

# An Open Letter to My Parents

Only No Can I Begin to Appreciate the Gift of Your Sacrifice

By Milagros O'Reilly ('16)

Dear Mom and Dad,

In the three years since I left home, I have learned so much about the amazing things I came here to study, but I have learned even more about the sacrifice you made so that I could be here.

In the U.S., parents are prepared to see their children leave for college. They leave home themselves when they were 18, and they expect that their children will, too. For us it was different. In Argentina people go to universities in their own city. It never crossed your minds — or mine, for that matter — that I would go to school across the world at the age of 17.

I did not appreciate it at the time, but three years later, I see that my decision to go was the hardest thing I have ever put you through. I was the first child to leave home, and I was doing something different and unexpected. I know that it scared you, and that you could have said no — and even wanted to at times — but still did not, because you love me.

It seems like only yesterday that I was going to school for the first time, and you took a picture of me in my brand-new uniform and backpack. Dad would come into our room in the morning, saying the morning prayers out loud, and tickle us until we got up. When we came home from school, Mom would help us do our homework and serve us dinner in time to brush our teeth and listen to Dad playing his guitar and singing his lullabies.

Next thing I know, I am in college, and things will never be the same. I wish I had known the first time I walked out that door that those steps would have such consequences. But you did. You were aware of the big decision I was making, even when I was not. I just hope you know how dear is the memory of our home, and I want to thank you for supporting me every step of the way.

When I decided to come to Thomas Aquinas College, a priest told me to make sure I knew exactly the reason why I was going. He said when it gets really hard, and it will, I should remind myself of that reason, and that conviction would get me through the hard times.

Thank God I followed his advice! I believe in the gift of your sacrifice, and I believe I held on to that purpose every time that I wanted to quit, and every time it made me stay.

Robert Bagdasarian

# Fit for Life

Cheryl and Christopher Schultz ~ Make Gifts for Sons and the College

**F**ive years ago, it looked like Stuart Schultz ('18) might never make it to Thomas Aquinas College.

At 15 years old, the 6-foot-7 high school sophomore from Noblesville, Indiana, had dropped from 200 lbs. to a mere 150 lbs. Months of chemotherapy treatments for his leukemia had given rise to an underlying genetic condition that prevented his body from metabolizing fat. He was wasting away, barely able to wiggle his toes, let alone walk or fulfill his dream of playing high school basketball.

But by God's grace, and over the course of several arduous years, Stuart overcame the maladies that had kept him away from school and the basketball court. He had to fight for his

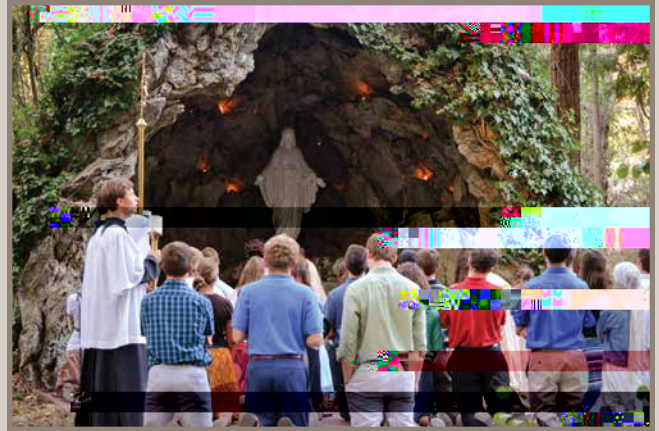




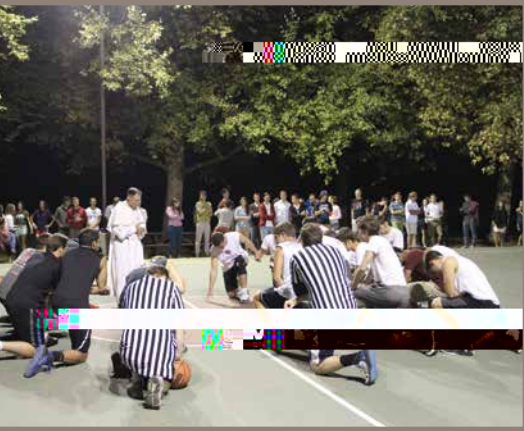
## Rosary Procession



On September 8, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Head Chaplain Rev. Paul Rattery, O.P., led students in a Rosary procession to the Lourdes Grotto on the lower campus. Leaders: Elaine Halbur ('16) and Emily Sanchez ('17)



## Freshman-Sophomore Dance



Top, left: Moira O'Reilly ('19) and Isaac Cross ('19), Zachary Beckmann ('19) and Madeleine Birchenough ('19); top, right: Michael Dufresne ('19) and Anna Goodwin ('19); middle, right: Megan Schmidgall ('19), Christina Matthews ('19), Nicholas Pfeiffer ('19), and Michael Zepp ('17); bottom, right: Angelica Ayala ('19), Bella Ayala ('19), Kathleen Doran ('19), Lizbeth Guzman ('19), and Saxony Schmiel ('19)



# Making Connections

## Student Gain Insight into Business & Finance Talk

In the first of its year-long series of career events, the Office of Career Advisement sponsored a talk in September from two young professionals who shared their wisdom about finding work and fulfillment in the world of business and finance.

