

Lessons Learned: A Tribute to Gayle Wilson



Jared Jabaut, SCC '98



In the fall of my 8th grade year, I signed up for a meeting with cross-country coach, Gayle Wilson. I was skeptical that running cross country or track was even something I would want to do. However, I knew from my older friends that Mrs. Wilson was a no-nonsense coach, and I was interested. We said our hellos and I sat down. I told her I was a basket-

ball player right away and I wasn't a "runner." She smiled and said, "Pretty sure you do a lot of running up and down the court. I think that qualifies you as a runner." With her thick curly hair and dark blue Seton cross-country jacket on, she quickly persuaded me to give cross country a try for my freshman year. I made a snap decision and committed to it right there. What I didn't know was that running for Mrs. Wilson would shape the next 10 years of my life and mold me into who I am today.

Gayle Wilson has two very distinct sides to her. First off, she is a fierce competitor, someone who wants her athletes to find the best in themselves and bring it every race. Her will to win is something that lit a fire in my spirit that still burns strong today. Secondly, but most importantly, she loved each athlete as a person. She wanted you to strive to be your best self in school as well as life. I always looked at her coaching style as "first the person, then the athlete." She had a way of understanding what your personal obstacles were in life and helped you overcome those through running. It was an amazing conduction on her part, orchestrating from her podium a symphony of talented athletes into a structured team who would do anything for each other.

As a team we wanted to win for Gayle. As her runner, you did not want to let her down. It was a respect that she commanded. It was a respect that we all knew she deserved. If someone was falling out of line, Gayle would give one of us a

look and we would right the ship. Her team was a well-oiled machine. I remember state qualifiers my sophomore year; I had not been running up to my normal level. Gayle could tell I was down on myself. So about 20 minutes before our race, she called us all over to give a pep talk. I will never forget what she said: "If Jared Jabaut does not qualify for this state meet today, no Seton boy will be going to states." My jaw hit the ground. I had two amazing runners on my team that year: Pat Larkin and Jeremy Stone. Pat, a senior, grabbed me by the back of my neck and said, "If you don't run till your guts fall out today, I'm gonna kill you." Gayle knew I needed that pressure to get me out of my rut. I qualified for states. That was her magic.

She also had a way of making you feel like family. The countless spaghetti dinners at her house and the weekend cross-country invitationals she would get us into were some of my fondest memories from Seton. You wanted to make her proud. On the course or in the classroom, she was always in the back of your mind. Even over the summer months you knew you had better put in the work to be ready for the start of the season. Gayle was my first "real" boss. She was not just preparing us for races, she was preparing us for life. Goals, deadlines, expectations, consequences and accomplishments. She set the stage for the next chapter in our lives.

Gayle had a profound effect on me that resonates to this day. She taught me how to work for it. Whatever "it" is—a job, a special someone, a thing, a goal. You have to do the work. You have to practice and sweat and try. Nothing good happens without unwavering effort. I learned that from Gayle. I hold that close to me personally and professionally.

My senior year of indoor track was a special season. I quietly dedicated it to her. I reached my goal of Section 7 Champion in



Boys' Cross Country



Front: Steve Moore, Tim Nuzartian, Chris Bouvier, Jared Jabaut, Gabe Sabourin; Back: Andrew Reid, Martin Sable, Joshua Jabaut, Eric Gregory, Asa Tucker, Kevin Larkin, Luke Collin, Austin Borchelenu, Jason Jabaut, Coach Gayle Wilson, Coach Jack Wilson

For the seventh straight year, the Boys' Cross Country Team ran to a CVAC Championship. Led by All Stars Gabe Sabourin and Jason Jabaut the Knights posted a 16 - 1 record and dominated throughout the season.

