

ROCKET TIMES



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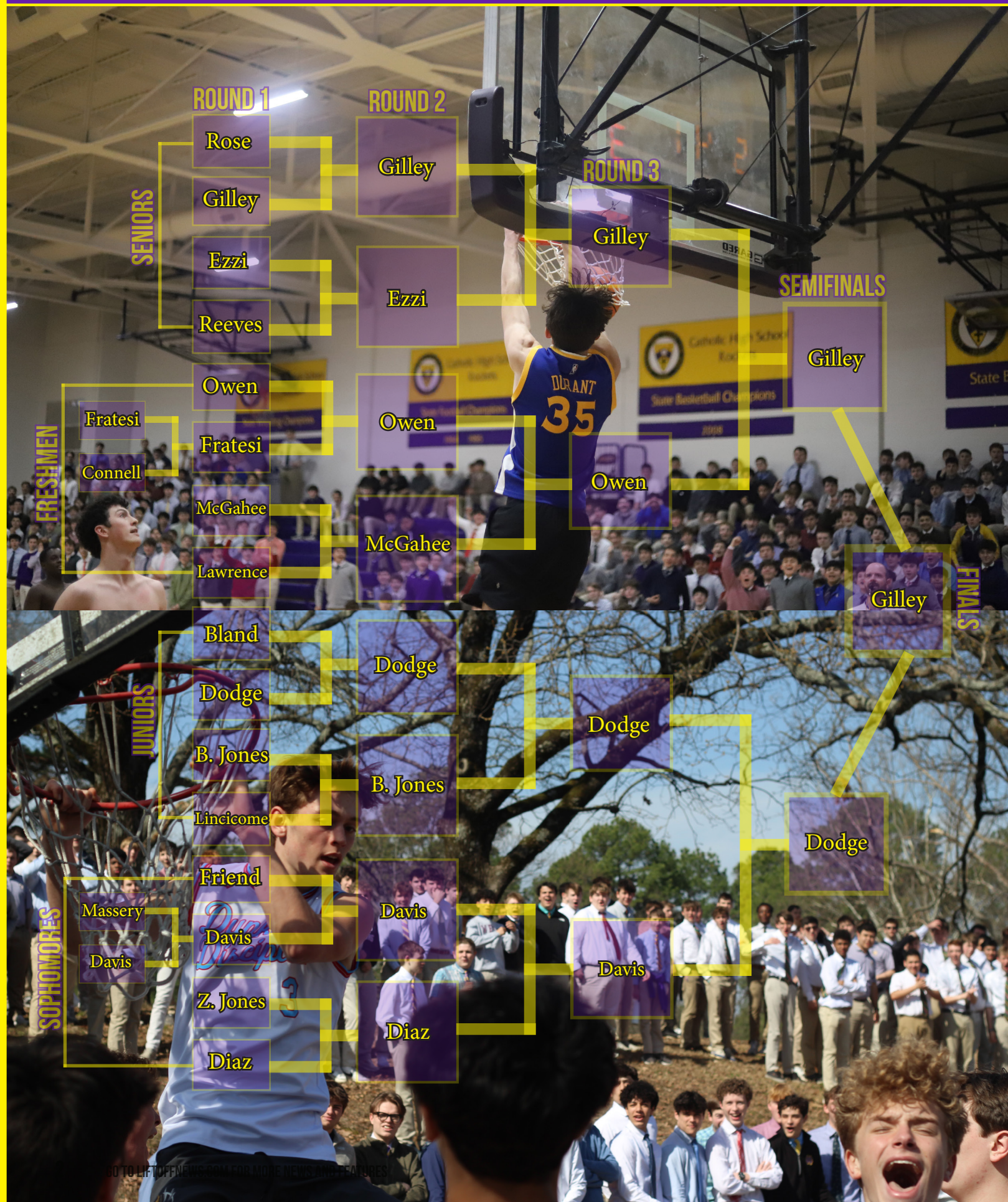
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2025 Intramural Season





Gavin, Graham, and Owen Melton '24 getting ready to perform in Dallas, Texas in 2014.



Gavin and Graham Melton at 8 years old dancing at Gibbs Magnet Elementary.



Gavin and Graham Melton posing in uniform.

HAPPY FEET

GAVIN AND GRAHAM MELTON PURSUE IRISH DANCING

BY GAGE BENNETT

Like a swan, Irish dancers keep their upper bodies perfectly still and perform a rush of kicks using their strong legs and core. Irish dancing to music in the form of reels, jigs, and hornpipes is a colorful, cultural activity with Celtic roots dating back centuries. Being successful in this artistic endeavor requires dedicating a significant amount of time and energy to practicing. Seniors Gavin and Graham Melton have been dancing since childhood and have now reached the upper echelon of Irish dancing.

The Melton brothers practiced Irish dancing together far before they even knew their times tables. "Graham and I started Irish dancing when we were four. My grandmother was the dance teacher, and I just went to class one day," said Gavin Melton. The boys started competing young, maybe a bit too young. "My first competition was in 2014, and I got third place. Graham competed with me, but he got distracted mid-performance and just stopped dancing," said Gavin.

Last summer, the Melton brothers traveled to Grapevine, Texas, to compete in the North American Irish Dance Championship (NAIDC), an international competition. Gavin placed 17th in what he called "the biggest competition I've ever done." But the boys didn't stop there. "My second biggest competition was the

Oireachtas, an annual regional Irish dance competition. I placed 6th, and Graham placed 5th, which qualified Graham for the World Championships in April."

