeeper received great news: the school had been named one of five beneficiaries in the will of a parishioner.

With a policy in the works yet not in place, it took the school almost six months to meet all legal requirements and facilitate the \$69,000 donation.

Principal Joe Ciccoianni says while the school receives generous donations every year, this bequest was his first of this size since he started at the school nine years ago.

"I was surprisingly thrilled to learn that someone was blessed in this life and wanted to turn around and bless our kids," Ciccoianni says.

The Consultative School Board will ultimately decide where that money will go, though Ciccoianni says current needs include new classroom furniture and air conditioning units, the endowment fund and tuition assistance.

According to a story in the New York Times, about 150 Catholic schools closed in the aftermath of the pandemic. In addition, more than 1,000 have closed since 2006 and enrollment has dropped by more than 400,000, according to data from the National Catholic Educational Association.

Closures are nothing new in Orange County and include St. Anthony Claret and Cornelia Connelly schools, both in Anaheim, and St. Catherine of Siena Parish School in Laguna Beach.

Despite rising tuition costs and lower teacher salaries than at public schools, St. Norbert Catholic School is continuing to find ways to maintain its 300-plus students in pre-K through eighth grades.

Efforts include Planned Giving, a fund that helps ensure the future of Catholic education in the parish through donations and legacy gifts.

"I often think, if founding families like Terrance and Elizabeth Barry, who put all eight of their kids through St. Norbert, hadn't assembled desks, fund-raised and supported the school, we would not be here today," Ciccoianni says. "We are literally standing on the shoulders before us."

Ciccoianni says St. Norbert families past and present are custodians of a future we might not see but part of our responsibility is to make sure the school remains after we're gone.

"All of us should be thinking about how we can build a foundation for the kids who come after ours," Ciccoianni says, "to make sure the school is around for another 60 years."

careers and is now a Realtor with First Team Real Estate based in Tustin.

2000s

After graduating from Mater Dei and completing her B.S. degree in Anthropology at UC Irvine and B.S. degree in Nursing at Loma Linda University, **Austin Alicastro** (2005) is now a nurse practitioner for Orange County-based Pacific Cardiovascular Associates Medical Group.

Sarah Balch (2005) is a deputy associate photo editor at MailOnline, owner of the Daily Mail, in New York City.

2010s

While he's continuing to study geology as a sophomore at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, Mater Dei graduate **Cameron Fetter** (2017) is shaking things up with his informative earthquake summaries on his The QuakeHub TikTok with 330,000+ followers.

Jade Sandoval (2018) is studying business marketing and cheerleading at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

2020s

Sydney Swenson (2020) has been named Rosary Academy's junior varsity golf captain for the 2022-23 school year.

Do you have news to share? We'd love to hear! Email your Alumni Update to alumni@saintnorbert-school.org.



FACULTY & STAFF NOTES

Not Too Far From Campus

Aura (Ilinescu) Covington started her teaching career at St. Norbert Catholic School in 2013 when she long-term subbed in sixth grade for Margherita Tredanari (she was pregnant with baby Angela) for the first three months of the school year. The remaining six months she subbed for first grade teacher Carly Thigpen.

The following school year she taught fifth grade.

"I truly feel it was in God's plan for me to work at St. Norbert as it was a wonderful teaching opportunity for me and I was able to work with many wonderful people," Aura says. "St. Norbert holds a very special place in my heart."

In the summer of 2015 Aura was hired by Serrano Elementary in Villa Park, where she now teaches sixth grade.

In the last eight years, she married her high school sweetheart, Chase, and welcomed sons Jackson (4) and Lincoln (2).

She has traveled to five different countries and five states; earned her master's degree from Concordia University; and received two different



Aura (Ilinescu) Covington kicked off her teaching career at SNCS in 2013.

grants from the city of Villa Park to help with class materials and projects.

Outside of the classroom Aura enjoys playing with her kids, going to the beach and doing mom things.

"I am looking forward to the boys getting a little older so we can hike together and travel during summers," Aura says.

GET INVOLVED

Fish Frys Return

Our seventh and eighth grade students will be back in the gym welcoming guests and serving meals for the six weeks of Lent. Support our students' efforts to raise money for their East Coast Expedition trip. Purchase meal tickets at the gym front door and join SNCS families between 5 and 8 p.m. every Friday Feb. 24 to March 31.

Donate your Time

Alumna Michelle (Ortiz) Navarro (1990) is heading up St. Norbert Church's Christian Service food distribution and is looking for volunteers 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Join alumni, current families and parishioners as they assemble bags of food for more than 150 families each week behind the St. Norbert Family & Youth Center. To sign up, email christianservice@stnorbert-church.org.