This was the 20th season at the helm for Coach Gayle Wilson and her combined record during her tenure, is by far, the winningest of any coach in the section.

the 300. I felt it was the culmination of all the lessons I learned from her. Pace, strategy, grit, determination, confidence, heart and effort. It was Gayle Wilson

embodied in one race for me. It was my peak. Then it was over. I felt lost during spring track. I knew it was ending and I couldn't stop it. I was racing without heart. I lost my spark. I knew I was losing my coach, my friends and my school. I loved being a Seton Knight. Before our last meet against Peru (our archrivals) she came up to me and said, "So are you going to go out a CVAC champion?" We were tied with Peru and needed to beat them straight up to win. I knew we all had to race our guts out for us to win. I said, "If I have anything to do with it, we will." The meet was tightly contested and came down to the 4x400. I had the privilege of anchoring our team to victory that day and to a 4th straight CVAC title. She gave me courage when I needed it the most.

Gayle Wilson was a mentor to many young runners throughout her career. I was honored to be her captain. I was privileged to be able to take her lessons into my adult life. I thank her from the bottom of my heart for the difficult and the joyful experiences she gave me during my high school career. My college coach, Scott Slade, said during my freshman year of track in an interview before the SUNYAC Championship: "Jared has earned everything he has achieved this year because of his work ethic." That was my daily tribute to Gayle Wilson. Work hard and earn it.

Thank you, Mrs. Wilson, from not only me, but from all the runners you influenced. Thank you so very much. ■

Gayle had a profound effect on me that resonates to this day. She taught me how to work for it.



Sunshine through

COVID-19 may have tested us but it also brought us moments of joy, reunion and gratitude. Here are some photos of life at Seton during these unprecedented times.



I don't even have words to express how grateful I am for Seton and everything they've done for our kids. The progress Teddy made this year is unbelievable and they made his transition to a new school seamless and stress free. He tells us frequently how happy he is with school now and we couldn't be happier!

—Pirofsky Family



the Rain of 2020



COVID-19 took us all by surprise. Nothing in my training could have prepared me to deal with this level of workplace stress and patient acuity. Working in the COVID ICU allowed me to care for the most sick and vulnerable among the COVID population. That said, teamwork and collaboration with my peers is what helped to get me through the worst of the pandemic. Without the support of my colleagues and my friends and family, it would have been a great deal more difficult to come to work every day.

—Tyler Grant, SCC '11, RN, BSN, CCRN-CMC-CSC



I feel a strong daily gratitude for Seton and what they have been able to pull off to make sure our kids go to school. I hear stories from friends whose kids are not at school, not in sports...and are still home schooling and missing this valuable time with their peers and I feel so incredibly blessed that our kids are in school 5 days a week! With sports! It feels like a miracle and we are very grateful to each and every person who is making this possible every day.

—Ani Anderson, Parent



From Canada, With Love



Every school day, the Samson family would get up at 5am and leave by 6am to make the 45-minute trip across international borders to go to school. Rosalie Samson, now in sixth grade, would use the car ride to get more sleep. Justin, who is in ninth grade and the morning person of the two siblings, would think about playing card games with his friends at lunch or which movie they would watch after school in a teacher's classroom.



The trip from Lacolle, Quebec to Plattsburgh, New York was part of the routine, a minor sacrifice for parents, Julie and Martin. They wanted a good, Catholic education for Justin and Rosalie and found Seton after another local Catholic school

closed. They met with the principal and immediately knew Seton was the right choice.

"We knew in our heart that Seton would be the perfect place for our kids," Julie said. "Commuting to the school and crossing the border every day was a small price to pay if we look at the benefits Justin and Rosalie will get. Knowing they are receiving the best education is our reward for all the efforts made."

Justin joined the Seton family in 2012 as a first grader who could not speak a word of English. Rosalie joined shortly after in Pre-K. The language barrier was a huge concern for the Samsons who didn't want their children falling behind in school. But after Justin's first day, their worries quickly disappeared. He already met new friends and left school with a big smile on his face.

His teacher, Mrs. Kivlehan, downloaded a translator app to her phone so that he could understand what she was saying and learn new words. In second grade, his English comprehension excelled further as Mrs. Ryan perfected his grammar and speaking. Through the patience of teachers and hard work Justin and Rosalie put in, they quickly became fluent in English and now they have no problem learning or understanding class subjects.