Graham feels excited and anxious about the upcoming championship in Dublin, Ireland. "It's a lot of pressure. The Oireachtas qualifier was in December, and since then, I've just had the impending feeling of the competition coming," said Graham. "It's been stressful but exciting, as not many people can say they've been to a world championship competition for Irish dance."

Out of all the world's Irish dancers in the under-17 age group, only a select group gets the privilege to compete in this huge event. "Even if I get last place, I'll be around top 40 in the world," said Graham. Graham ended up placing 26th in the event.

On April 10th, 2025, Graham was able to secure some practice for the looming event. Graham, Gavin and freshman Ledger Nicholson performed together at the CHS intramural finals. "They looked like they were floating," said junior Alejandro Haislop-Rodriguez. "I liked the performance a lot."

Not only have they earned spots in top-tier competitions, but they have also earned scholarship money. Overall, Gavin has won \$59,000 and Graham has earned \$63,000 for the University of the Ozarks. The Melton brothers rehearsed for years to earn



Gavin and Graham Melton dancing during the Catholic High School intramural finals half-time show.

thousands of dollars for a short video. "It was one dance, which took about three minutes to record," said Graham.

The Meltons do not have to compete in Irish dance to retain their scholarships, and their future in the art of Irish dance remains open. But wherever and whenever they dance, they bring joy to everyone watching. "We recently performed live at a library for children, which made their day. We perform at hospitals and nursing homes as well," said Gavin. Even without the competitive edge, the Melton brothers know their time in Irish dance will never really end. "It's not only to dance better but also to connect yourself to other people and have fun," said Gavin.

CARREY REYNOLDS: A CHS LEGEND

SITTING DOWN WITH MS. REYNOLDS TO DEBRIEF 25 MEMORABLE YEARS

BY STEPHEN EDWARDS

Ms. Carrey Reynolds, one of the last hires of Father George Tribou, was completely new to Catholic High in 2000: new to the predominantly male environment, Catholic faith, and Rocket standard. 25 years later, she finds herself woven into the identity of the school, a legend in her own right, and an honorary alumna.

How long have you worked at CHS?

I was hired for the 2000-2001 school year and was one of Fr. Tribou's last hires. I've been here now for 25 years! Where does the time go?

What did you do before CHS?

I taught English and served as a librarian in Parkin and Wynne, first as a teacher, then as a librarian at each place.

We know you are the librarian and theater director. What other roles have you had during your time here?

I was the sponsor for Homecoming and Winter Formal for ten years.

First year: What were you nervous about? What did you expect?

I was SO nervous! At that point in my life, I was not very familiar with the Catholic faith, and I was very afraid I would say or do something "wrong" out of ignorance. The all-boy environment—as well as the primarily male faculty—was also new to me. I understood right away that this was an environment with high expectations.

Compare and contrast your first and last year at CHS.

I was full of fear and apprehension my first year because everything was so unfamiliar to me. This year those very things are the things that I treasure: Mass, my relationships with students and faculty, the "rules," and those ever-pressing high expectations. The facilities have, of course, changed with the renovation of the library, classrooms and the annex building. But what hasn't changed is our mission.

Three great memories.

I'll never forget my first school trip to Europe as a chaperone. I came from a very small town and had never had the opportunity to travel much, certainly not internationally. Seeing cities like Paris and Rome and monuments like the Eiffel Tower, the Roman Colosseum, and the Sistine Chapel was an unbelievable dream come true.

A moment I'll never forget was the day a former student who had been in real trouble with me showed up here to try to make things right long after he had graduated. He thanked me for all I had tried to do for him and apologized for his behavior. He was so changed and so full of regret and appreciation. It was an affirmation of what we try to do here.

Being named an honorary CHS alum.

What do you think you'll miss the most?

It's a love/hate thing, but the school plays. I hate all the hard work that goes into it. It consumes me....rehearsals, blocking, costuming, finding props, building a set, creating lighting...but I absolutely love seeing the final product. There's just nothing like it.

Who will you miss the most?

The boys, believe it or not. The interactions with them have given me purpose and kept me young... at heart!!

Could you share some close working relationships?

Rather than mention present close working relationships (which are many), I'd like to just point out that the working relationships here are so strong that they go beyond these walls and often continue after retirement. I'm grateful for that as my own retirement approaches.

Lastly, what would you say to the next librarian at Catholic High?

Welcome to this wonderful place. You'll be forever changed.



Ms. Reynolds chaperoning a group of student actors during the Europe trip in Rome.



Ms. Reynolds and Greg Renick '07 as Elvis at the 50s-themed homecoming dance in 2007.



Ms. Reynolds as the official lighter of the 2025 tie burning.

APPRECIATION FROM THE INSIDE

INTERVIEWS FROM FACULTY AND FRIENDS

Head of School Mr. Steve Straessle:

When describing Ms. Reynolds, where should one begin? She's a walking irony: a librarian with flair, a dedicated bibliophile who loves the stage. I met her in 2001, and I knew she was a force to behold, reckon with, and retreat from when she's on a mission. Carrey Reynolds at once demanded quiet and order in her library and then moved to the auditorium where she squeezed talent from teenage thespians. Have you ever heard her sing? It's like an Aretha Franklin, Beyonce, and Taylor Swift smoothie. She once sang, "Happy National Boss's Day" to me in front of the entire student body and I've never forgotten it. She's a steady hand, reliable in every way. She's the first to volunteer. She understood the mission of Catholic High as well as any alumnus and demanded that it manifest in every boy she encountered. I keep trying to talk her out of retirement because Carrey Reynolds leaving the building is a loss. She has worn her many talents like a wardrobe, pulling them out when needed, storing them when appropriate, and then letting them explode into the Catholic High scenery. She is and always will be Ms. Reynolds.

