

ALUMNI UPDATE

ST. DOMINIC SCHOOL

Spring/Summer 2023

From Cleveland
to the South
Pole: Alumni
Who Serve



Officer Gardiner at his First Communion in 2nd Grade (above) and now as Trooper of the Year (below).

MYKOL GARDINER CLASS OF 2001

Mykol Gardiner, a 2001 graduate of St. Dominic School, says that he knew from early on that he would work in some way to serve the public. He has done just that in his role as a highway patrol officer, and his efforts were recognized when he was named Trooper of the Year for the Cleveland post in 2022.

Officer Gardiner says that law enforcement appealed to him since his earliest days at St. Dominic School. He remembers Officer Buck, of the Shaker Heights Police Department, who would park his car by the playground to watch for speeding vehicles. Officer Buck would chat with the students, and Gardiner admired how helpful he was. He recalls that he would retrieve balls from the street for the kids.

After St. Dominic, Gardiner attended Benedictine, where the message of “serve God, serve others” was impressed upon him even more deeply. After high school, he earned a criminal justice degree from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. His first role in law enforcement was at the TSA, which was followed by time at the Sheriff’s Department. In 2017, he became a state trooper. According to the press release about Officer Gardiner’s award, fellow officers chose him for his “leadership abilities, professional ethics, courteous treatment of others, enthusiastic work attitude, and cooperation with supervisors, peers, and the public.”

What Gardiner most enjoys about his career is keeping people safe. He says, “I like making a difference by getting impaired motorists off the roads. I love arresting drunk drivers because I’ve seen the damage they do.” His faith plays a big role in his life. He knows that God is looking out for him as he does this dangerous work. Officer Gardiner has been hit by vehicles three times while on duty and has walked away each time. He says, “To me, that’s God looking at me and saying ‘I got you’ and bringing me home each day.”

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Gardiner, cont.

Officer Gardiner's favorite memories of St. Dominic School are of the St. Patrick's Day Shows (now the St. Dominic Show). He remembers the song he and his class performed in every grade, from "Jeremiah was a Bullfrog" to "Eye of the Tiger" his 8th grade year. Gardiner has such good memories from St. Dominic that he enrolled his son Ian, who is now a 2nd grader at the school. During the playground construction, Officer Gardiner brought his patrol vehicle to the temporary recess area on Norwood to make sure that cars slowed down and drove carefully.

Officer Gardiner lives in Bedford with his wife and two children. St. Dominic School is grateful for his service to our state and to our school.

Henning (center front) in 4th Grade at St. Dominic School



CONNOR HENNING

CLASS OF 2014

Sometimes people know exactly what they want to do in life and other times, they stumble into a career they absolutely love. St. Dominic School graduate Connor Henning was looking for a way to help pay for college when he signed up for the Air National Guard as a sophomore. He discovered, during his training and deployment, that serving in the military was what he wanted to do, and that choice brought him to the literal ends of the earth, as he was most recently deployed to Antarctica.

After St. Dominic, Henning attended Shaker Heights High School and then Ohio University, following in the footsteps of his older brothers who did the same. His path diverged from theirs, however, after he returned from a year of training in Texas to his station in Mansfield, Ohio. Trained as an aircraft mechanic, his role as crew chief has allowed him to combine his love of mechanics and engineering and his passion for travel. He also credits his grandfather, who was in the Army during World War II, with his patriotism and desire to serve his country. Since enlisting in the Air National Guard, Henning has been deployed to Kuwait, Greenland, and all over the United States.

According to Henning, "visiting the South Pole while stationed in Antarctica, is probably the coolest thing I've ever done." The South Pole is a two-and-a-half-hour flight from McMurdo Station, where he was based. His crew was there to bring supplies and transport personnel to and from the station, which is a research station, not military. He says, "When the plane landed at the South Pole, they couldn't shut off the engines because it was too cold to restart them. It was negative 50 degrees without wind chill and it was negative 60 degrees with wind chill. We had about thirty minutes on the ground, and then went inside the science station." During his time in Antarctica, Henning saw animals like seals, penguins, and native birds. The sun never set, even during his 4 p.m. to 4 a.m. shift.

When Henning is visiting his parents, he attends St. Dominic Church with them, and he has helped his parents in the kitchen during the Fish Fry. Henning says that the faith he grew up with as a student at St. Dominic School gives him great comfort in moments of danger or stress. He says, "knowing there's a plan for you can bring you comfort on those tougher nights."

His favorite memories from his St. Dominic School days share a common theme -- activity. He enjoyed P.E. class with Miss Kennedy, Field Days, and recess. Being outside and competing with other students made him happy in school and prepared him for the life he now leads. Another fond memory is playing in the band with Mr. Tennant. He continued his musical career in high school by joining the marching band.

St. Dominic School is proud of Connor Henning's service to our country.



Crew Chief Henning at the South Pole