"After Justin's elementary years, we did not consider any other school because all the values taught at Seton were perfectly in line with ours," Julie said. "We particularly loved the family atmosphere, quality of education and community spirit."

In March, the early mornings and long car rides stopped for the Samsons. COVID-19 precautions closed the border between the United States and Canada for the foreseeable future. While most students transitioned back to in-person learning this September, Justin and Rosalie had to remain at home, commuting this time through Teams video chat and email.

"I knew that the school would not let us down and I had confidence that my teachers would help us," Justin said.

For every class, Justin and Rosalie sit in and listen, just like they would be in-person. Since they're integrated into the class, they can ask questions or talk about any concerns and the teacher can answer on the spot.

Both Justin and Rosalie credit Mr. Miller, their science teacher, with helping make remote learning engaging and fun.

"He is always active and knows when to send everything and is on track," Rosalie said. "He never forgets to call me and answers all my emails like five minutes after."

Julie and Martin are thankful that their children were able to continue their education at Seton, especially after a year that left many parents not knowing what the next





month or even day would bring. However, they knew that Justin and Rosalie were still missing out on the “normal” life that their classmates were experiencing. After talking with friends in Plattsburgh and the school, they agreed to send Justin and Rosalie to Seton for one week once a month. The 45-minute, early morning drive was back! Well, at least once a month for now.

“Distance learning is great thanks to the available technology and willingness of dedicated teachers, but Justin and Rosalie missed their school friends and teachers,” Julie said. “We are truly privileged to have them attend school every month and we want to thank everyone involved in that offer.”

While they love being able to attend school in-person once a month, Justin and Rosalie are hopeful for a day when they don’t have to learn through a screen.

Small acts between friends and teachers have made this separation not feel as distant at times. Playing chess was a frequent occurrence with Justin’s friends. Now, they found a way to continue playing through an app on their phones. It’s simple, but it’s connections like this across international borders that make the Samsons still feel a part of Seton.



Much remains to be seen with the future of the pandemic and border restrictions between Canada and the United States. What is certain, though, is the Samson’s love for the school that has embraced their children as wonderful contributions to the classroom culture. Whether it’s a morning commute in the car or to the computer screen, the Samsons know that the experience Justin and Rosalie are getting is irreplaceable.

“We are very proud of them. Early on, Seton taught them a sense of responsibility and an exceptionally good work ethic,” Julie said. “Education is a top priority for parents and Seton offers not only good academic standards, but an environment where the students can live all the important values carried by a Catholic school. We are part of the Seton family and feel it.” ■



“Personally, I’m really proud that I’ve been able to keep my grades constant,” Justin said. “I’ve worked exactly as hard and I’m happy that this school has made a big effort to try to get us as accommodated to school as it would be if we were in-person.”



THE BIGGER PICTURE: A VIEW

By: Keagen Briggs, SCC '14



Larry coaching Ryan



Coach Converse at Graduation 2014

February 13, 2020

PLATTSBURGH —
It was Senior Night for Seton Catholic, and the Knights thrived Wednesday.

Alex Coupal scored a game-high 32 points, and Seton Catholic coach Larry Converse recorded his 400th career win in the Knights' 66-26 victory over Bolton in a Mountain and Valley Athletic Conference boys basketball game.

Tom Murray finished with five points, 10 assists and eight rebounds for Seton Catholic, and Foster Ovios (15) and Kolbee LaPoint (10) combined for 25 points.

"It was a good win for us to honor our seniors," Converse said. "We have some kids who are very dedicated to this program, and this was a special night for them."

Murray, Ovios, Chris Wang, Connor Wu and Gary Li were all honored as seniors of the Knights.

Kevin Neacy dropped 20 points to lead the Eagles' charge.



Ryan & Larry Converse

There are certain people in our Seton family who have always gone above and beyond in their commitment to our Catholic schools. Whether it be St. John's Academy, MAI, Seton Catholic or any of our former elementary schools, our Catholic schools have built a long history of successful athletic programs and coaches. The sample size is small in regards to all the great coaches who impacted our communities throughout the years. Our highlighted coaches spent many thankless hours dedicating their time to the love of the game and their craft.