Fr. Patrick Friend:

It is a blessing to have a teacher who can find the diamond that exists in the center of every soul. It is a greater blessing still to have a teacher who helps her students recognize that diamond in themselves.

Mrs. Lisa Connell:

I was always so impressed by her talent for directing the plays at Catholic. My sons loved being in the plays that she put on when they were here. She is an amazing woman and I will miss her greatly.

Senior Miles Tillemans:

Ms. Reynolds sparked in me a different kind of love for theatre that I wouldn't have found without working with her. I owe my development in confidence and personality to her, as she really helped me find myself onstage and offstage. If I hadn't worked with her, I wouldn't have realized the pride and joy I experience from doing shows. She is truly an incredible woman who I will always hold dear in my heart.



Ms. Reynolds and Brother Richard at a Catholic High School dance.



Ms. Reynolds on the mechanical bull at the 2021 homecoming dance.



Ms. Reynolds' first day of her 50th year of teaching.

Road to Honorary Alumna

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{5} \text{ YEARS AT PARKIN} \\
 + \\
 \boxed{21} \text{ YEARS AT WYNNE} \\
 + \\
 \boxed{25} \text{ YEARS AT CHS} \\
 = \\
 \boxed{51} \text{ YEARS OF TEACHING}
 \end{array}$$



CORPUS #9

SOPHOMORES SURPRISE LANDON CORPUS ON HIS BIRTHDAY

BY LOGAN MCCALLUM

It's 7:30 in the morning. You're tired. You're worried about homework, quizzes, and whether or not you brought P.E. clothes. However, as you enter Catholic High, a familiar face greets you with a smile and a fist-bump: legendary sophomore Landon Corpus.

Corpus is arguably the kindest student on campus. The sophomore class, in appreciation of Corpus and all the positive vibes he brings, wanted to do something extra special for Corpus' birthday. Led by sophomore Cannon Burks, a group of boys banded their resources together and surprised Landon with a custom Real Madrid jersey.

Corpus loves Real Madrid. He has been a fan of the Spanish La Liga powerhouse for years and will talk about it to anybody who listens. "I talk to him every morning and after school about upcoming games. Then, the next day, he'll tell me the results and how the team performed," said sophomore Charlie Cline.

Corpus's love for Real Madrid is also contagious. His English teacher, Mr. Joshua Parkey, has become a fan. "Landon updates me on the team every day, and I've found myself checking out La Liga highlights on YouTube so that I can keep up," said Mr. Parkey.

Corpus owns many jerseys from his favorite players, but the one he didn't have was one with his name on it. Burks knew a jersey with Corpus on the back would be pricey, so he hopped around lunch tables to collect money. The money flowed in faster than he thought. "Not one person who knew Landon didn't want to donate," said Burks.

Once Burks had the cash, he searched for the perfect present. Burks landed on a white-and-black away jersey with CORPUS printed across the shoulders. "I wanted to find one he didn't have and customize it to him," said Burks. On February 3rd, the sophomores were ready to unveil their surprise. At the end of the second lunch, everyone crowded around

the main entrance. A few guys brought Corpus over. Then the sophomores made space around Corpus as Burks revealed the gift. When he opened the box, the crowd exploded with excitement and sang, "Happy Birthday." In typical Corpus fashion, he fist bumped up everyone in sight.

Corpus loves the gift. It's now a good luck charm. "I have to wear it or we'll lose," said Corpus.

Mr. Parkey loves it, too. "That's what the brotherhood and loving your neighbor is all about—looking out for each other, making a buddy feel special on his birthday. Seeing that made me proud to teach sophomores," said Mr. Parkey.

The jersey was not cheap. But for Burks and the other sophomores, it was worth it. "What made me happiest was how joyful he was and how glad everyone was for him. I hope it inspires others to go out of their way to do kind things for their friends," said Burks.



Corpus receiving his custom-made Real Madrid jersey as a birthday gift from the sophomore class.



THE JERSEY WITH HIS NAME ON THE BACK IS SO SWEET. PLUS, WE GOT HIS FAVORITE NUMBER, AND THE COLORS JUST SEEM TO FIT LANDON. -SOPHOMORE TY GIBBONS

Corpus in his bedroom with a Real Madrid flag and a bed made with matching sheets and pillow covers.



and light, and then let the conversation go where it may.

Fourth, and most importantly, stop focusing so much on yourself. The main reason most people are nervous is that they're worried about what they're saying, instead of listening and focusing on the other person. They think, what if I say something stupid? Does this person like me? When you stop worrying about how you're coming across and start paying attention to who you're talking to, you'll naturally be more relaxed and way more fun to visit with.

Finally, give it some time. Becoming confident socially doesn't happen overnight, and no one gets it right every time. So instead of seeing every interaction as a chance to fail (or avoid altogether), see each interaction as practice, as a chance to learn.

If you'd like to read more about becoming more social, here are a few books to guide you: *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie is a classic for a reason. *The Charisma Myth* by Olivia Fox Cabane breaks down confidence into practical, doable steps. *Digital Minimalism* by Cal Newport explores how screens can block real-life connections.

Social skills? Problem solved. Now, say hello to someone new today. You got this.