Invest in our Future

Honor a loved one who valued Catholic education by donating a monetary gift or non-cash financial instruments, such as stocks or mutual funds, to St. Norbert Catholic School. Our needs include:

- **SNCS Endowment Fund:** Provides financial support now and into the future. Funds are used to reduce or stabilize the school's deficit.
- **Tuition Assistance Fund:** Gifts of any amount help families struggling to meet their child(ren)'s tuition costs (about \$7,000/year).
- **Legacy of Light:** Contributions help finance projects that improve the school's safety, durability, beauty and energy efficiency.
- **Kathy Oldham Children's Fund:** Supports our school in a way that honors our dear friend Kathy Oldham and her love of family, children, faith and art education.

To arrange a donation, please call (714) 637-6822 or email info@saint-norbertschool.org.

IN MEMORIAM

STAFF & FACULTY

Sharon Dolan
Principal 1999-2000

Jeanne Honikel
Health Room 1988-1997

Janet Llewellyn
Pre-K teacher

Sr. Francis O'Leary
Principal 1983-1997

Sr. Cabrini Riordan
4th Grade Teacher
1980-1983)

STUDENTS

Ronald Arlt
Class of 1986

Julie Griffis
Class of 1980

Darin Haskins
Class of 1980

Kevin Hogate
Class of 2012

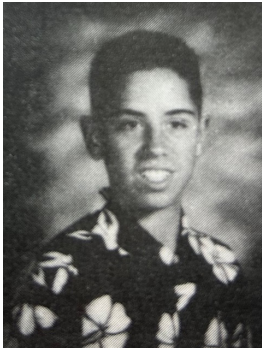
Charlie Levandowski
Class of 1980

Paul Moulthon
Class of 1980

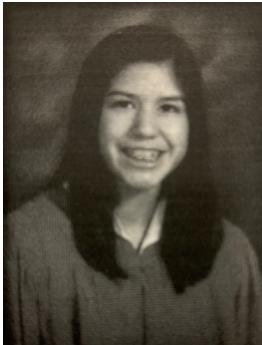
Phillis Piczyk
Class of 1980

Mieke Riccio
Class of 1986

Jonathan Schulte
Class of 2002



George Nichols
Class of 2003



**Erin (Solorio)
Howard**
Class of 2005



This year's Kangaroo pre-K class includes (front row, from left) Penelope Howard and Lyla Avalos; and (back row, from left) Georgie Nichols and Lily and Shane Blalock. Their parents, all SNCS alumni, are also pictured.



**Ashley (McNamara)
Blalock**
Class of 1997



**Ashley (Magsanide)
Avalos**
Class of 2002

FAMILIES, from page 1

Sue (Corti) DeGennaro (1985) brought daughter Sarah (2020) to SNCS, while **Bernadette (Mendoza) Enriquez** (1981) enrolled daughter Madison (2013) and son Sam (2015).

In fact, Principal Joe Ciccoianni says he's welcomed more than a dozen alumni families in the last decade.

This year alone, at least seven alumni have children in pre-kindergarten: Kangaroo class includes **Ashley (Magsanide) Avalos** (2002)—daughter Lyla; **Ashley (McNamara) Blalock** (1997)—students Shane and Lily; **Erin (Solorio) Howard** (2005)—daughter Penelope; and **George Nichols** (2003)—son Georgie. The Monkeys class includes **Chase Rodgers** (2004)—daughter Lorelai; **Brianna (Lane) Ryan** (2004)—son Parker; and

Alicia (Ramirez) Westphalen (1998)—daughter Avery.

Ashley (McNamara) Blalock's parents met at SNCS. Mom **Leigh Ann (Ames) McNamara** (1973) started first grade the year SNCS opened and was in the first class to go from first to eighth to graduate. Dad **Tim McNamara** graduated in 1972.

Leigh Ann says St. Norbert School has always been "home away from home" for her family.

"We knew our children were safe and loved," Leigh Ann says. "We chose SNS for our children because we wanted them to have the same experience we had in grade school. SNS is a faith-filled community built on love, support and family. Now having our grandchildren there, it's the exact same feeling."

Ashley (Magsanide) Avalos says she's enjoying being back at SNCS and getting involved with the school again.

"It was a pleasant surprise to see familiar names on the school roster when it came out," says Ashley, 34, a physical therapist. "The little Kangaroo class is small (only 11 kiddos) so it's really fun knowing all of our kids are spending a lot of time together."

Ashley says it was comforting to know that many other alumni who went to school the same time she did are now enrolling their children at SNCS.

"There's something nice about seeing all of the familiar faces at school events and knowing there are many of us choosing to send our kids here," Ashley says. "I definitely felt very comfortable when touring and dropping off at preschool on the first day."



ST. NORBERT
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

*Truth * Service * Family * Peace*

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Legacy
THAT TRANSCENDS TIME



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