We sat down with current and former Head Coaches: Larry Converse (St. John's Academy/Seton Catholic Varsity Boys Basketball: 1986-Present), Kathy Champagne (Seton Catholic Varsity Cross Country Head Coach: 2019-Present, Varsity Indoor Track and Field Head Coach: 2004-Present, Varsity Outdoor Track and Field Coach: 2005-Present), and Gary Ryan (Seton Catholic Athletic Director: 1978-2009, St. John's/Seton Catholic Varsity Hockey: 1975-1988, 1998-2003, St. John's/Seton Catholic Varsity Football: 1999-2011). Each coach has built quite the impressive resume of wins, records and individual accolades over the years. Over time, wins are forgotten, and records are broken. Instead, what will be the lasting memory of all our coaches is the commitment and dedication they have given to their athletes and the Seton family at large.

What was your first experience with Catholic schools in the area, and how did that evolve into a coaching position?

Gary Ryan: In the fall of 1973 I was hired by St. Peter's Elementary School to teach 6/7/8th grades social studies, health, spelling, physical education and to coach the 6/7/8th grades boys basketball teams. My coaching career began in the fall of 1973. My next coaching position was fall 1975, when I was hired by St. John's Academy to start and coach varsity ice hockey. In the fall of 1976 I became a JV football coach at St. John's. That was the beginning of my coaching career.

Kathy Champagne: I am a 1980 graduate of St. John's Central and was on the first ever Cross Country Team there (fall 1979). Gary Ryan and Mary Forbes were early in their teaching careers when I was in high school. In the fall of 1993, we enrolled our oldest child in Pre-K at St. John's Academy. All three of our children are products of St. John's, Seton Academy and Seton Catholic. When my oldest daughter, Mary Kate was in 8th grade at Seton she was moved up to varsity track. I was watching one of her meets at the field house when Gary Ryan asked me if I would consider taking over the track and field program the next year. I was very

FROM THE SIDELINES

hesitant at first and initially wanted to say no. I didn't know if it would be a good idea to coach my own child and if I would have time. I was about to start work full-time as a Speech Language Pathologist at a local elementary school and I had two younger children at home. Gary convinced me that I would be able to do it. The next fall (2004) I became the head indoor and outdoor track and field coach. That first year I think I called Gary about once a week with questions!

Larry Converse: In 1985 I was the assistant coach at Beekmantown Central. My wife Penny, was a Carpenter and her father (Earl) was a staunch supporter of St. John's Academy. In the summer of 1986 St. John's had a coaching position open for the boys varsity basketball team. I applied for the coaching job. Gary Ryan was the athletic director and gave me an interview. I was fortunate to be hired. Now, 36 years later, I feel fortunate and proud to still be coaching at Seton Catholic.

Did you also have other school duties aside from coaching?

Ryan: I sure did. I was the Athletic Director for over 30 years, Assistant Principal for over 20 years, two terms as Principal and Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds for about 20 years. In addition, I could be counted on to be a bus driver, field preparer and anything else that needed to be done.

Champagne: I don't have any assigned duties since I don't teach there. Over the years I have been a part of many Open Houses, bottles drives and fundraisers. I have written many letters of recommendation for National Honor Society and college and I have been a reference on more than one job application!

Converse: When I first started coaching, I got involved with the Booster Club, Bingo, the Bizarre and scouting for the football team. At a Catholic school you are always helping in any way you can. Mowing, soccer field maintenance and moving the schools to name a few!