Hey Peter,

I've been having a difficult time making friends and having conversations with people. I always feel awkward or like I'm saying the wrong thing. Everyone else seems to get it, but I don't. What can I do to improve my social skills – Harry

Thanks, Harry. First of all, you are not alone. Believe me. Many students walk through the halls of CHS feeling the same way. Social skills aren't magic. They're learned. And just like any other skill, practice makes perfect. So here's some advice to get you started.

First, try listening more than you talk. Sounds simple, but it's really helpful. When you take the time to listen—as in, actually pay attention—you'll pick up on what people care about, what's funny to them, what annoys them. Listening shows people you care what they have to say, and that makes you a more likable person. When you do talk, you'll

have a much deeper knowledge of both the conversation and the person, making it all the easier to have that conversation.

Second, ask more questions. A good rule of thumb is always to let the other person talk more than you. Trust me, people love to talk about themselves. Ask simple, open-ended questions like, "What do you like to do after school?" or "What's been the best part of your week?" or "What else is going on?" This helps you keep the conversation going and takes the pressure off you.

Third, practice small talk. I know, I know. Small talk can feel awkward or even fake. It might even be what you dread the most, but small talk opens the door to deeper conversations and new friendships. You can comment on something around you. "It's pretty hot today, huh?" Share a quick opinion. "I love the guac here, too." Or drop a compliment. "Sweet jacket!" Whatever you say, just keep it upbeat

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Junior year has long been regarded as the toughest at Catholic High. I can vouch for that. And yet I primarily associate this year with substantial growth as a person and a writer.

Socially, I hatched out of a cocoon I built around myself my first two years here. I started going to parties and fostered new friendships. It's not easy pushing yourself out of your social comfort zone (which Peter Tumblison writes about in this issue), but it's worth it. Something as simple as joining a new lunch table changed my entire year, for the better.

I also pushed myself as a writer. At the beginning of the year, I set a goal to cover the football team and write an article each week. If I didn't attend the game, I watched (and rewatched) the livestream and took notes everywhere I went. I wrote multiple drafts and worked with Mr. Parkey to

articulate the story of each game. I posted eight articles on Liftoff News.

Relaying the emotion of a football game is difficult, and I didn't cover every game, but I learned a lot and gained experience that made me realize sports writing is in my future.

Let me be clear, though. Growth takes time. The best work is made out of hours of practice and endurance through challenging times. Head football coach Richard Cochran spent years as an assistant before leading the Rockets to nine wins in his debut at the helm. The Rocket basketball team found playoff success after seasons of drought. And the *Rocket Times* staff, mainly comprised of sophomores, improved steadily throughout the year.

Ultimately, a challenging year or a lofty goal forces you to find discipline in your craft. Our sophomores at the *Rocket Times*

couldn't stay on task at the beginning of the year, but now they turn in drafts that look like actual articles. In the fall, writing about a football game felt like stepping into a new world, but now it feels familiar—and even fun.

Think about all you went through this year, and how much you've grown personally. Be appreciative of the work you've done. In the words of Peter, you got this.

Stephen Edwards, Co-Editor-in-Chief

CLASS COMPETITION

NEW TRADITION AT CATHOLIC HIGH

BY LOGAN MCCALLUM

It is 7 a.m. on a Saturday, and the Catholic High campus buzzes with energy. Students and faculty gather at the starting line, stretching and warming up, ready for the Rocket 5k. This run is special, however, because it marks the beginning of a new school tradition: the Rocket 5K Class Competition.

The Rocket 5K, a longstanding Catholic High tradition, tests runners' grit and endurance over a challenging course that features demanding hills. This year, the class officers decided to add a new twist to the event by creating a class vs. class competition to boost student participation. "We wanted to find a way to get the students more involved in the event. We spoke to the class officers, and they thought a class competition would be a good idea," said Mrs. Berry, Catholic High's Special Events Coordinator.

The Rocket 5K Class Competition awarded points in two key categories: participation and performance. Students earned 15 points for registering, 5 points for showing up on race day, and a hefty 20 points for crossing the finish line. Each class also selected "class runners" who raced head-to-head for extra points. The first-place class runner won 75 points, second place earned 60 points, third place 45 points, and fourth place 30 points.

Every class had a heated debate on who should represent them in the competition. "If not me, it would have been Gage Bennett or Stephen Edwards. They knew I ran cross country, so they thought I would be their best shot," said junior Ethan Hurtado. The seniors had the same sentiment, choosing Mick Kline, another track and cross-country runner. The freshmen and sophomores, however, did not have as deep a pool of cross-country runners to choose from. The freshmen elected Maddox Boelkens, who competed in cross-country last fall, and the sophomores elected Garrett Franzetti.

As the students and faculty gathered at the starting line, Brother Richard offered a prayer, followed by a trademark joke,

and then the race began. During the race, two separate battles were fought. One was between the seniors and sophomores over who would win the overall (and a donut party), and the other was between junior Ethan Hurtado and senior Mick Kline over who would win the race.

It was a heated race, only fair for such a gritty course. "The hills are treacherous and steep, and they can be really hard on the legs. Honestly, anyone who is able to finish the race is impressive," said Hurtado.

As Hurtado and Kline rounded the final corner, it was clear that this race was closer than anyone could have imagined, even Hurtado. "I expected to get second overall since Kline had a far better 5k time than I did. However, I was surprised how close it was." In the end, Kline won with a blistering 19:04, only six seconds ahead of Hurtado.