In an hour-long discussion with students in Albertus Magnus Hall, newlyweds Deirdre and Patrick O'Connell stressed that young, faithful Catholics can both make a living and contribute to the common good by pursuing careers in business. To begin with, advised Mr. O'Connell, a credit analyst on Alliance Bernstein's Fixed Income Global Credit Research team, one should ask: "How can you use your unique talents to best help those around you in a really constructive way, helping as much as you can with the tools that you have that are unique to you?"

The O'Connells urged students not to be concerned that, because they have pursued a liberal education, and not a business degree, they will be disadvantaged in the job market. "For a lot of these business jobs, you don't need to already have business skills," said Mrs. O'Connell, who has worked for USB Investment Bank and who, having recently earned an MBA from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth, will soon join Monitor Deloitte as a management consultant. "Because a lot of the knowledge is so functional-specific to a job, they don't care whether you have spent four years studying this — because you can't," she continued.

They want employees who have an A+ attitude and the ability to solve problems and learn.



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The key, Mr. and Mrs. O'Connell agreed, is being vigilant about networking and making phone calls, and being willing to hear the occasional "no" from a prospective employer. The couple stressed that they would be personally available to the students to help them in any way with their career searches.

Married earlier this summer, Mr. and Mrs. O'Connell live in New York City and have been active in numerous Catholic apostolates, including St. John's Basilica, where they helped to start a youth group with Thomas Aquinas College sophomore Siobhan Heekin-Canedy. (See page 8.)

"We're very grateful to the O'Connells for being so generous with their time and their insight, and we're grateful to Siobhan for helping to arrange their visit," says Director of Career Advisement Mark Kretschmer. "It's a blessing for our students to know that there are good people out there who can and want to help them."

## The Perfect Gift ...

Beginning on December 16, the chaplains of Thomas Aquinas College will offer a novena of Masses in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Each person enrolled in the Novena will receive a beautiful, personalized card from the College. (Cost: \$5 each, including shipping and handling)

[thomasaquinas.edu/christmas-novena](http://thomasaquinas.edu/christmas-novena)



# Aer TAC: Discerning the Right Path

Parents Madelyn and John LaFave of Peep the Children's High Aptitude Testing

“For some students, one of the great advantages of a liberal education — that it prepares you to do anything — can, at first, feel like a burden,” observes Director of Career Advisement Mark Kretschmer.

“When students don't have a strong sense of what they want to do for a living, the sheer number of career choices available to them may seem overwhelming,” he explains. “They approach graduation thinking that maybe they want to study philosophy, or practice law, or get a master's in engineering, or sell real estate. Sometimes, they are so bewildered by all the options that they have a hard time choosing just one.”

Mindful of the danger of “professional paralysis,” Madelyn and John LaFave of Bozeman, Montana — parents of Peter ('13), Andrew ('15), and Mary ('18) — have embraced a strategy for helping their children discern a career: aptitude testing. Over the last several years, each of the adult LaFave children has undergone a series of tests and assessments designed to identify not only their talents and dispositions, but also the professions that best suit them.

There is a wide range of aptitude testing available, varying greatly in terms of quality and price. The LaFaves chose the services of Johnson O'Connor, a nonprofit research organization with offices throughout the United States.

“They conduct an inventory of your aptitudes,” says Mrs. LaFave. “They look at all kinds of things — your visual perceptions, your divergent thinking, or ability to multitask, your foresight, your inductive reasoning, your analytic reasoning, even the strength of your grip, which can indicate whether you would be happy in a desk job.” The assessments include a wide variety of tasks, such as assembling blocks, solving puz-

# Parents' Corner

From Sochi to San Antonio

by Anne and Sco Heekin-Canedy

Ever since she was a little girl, we encouraged our daughter, Siobhan, to pursue excellence with grace, courage, and sacrifice. That pursuit led her, first, to the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, Russia, and now to Thomas Aquinas College.

Siobhan began taking figure-skating lessons when she was 5 years old, and very soon she started to dream of one day competing at the Olympic level. By the time she turned 14, she had decided to devote herself exclusively to ice dance. Her coach arranged for a Ukrainian boy, Dimitri Dun, to become Siobhan's partner, and the two began competing at the world level. Thanks to their laser-like focus and hard work — and a great deal of prayer and support — Siobhan's dream slowly became a reality.

For us, guiding our daughter through this journey required a delicate balance of encouragement without pressure. For Siobhan, it required both endurance and sacrifice, foregoing parties, vacations, or even just time with her friends. For the whole family, there were numerous trips to Ukraine and competitions throughout the world.

Early on it became clear that homeschooling would be necessary to facilitate the level of travel and training that Siobhan's