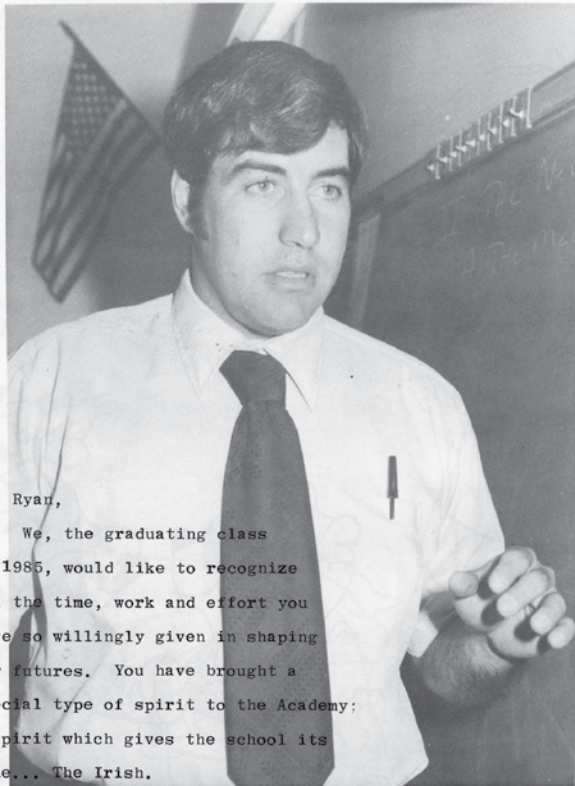
Have you seen a change in the participation level of sports?

Ryan: Yes. I believe there are multiple reasons. I think we have more participation in sports now but that is tied to the fact that we offer so many choices. In the good ole days we had boys' football, basketball and baseball. Since then we have had a large increase in female athletic endeavors and the expansion of male sports. Bottom line—more participation but spread out over a larger number of activities. There is also the influence of social media that precludes individuals from making a commitment to an athletic season. Sometimes the time and effort is more than a student wants to commit to.



Coach Kathy Champagne





Mr. Ryan,

We, the graduating class of 1985, would like to recognize all the time, work and effort you have so willingly given in shaping our futures. You have brought a special type of spirit to the Academy: a spirit which gives the school its name... The Irish.

We dedicate our Aquila of 1985 to you. You will always be remembered.

Class of 1985

Champagne: Kids have so many options and distractions these days and families have a lot going on. The rise of club sports has hurt high school sports to a certain degree. It used to be if you were an athlete you did three seasons (fall, winter, spring) of a school sport. However, given Seton's enrollment I would have to guess that our ratio of students participating in sports is quite high compared to some of the public schools.

Converse: It seems like kids today have so many things that are available to them that sports may not be the most popular. We are fortunate at Seton, even with our smaller enrollment, that the percentage of kids that participate in sports is much higher than the public schools.

What is the greatest reward of working with and coaching students from Seton, and what would you say is your greatest accomplishment in your coaching career?

Ryan: The greatest reward was getting to know each individual. I got to be a part of their accomplishments and failures. I had a chance to be there to support them when things either went well or poorly. I have been humbled over the years from student feedback indicating my influence positively affected their lives. They realize, years later, the lessons learned at Seton Catholic live on. When your coaching career encompasses six decades, it is difficult to select a single accomplishment. There were numerous league, sectional, regional and state championships, and it is easy in those years because almost everyone is happy and proud. But what about the year you go one in seven in football and at the end of the year your players tell you they had more fun and learned more than anything else they had ever done. My greatest accomplishments were every season and every game.



1977 CVL Champs and Section 7 Champs

Champagne: I feel so fortunate to coach cross country and track at Seton. Since I coach all three seasons (cross country, indoor track and field and outdoor track and field) I have been able to really get to know the athletes and their families. Many of them I have coached from 7th grade all the way up to their senior year. There is a real sense of community at Seton that is organic. The student athletes at Seton are respectful and goal driven. I always felt comfortable bringing kids to overnight state meets. I knew that they would conduct

themselves in a manner that would make their school (and parents) proud. Coming up with a single accomplishment is difficult. If you coach long enough you will have ups and downs; success is not linear. As a parent, having my older children win state titles is something I cherish. My oldest daughter Mary Kate qualified for the Footlocker National Championship in San Diego, CA her senior year and that was an amazing experience, not only as a parent but as a coach too. Looking at it from a team perspective, I would have to say when our girls finished 2nd at the state meet in Canton in 2014 that was memorable. The less obvious accomplishments are the various teams we scraped together with the minimum number of runners. Often these teams far exceeded our expectations.