Kline won the battle, but he had to wait to see if he had won the war. While the sophomores' runner finished fourth of the electees, they still had a massive number of points thanks to their large number of participants, keeping them alive and in the



Mr. Jack McGahee approaching the finish line of the Rocket 5k in style.

A couple of days later, the officers announced the results. The juniors finished last (595 points); the freshmen finished third (675 points); the seniors finished second (1,010 points); and the sophomores won with an astounding 1,160 points.

The Class Competition brought in more students than ever before and infused the race with new energy and spirited competition. "It definitely helped with participation and attendance at the 5K. We had over 100 students participate in the event this year," said Mrs. Berry.

The new tradition is here to stay. Start training now.



Students lining up at the starting line of the Rocket 5k, raring to go. Among them, left to right class competitors junior Ethan Hurtado (339), senior Mick Kline (381) and sophomore Garrett Franzetti (329).



Bradshaw in his infamous Jorts during the outside intramurals game. Juniors watch in awe as Bradshaw draws a tech for his Supreme brand underwear.

DENIM DREAMS

JUDE BRADSHAW ACHIEVES JORT-TASTIC INTRAMURAL GLORY

BY STEPHEN EDWARDS

In the Catholic High intramural world, students don't see the players' talent at first; they see their clothing style. Many boys try to stand out on the court, but few are as successful as junior Jude Bradshaw, who plays with a drip-first mentality.

This year, Bradshaw built his fit around an old-school, unconventional article of clothing—Jorts, which are denim pants, cut or professionally sewn into shorts (jeans + shorts = Jorts). Bradshaw chose Jorts for their everyman appeal. "Jorts are for everyone. You can wear them above the knee, at knee-length, or even around the shins," said Bradshaw.



He also wanted to curate a specific look that harkens back to a baggier time in the NBA. "I wanted to create an early 2000s high school mix-tape vibe, like I could get a bucket on every play," said Bradshaw. Do buckets bring swag, or does swag

bring buckets? For Bradshaw, the two are intertwined. "Jorts create confidence in every baller. If you do not have aura, what can you truly have?"

Bradshaw paired Jorts with a signed Bobby Portis jersey in his first game. Bradshaw won the jersey at a basketball camp at the University of Arkansas. "I was a

real hooper as a young man and was one of three campers to win a signed Portis jersey. I also got a picture with him. It was surreal standing next to someone so tall," said Bradshaw. In his first game, Bradshaw knocked down a high-arching three, and the crowd went wild. "It was stunning. A sight to see: The jersey, Jorts, and J's completed one of the flyest fits I have ever been blessed to witness," said junior Cole Simmons.

Bradshaw brought his drip to the parking lot for the first-ever outdoor intramural game. But his team was chosen to be "skins,"

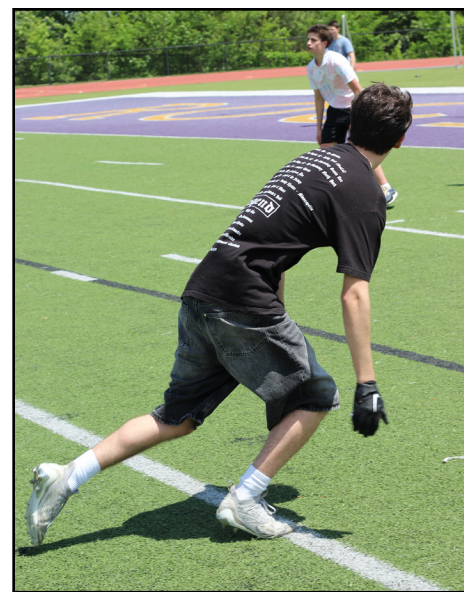
which presented a problem: undies. Showing underwear in a game results in a technical foul, and sagging, for Bradshaw, is part of his persona.

Predictably, Bradshaw was T'd up. Classmates gave him a belt so he could continue to ball. "I was not aware before the game that we would be skins, so even when I knew it would draw a tech, I had to play into the crowd. Because, as everyone knows, sag equals swag," said Bradshaw.

Bradshaw's fit on the blacktop intimidated players and spectators alike. The aura was almost too much for junior Zach Brown to handle. "It was difficult for me to process how I was going to match the type of player he is. Such swag can do that to the best of us," said Brown.

Not everyone loves Jorts as much as Bradshaw, or sees their aura-increasing appeal. But that doesn't stop Bradshaw from expressing himself through denim fashion. "I get trolled by a lot of kids who wear Lulu Lemon. But they will never understand my drip. That is not going to stop me from showing off my swag day in and day out," said Bradshaw.

Even though Bradshaw's homeroom didn't make the finals, he still achieved what he set out to accomplish: spread a denim-positive message wherever he goes. For Bradshaw, there's no such thing as too much style, particularly when it comes to dungarees. "If a kid saw me wearing Jorts and decided to start wearing them around their friends, that would be cool."



Bradshaw, in faded black Jorts, ready to run a route during the 2025 CHS field day.

SURRENDERING SOCIALS

STUDENTS GIVE UP SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LENT

BY PETER TUMLISON

Smartphones and social media now dominate daily life: Snapping, texting, and doomscrolling TikTok eat up hours and hours of each day. Head of School Mr. Steve Straessle organized an initiative called the Great Deletion to encourage students to get off their phones and refocus on what matters. On Ash Wednesday, Mr. Straessle allowed students to bring their smartphones to lunch and delete social media apps from their cell phones, promising to keep them off until after Easter.

The cafeteria roared as the countdown started: “5, 4, 3, 2, 1, DELETE!” And just like that—in a snap—apps like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok disappeared from students’ phones. Students had different reasons for joining The Great Deletion, but they all sought something outside their devices.

Junior Jared Aranda participated in the Great Deletion for spiritual reasons. “I’m trying to find Christ,” he said. Junior Ethan Hurtado also hopes to strengthen his faith. “I want to have a closer connection to God, not just my phone,” said Hurtado.

Others viewed the Great Deletion as a challenge to become happier and more productive. “I spend way too much time on my phone, and I need to concentrate more

on my homework,” said junior Miles Null. Null wants to spend more time reading, walking dogs, and playing basketball—“just really just relaxing,” Null said.

Many students don’t plan to delete apps from their phones permanently, but they think a respite will serve them well. “It’s not necessarily a problem, but I do go on it a lot, and I’m happy to be taking a break from it,” said junior Trey Cochran. Null also plans to reinstall the apps after Easter. “The idea is

“WE’LL FOCUS ON DIFFERENT KINDS OF STREAKS: OUTDOOR ACTIVITY, READING, AND MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER HUMANS FACE TO FACE.”

- MR. STRAESSLE

that following this erasure, I will use social media less frequently overall,” Null clarified.

Mr. Straessle hopes that by taking a break from social media, students can step back and reflect on their online habits and develop a healthier relationship with their phones.

“Social media is not necessarily dangerous,” said Mr. Straessle. “The issue is more about the way that we interact with it. During Lent, we will do other types of ‘streaks’—such as exercising outdoors, reading, and engaging in face-to-face, personal conversation.”

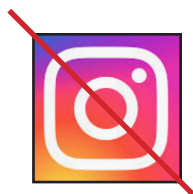
After the Great Deletion, the cafeteria atmosphere felt electric: enthusiasm mixed with nervousness and resolve. Students joked about what they would do with their new free time and who would last until Easter. Whether or not every student remains faithful to the challenge remains to be seen. But based on the number of students who were at least willing to give it a shot, the Great Deletion was a Great Success.



Freshmen Ryan Allison and Brayden Anderson participate in the Great Deletion during second lunch.



Head of School Mr. Steve Straessle speaking on the Great Deletion during lunch.



MYTHICAL ORIGINS

A SHORT HISTORY OF MYTH: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN

BY EDWARD DODGE

In *A Short History of Myth*, Karen Armstrong argues that the history of humanity and myths are inseparable. Armstrong traces myths to their origins and describes how they change throughout history. As humanity moved from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle to a civilization, myths evolved with them. Armstrong argues that the oldest humans understood the entire world, especially nature, to be divine. Rethinking day-to-day life as a natural world alive with meaning allowed me to feel the words in Genesis and something Mr. Lincicome once said: We once walked with God, in the breezy time of day.

According to Armstrong, myths do not explain how the world was created, but they do provide a reason: “Mythology was not about theology, in the modern sense, but about human experience.” Humanity does not have the records of its origin, nor does it know where it is headed, but myths help humans cope with this struggle to find our place in the universe.

Mythology and storytelling inspire people to live “more intensely than usual, firing on all cylinders, and inhabiting the whole of humanity,” writes Armstrong. “Like poetry and music, mythology should awaken us to rapture, even in the face of death and the despair we may feel at the prospect of annihilation.” When we create anything, even today, whether a guitar lick or a drawing, we’re tapping into a creative dialogue that’s as old as time.

Armstrong’s explanation of myths as a part of human nature helped me better understand the myths I’ve studied. For example, it reshaped how I viewed *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, an epic poem from ancient Mesopotamia: I never really knew how to connect to a poem written almost four thousand years ago, but I realized that it’s not about interpreting the poem “correctly.” Instead, just by reading it, I joined an age-old conversation about the meaning of life. And that’s precisely Armstrong’s point: humans are still searching for answers to the same questions we’ve asked since the beginning.

Armstrong explicates some key symbols in mythology. For instance, height signifies

divinity. Anytime a myth mentions a tree, a mountain, or the like, the reader should be drawn to the concept of divinity. Why? Because they force us to look up.

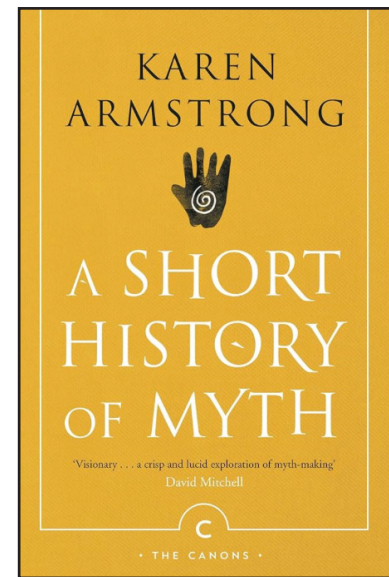
When considering height, think of mountains, ladders, and trees. For example, the Greeks had Mount Olympus; in Hebrew tradition, there’s Mount Sinai. Mountaintops are as close as humans can physically come to heaven, inspiring fear, wonder, and other emotions. In the Abrahamic creation story, the tree, planted in the center of the garden, is traditionally seen as a bridge between man and God. When Adam and Eve commit the first sin, they are expelled from the garden, away from the tree, and cut off from God’s presence.