Barry Yanulavich, Coach Ryan, Brent Yanulavich



Converse: Working with and coaching students at Seton has been so rewarding. The game of basketball has evolved so much in 36 years along with how you coach it. Changing with the times and working with our student athletes has kept me young. Just to remain active in coaching for 36 years is quite an accomplishment. I would also say that another outstanding moment was when Seton played in the New York State Final Four in Class “C” in 2002.

After years of success, what keeps you motivated to continue dedicating your time to Seton Catholic?

Champagne: Success is very subjective. As I mentioned above, if you coach long enough you will experience ups and downs. It is easy to measure success with a win/loss record but there is more to it than that. It has been challenging the last few years since our teams have gotten smaller, but my love of the sport and coaching is still there. I think many people thought I would stop coaching after our youngest (Margaret – Class of 2016) graduated. Nothing beats the feeling of seeing an athlete put in the work every day and walk away with a new personal record or a big win.

Converse: Over the years, the Catholic schools in the area have closed one by one. Seton is the only remaining Catholic high school in the area. I will do whatever I can to make sure that we continue to give kids and families the option of a Catholic education in the future.

What do you miss most about Seton Catholic since retirement?

Ryan: The main reason to go into education is to work with students. They are what makes your day rewarding and successful. When you no longer have them in your day that is what you miss!!

What words of wisdom would you pass on to anyone interested in volunteering their time to a cause such as coaching at Seton Catholic?

Ryan: Go into it with your eyes and ears open. It can be the greatest time of your life. You will be giving your time and athletic knowledge to a group who is eager to learn. Appreciate the history of Seton Catholic and know that what you will get in return will far outweigh what you give. By the way, you won’t get rich. Payment is the satisfaction of accomplishment.

Champagne: Coaching is like everything else in life- you get out of it what you put into it. The athletes will sense right away if you are committed. Obviously, knowledge of your sport and being a lifelong learner is important but often there is more to coaching than just that.

Converse: Get involved with Seton Catholic, volunteering, coaching etc. Once you do you will feel what I do about the school. It is hard to explain how fulfilling and rewarding it is to be involved with Seton. “FOREVER KNIGHTS!” ■

2019-2020 Cross Country



Seton Hockey

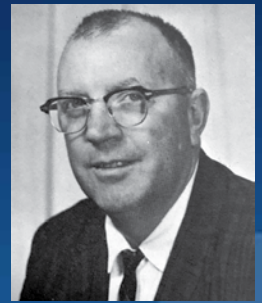


2019-2020 Varsity Basketball

W. BARRY BRANON

THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE LEGEND

By: Kathleen Branon Stark, SJA '75



The Branons had many great years at St. John's Academy. It started with Father Stone. He became aware of a 1936 St. Michael's graduate who had years of teaching and coaching in Vermont high schools and his alma mater SMC. Father decided he would go to Fairfield, VT in August 1952 and ask Barry to move across the lake for a teaching and coaching position in his school, SJA. Upon this unexpected arrival Father Stone met Mary Branon and daughters Roseanne (class of '68) and Gracemary (class of '64). When he explained to our Mom why he was there she happily pointed to the field where he could find Dad haying. Father crossed the fence to have a chat and the story unfolds!

The Vermont family with oldest kids Mike ('58) and Bill ('60) ages 12 and 10 and youngest Martin just a year, (died in 1959) plus Kevin ('67) and their two sisters come to Plattsburgh and love St. John's Church and school. Two New Yorkers are born and all will graduate with lots of great times and fond memories. We were asked to tell some of the funny stories we (Terry '72 and Kathy '75) remember. Here are a few.

The 1970 football season ended in six straight wins. The team of '71 was ready to go undefeated. Someone, with the Nuns' approval they say, thought to plant a few rosaries at the Peru goal posts for the final game. If you were to ask a member of this team how they did it, they will probably claim it to be a highly classified secret. Some may even think the rosaries are still there! No losses that year 8-0 plus last seasons six consecutive victories...the winning streak began!

The next season began and wins continued. School pride and spirit are high. One of the tougher games had our opponent predicted to win. The game was packed,



fans from all over. When all the spectators looked across the field they could see a sign painted on big sheets in red letters

"BARRY WHO?"

Maybe that helped the Irish, no losses again! Christmas was full of surprises for sure. Ours was to see that sign across the mantle next to the stockings in our living room Christmas morning. Oh the fun to wait and see what Dad would think. Thanks, Kevin!

W. Barry Branon was the oldest of ten. One of his brothers, Father Phil Branon was either at a game or in a restaurant when a football coach from one of the teams that played against St. John's struck up a kind of one sided conversation thinking it was with Coach Branon. Fr. Phil told the story of this coach using a lot of off color language. Actually the coach was mad and wanted to know how the h_____ he won a particular game. Fr. Phil let him go on for awhile then informed him he was Barry's younger

brother and a Catholic Priest from St. Rose of Lima Parish in North Hero, Vermont.

On September 29, 1980 Mr. Branon was inducted into the St. Michael's College Athletic Hall of Fame as a Football, Basketball and Baseball Coach. That training came into good use when the diocese needed a male teacher, coach and vice-principal at St. John's Academy in Plattsburgh, N.Y. and they hired Barry. At the same time they got the services of his wife Mary Mulcahy Branon. Even while she was raising her eight children, she continued to be a substitute teacher, when needed, at St. John's. If a nun was out for a period of time, she would fill in. She also was the bookkeeper for the school cafeteria, and anyone who went to St. John's prior to 1978 would remember Mrs. Branon selling the white lunch tokens. Together Barry and Mary raised eight children and dedicated much of their time to Catholic education in the North Country. For that we are eternally grateful. ■





Thank You

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Seton Catholic gratefully acknowledges the many alumni, family members and friends who have offered their support in our Fiscal Year 2019–2020. The success of our students, faculty, staff and schools is built upon the generosity of these individuals. Their financial support, whether to the Annual Fund, Adopt-A-Student, or, previously, in the form of designated gifts to Seton Academy or Seton Catholic, makes a positive difference in the lives of our students.

Seton Catholic’s students, faculty, staff and Education Council members humbly thank you for your continued support in helping fulfill our mission to provide an exceptional Catholic education in the North Country.

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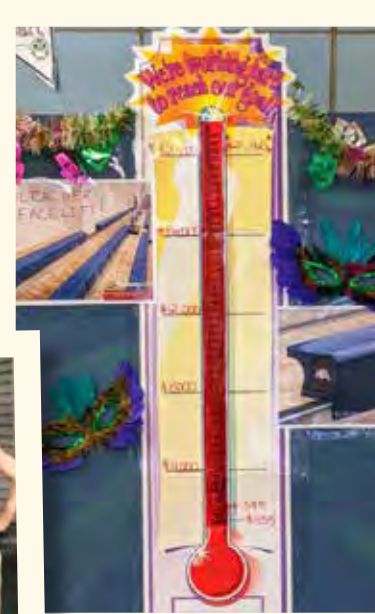
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FUND-A-NEED

Each year as part of our Seton Gala we choose a need in the school for a Fund-a-Need project. The Fund-a-Need cause this year was a face lift for the bleacher system in our gymnasium. The gym is enjoyed by students daily for gym class, and in addition serves as our site for assemblies, pep rallies, Christmas dinners, Masses and sporting events. It is a gathering place where the entire school can come together as one and it is also enjoyed by the public that visit our school. The bleachers were getting tired and needed new seats for both safety and comfort. We would like to thank everyone who donated to our Fund-a-Need for the Bleacher Face lift. We surpassed our goal of \$21,150. We would especially like to thank the St. John's Academy Class of 1969 for their very generous donation to the cause. Your contribution will be enjoyed for years to come. Go Seton!





Seton Catholic

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Seniors 2021