The original humans did not distinguish between the divine and secular worlds. Instead, they interacted with the sacred world daily. The stars, moon, and sky reflected the heavens. “When they gazed at the sky—infinite, remote, and existing quite apart from their puny lives—people had a religious experience,” writes Armstrong. Such respect and awe for the sky led to its deification (Zeus, Jupiter, Endra, Odin, etc.). For thousands and thousands of years, trees breathed. Science today has proven as much, but science also robbed us of that amazement.

Ancient humans experienced a world where everything was divine; they walked with the divine, smelled the divine, felt the divine. Reading about a world imbued with sacred meaning helped me with my Catholic faith in 2025, and the book is worth reading for just this reason. Although we should not deify the grass and the trees as our ancestors did, we should recognize the beauty of God’s creation. The wind can sway the trees hypnotically, and the sky’s tears hit the ground to further creation—if we see it that way.

Modern life discourages such awe and wonder. We often drive to work or school on the interstate. Dull, gray concrete drags on as far as we can see. But when it rains, we hear the same sounds humans have listened to for thousands of years. We hear exactly what God made us to hear, and recognizing that can reconnect us to Him.

A Short History of Myth opens readers



to the idea that humans, at their core, are storytellers. We all want to watch a good movie, read a book, and contemplate a painting, and these urges are in us for a reason that predates cave paintings. When we continue to read myths and write our own stories, we join a conversation that has existed as long as humankind. I highly recommend *A Short History of Myth* to anyone interested in better understanding who we are.

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FRONT COVER: FATHER FRIEND RE-LIGHTING THE TIE BURNING BIN AFTER AN ANTICLIMATIC BOOM. PHOTO BY MR. JOSHUA PARKEY.

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THE HYDRATION HASSLE

WATER BOTTLES CRASH CATHOLIC HIGH

BY CHARLIE CLINE AND ETHAN GONG

In Catholic High's classrooms, teachers wage a silent war with students over something that most would consider harmless: the water bottle, the bane of teachers and the student's best friend. Whether it's a plastic bottle from the cafeteria, an aluminum bottle from home, or even a gallon jug from the store, students stay hydrated in many ways, much to the dismay of faculty.

Teachers hate water bottles because they are a distraction in class, harm the environment, and often need to be picked up after each class. On the other hand, students see water bottles as essential to academic and athletic success. Can water bottles exist at Catholic High in harmony with students and faculty?

Water bottles have not always been a common sight at Catholic High. The shift towards water bottles is relatively new. "It's a COVID thing," said physical science teacher Mr. Todd Ezzi. "For most of this school's history, we've used water fountains. We do not necessarily want to take water bottles away from the students, but they aren't necessary for students either."

Teachers find water bottles a distraction in class. Plastic water bottles crumple, and metal water bottles get knocked down and make a loud noise. "When someone brings out their water bottle in the middle of class, it can make me lose my train of thought while I'm lecturing," said Mr. Ezzi. English teacher Mrs. Lisa Conyer agrees. "When students keep plastic water bottles in their pockets, they crinkle all the time," said Conyer.

Mrs. Conyer also dislikes the environmental harm of plastic water bottles. "Arkansas has some of the best water in the country. We have beautiful, wonderful, fresh water from our faucets," said Mrs. Conyer. "All of these boys go into classrooms and dump their water bottles. We claim to care about the environment, yet we continually purchase

items that ultimately harm it. It seems wasteful."

According to several teachers, students also tend to forget their plastic water bottles, which leaves a mess for teachers to clean up. Economics teacher Mr. Dave Massery feels this effort daily. "I usually pick up seven water bottles a day," said Mr. Massery. "It's a pain." English teacher Mr. Josh Parkey had to create rules around water bottles, only to move the problem elsewhere. "I outlawed water bottles in my class primarily because I was tired of picking them up. But then I had to pick up the water bottles students left in the hall outside my classroom," said Mr. Parkey.

So why do students carry water bottles when the contagion restrictions and concerns of COVID are long gone? Students believe having water bottles helps with athletic and academic performance. Plus, they're convenient.

For sophomore soccer player JC Garcia, carrying water is necessary for achieving high-performance levels. "Without water, I can't play soccer that well. My muscles cramp up, and I get tired way quicker," said Garcia. "It helps me stay hydrated and perform to the best of my ability."

Water also plays a role in academic performance for students. "Drinking water keeps me awake," said freshman Jorge Bravo. "Sometimes, I find it hard to stay awake, so drinking water helps me stay attentive during class," said Bravo.



Sophomores Logan McCallum, Ethan Gong, and Charlie Cline working with water bottles on their desks.



Two plastic water bottles on the floor in a classroom. Will the students pick them up?

Water is essential for a high-achieving student athlete senior Aidan Bordador. "As someone who takes creatine, I must keep myself hydrated all day, whether at school or home. Having a water bottle around is very convenient as I can drink whenever, rather than going to the water fountain every time," said Bordador.

Despite their distaste for water bottles in the classroom, teachers do see the importance of hydration. "As a cross-country coach, no doubt, drinking water throughout the day positively affects performance. We're running miles and miles in the heat, and you must be prepared," said Mr. Parkey.

Even Mrs. Conyer loves the ease of her reusable water bottle. "I don't go to the water fountain every time. I just have a simple cup," said Mrs. Conyer.

Ultimately, teachers do see the benefits of being able to drink water throughout the day, but they believe students should take more responsibility. "If students could figure out how to pick up after themselves and when it's appropriate to drink them, it wouldn't be an issue," said Mr. Ezzi.

So whether you're an Ozarka-in-the-pocket, old-gallon-of-milk, or a thirty-dollar-insulated-Yeti guy, be mindful of how you're staying hydrated and where your water vessel lies—and maybe then, the water wars will end.



Brother Richard and the senior class following the special celebration.

OLD FAITHFUL

A BIRTHDAY SURPRISE TAKES BROTHER RICHARD ABACK

BY GAGE BENNETT

On January 8th, 2025, the Catholic High School community celebrated Brother Richard Sanker's 80th birthday. Brother Richard has spent half of his life at Catholic High School. The Catholic High community celebrated appropriately, with a mass.

After third period, students reported to their homerooms for printed report cards and an advisory period—or so they thought. Instead of report cards, students were given a purple shirt and ushered quietly to the gym. Everyone wore shirts made especially for Brother Richard and waited silently for the man of the hour to arrive.

When Brother entered, the gym erupted in applause. Brother stood for a minute, gazing around the gym with what looked like a tear in his eye, then continued to his chair

**BROTHER RICHARD EATS,
SLEEPS, AND BREATHES FOR
THESE BOYS. IT'S HIS LIFE
LONG MINISTRY. HE DESERVES
TO BE CELEBRATED.**

- MS. BARRE

behind the altar. "Seeing him get emotional was humbling," said senior Aidan Bordador.

After the mass, artist and alumnus Barry Thomas '81 gave Brother Richard a painting in which Brother is depicted alongside his old German Shepherd, Titus. Brother and Titus radiate light amongst a darker, grayed-out background. Thomas said that Brother "represents the light of the Holy Spirit," and, like the painting, a light of peace and love in a darker world. The painting matched the image on the back of the shirts, next to the messages: "Favorite Fan - Devoted Teacher - Faithful Servant - Our Brother - Pace e Bene."

After, the class officers gave speeches. Olaimey, Messersmith, and Pace each thanked Brother Richard for being such a profound influence at Catholic High and spoke on his impact on their lives. The crowd chanted, "SPEECH!" hoping for some parting

words from Brother Richard. But before Brother could talk, he paused momentarily, overwhelmed with the public outpouring of love. He opened with a joke in typical Brother fashion, but mostly expressed gratitude. "I have no idea how the faculty kept this a secret. I had no idea. Thank you and bless all of you," said Brother Richard.

Freshmen and sophomores were dismissed to fourth period, but juniors and seniors went straight to lunch, where birthday cupcakes were offered. Students grabbed their cupcakes and harmoniously sang "Happy Birthday" when Brother Richard took his.

The school day resumed, but the excitement lingered in the halls. Students wore their themed shirts over their ties and collars for the rest of the day. "His birthday celebration was so special. Being here for four years, I haven't been part of anything like that," said Bordador.

The appreciation of Brother's impact at Catholic High is shared among students and faculty. "Brother Richard is an iconic figure in our school who is a model of what we hope to produce in young men," said Head of School Steve Straessle. "He is dedicated, hardworking, spiritual, rises to every high expectation, and does it all with good humor."



Brother Richard and Mr. Steve Straessle entering the surprise birthday party.

SNOWY ESCAPE

A SNOW DAY REVIVES THE FADING WINTER SPIRIT AT CATHOLIC HIGH BY ETHAN GONG



Freshman Holden Keet dressed patriotically during the snow day.

It was the week after Winter Break, and the excitement and joy of the holidays had all but faded. Students at Catholic High braced themselves for the challenges of a tough semester ahead. But then, on January 9th, forecasters offered a glimmer of hope: the possibility of a snowy reprieve. Catholic High declared a half-day on Thursday to prepare for an upcoming snowstorm, and before the students even got out of school, dark clouds gathered and light snow began to fall.

Junior Sloan Smith smiled when he saw the first flakes out of the school's window. "It felt amazing watching the snow fall, it was like a late Christmas gift," he said. The first flakes brought hope for a day off from school, but for a snow day to officially be declared, the decision had to pass through the Committee of Playable Snow, a clandestine group responsible for making the all-important call.

Friday morning, after a night of restless anticipation, students awoke to a winter wonderland and the ultimate decision: no school.

The airy snow was perfect for outdoor fun, and sophomore Charles Cline took full advantage of it. "I built a snowman that took four people to roll. In the end, it was over 7 feet tall," said Cline. The colossal snowman attracted the entire neighborhood. "After we built the gigantic snowman, everybody came to look at it and take pictures with it."

Sophomore Gabriel Aldea went to the Country Club of Little Rock, which looked less like a golf course and more like the Winter X-Games. "It's a tradition. There's this slant on the golf course where many people go to sled, but I decided to make it more extreme," he explained. "I packed a 3-foot snow ramp, and people began flying through the air. We all took turns going down it, and the neighborhood just turned into a mini-ski

resort. Everyone was cheering each other on, trying to do tricks, and seeing who could jump the farthest."

For freshman Daniel Sadli, the snow day was an all-out war amongst friends. "My buddies and I built snow forts in the front yard, and then we had this epic snowball fight," he recalled. "It started with just regular snowballs, but by the end, we were throwing basketball-sized snowballs at each other."

By Sunday, the snow had melted, and students readied themselves for a week at Catholic High: classes, homework, quizzes, etc. But thanks to the snow, students started the semester recharged, ready to lock in with renewed vigor.



Freshman Ethan Robinson in a makeshift igloo he built.



Senior wrestler Luke Cornelison out snowboarding in uniform



ROCKETS BY 90



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SOCCER PHOTO BY DEANNA MCGILL

Br. Richard after teaching bocce ball to a group of juniors at the 2025 Catholic High School Field Day.

