



Saint Agnes School

Arlington Catholic
High School

Alumni Newsletter

February 2025

A Word from President Keough

Dear Saint Agnes and Arlington Catholic Community,

Have you ever wondered if there was “someone up there” pulling strings in your life? I have, especially in the time since announcing my retirement. Why did I travel this career path? Why looking back on it does it seem so logical and predetermined?



As a young person, I secretly wanted to be a United States Senator. However, after just a few political science courses I quickly gave up on the idea. I was sure I wasn't smart enough, so I changed direction and instead majored in history, hoping to become an attorney. However, after looking into law school, I again became discouraged and scrapped the idea. This is when by chance, I “fell into” teaching. At first as a substitute teacher and then as an aide. I quickly gravitated toward the behaviorally challenged students, and found a home in an alternative education program in Burlington. I was so comfortable in that environment that it hardly felt like work. In fact, it was here in the earliest stages of teaching that I came to believe that maybe God had a plan for me, and that maybe it involved serving young people and society.

As time went on, leadership roles came my way. I took my first assistant principal job and quickly learned that it is harder than it looks. The work of managing discipline for 900 students was just too much. I'll never forget one of my supervisors suggesting I spend less time “talking” with students and more time “...assigning discipline”. I was disheartened, wondering how I could ever help troubled young people without understanding and knowing them first. In fact, I considered leaving education completely at that point, but at the last moment miraculously found a job working for a principal who renewed my hope. She valued my approach and assured me that knowing and putting the students first was the only proper way to lead in education. It was Divine insight. Being “student centered” became my mantra and it remains such to this day.

Over time, I started to see a pattern in my life. I found myself being offered positions that fit my skills...and I tended not to get those that didn't. It was as if someone was sending me to certain places at certain times because that was where I was needed most.... Or conversely, because that was where I needed to go in order to grow more or see my true potential. Such was the case returning to my hometown district, where I had left as a C student with little hope for the future, to come back 40 years later as the Superintendent. A scenario that was once considered unimaginable came to be...almost magically.

Concluding my career here at Saint Agnes and Arlington Catholic, where I have had the chance to serve kids and God has been the icing on top. It has been a gift that in hindsight I can now see was simply part of a larger plan. None of my career decisions have been coincidental. Perhaps this is why so many of us working here care so much about each child reaching their true God given potential...because we know it is part of the Master plan. I feel fortunate to have played a part in it here in Arlington and thank you and God for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Andrew

Alumni Spotlight: Mary Benson Skipper '85

Every day, I get the opportunity and grace to serve the children and families of the Boston Public Schools. This is my third year as Superintendent and my 24th year in the District which I call home. I started my teaching career here in Boston back in 1989 as a Latin teacher at Boston Latin Academy, served as the founding Principal of TechBoston Academy in Dorchester where I spent a decade, had the opportunity to serve as the BPS Superintendent for our high schools and now am humbled to be the Superintendent for our District of 49,000 children and 12,000 educators and staff. Along the course of my career, in between my start and return to BPS, I spent five formative years teaching at BC High where I deepened my faith and learned about Ignatian Spirituality as a welcome call to action, putting my faith into practice. Between 2015-2022, I also spent seven years in the amazing community of Somerville as the Superintendent. My time in Somerville allowed me to return physically to my roots of where I grew up on the Arlington /Somerville border, working in the community at Foodmaster and learning and growing through my time as a student at Tufts University.

I loved my time at Arlington Catholic (AC). So many of my teachers fostered my love of learning and my classmates were -simply put -such talented, smart, and good friends. From Sister Ruth Cronin I learned the importance of persistence and hard work in the Classics as she walked with me every step every day as I struggled with Latin in my first year. Mr. Bill Murray pushed and stretched my mind and learning and taught me the importance of mastery and detail in English and the Classics. From Mr. Morrisette, I learned a love of History and the practical importance of connecting with your students and adding humor into

teaching. And from the Sisters of St. Joseph as a whole, I learned what service for others meant on a daily basis and was offered an incredible model of living out one's faith through vocation. My mom also worked at AC while I was a student there as the lunch mom with the 'magic hands' that ran the snack shop. My mom really loved young people and seeing how much my classmates loved her is still one of my best memories. I belonged to many clubs but my favorite was the Year Book club, where writing, art, and creativity all came together for our Class of 1985.

Both my formation at AC as a student and my time at BC High as a teacher serve today as a foundation for why I do what I do. I believe God calls us to our work if we listen and provides us the gifts and graces we need to carry out that call. For me, my work in education has never been a job. It has always been a ministry and one that gives back four fold whatever I give to it. I have had the blessing to work with the most incredible students, staff and families over the course of my career. As a single mom without any means to put me through college, my mom reinforced from day one that for me, getting a good education would equal the playing field in life and that AC was that opportunity for me. She also had a strong faith and knew that AC would help ensure that I would grow not only as a student, but more importantly as a person grounded by faith. My mom worked hard doing multiple jobs to make sure I could go to AC because she knew all that it could offer me.

Maximize every minute of your time at AC as it really is such an awesome opportunity. Throw yourself into the community and find things that interest you, groups you can join, sports you can try, and subjects you can study. The sum of your growth there will be one part what is offered and two parts what you put into it. Your four years will go by fast but they will be the foundation of your future education, your future faith, and your future self.



We are committed to featuring SAS/ACHS alumni and their lives after graduation in future editions of our alumni newsletter. Do you know of fellow

alumni living the mission of SAS/ACHS in their professional or personal lives who would be open to being interviewed by Sister Barbara McHugh and featured in a future alumni publication? Please email Sister Barbara directly at sbarbara@achs.net to nominate an alum or yourself!

In Memoriam: Ed Woods '73

On Friday, January 31, we lost a beloved member of our community, Ed Woods. Ed was an alumna of SAS and graduated AC in 1973. He was the Executive Director of Fidelity House for over 40 years. Rest in peace, Ed. Thank you for everything you have done for our community!



Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE



**Saint Agnes School /
Arlington Catholic High School**

Invites you back for

Quiz Night

Saturday, March 29th

ACHS GYMNASIUM

DOORS OPEN AT 6:00 PM

Purchase Tickets!

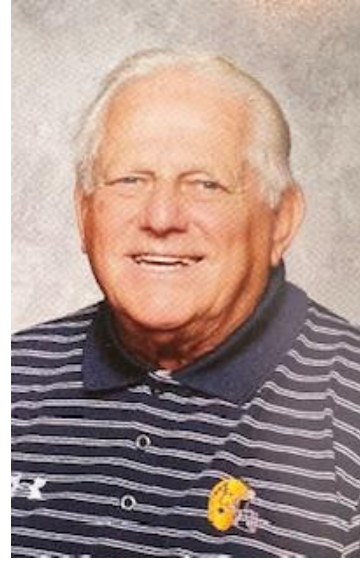
**Purchase Drink
Tickets!**

Honor the Legacy of Teacher/Coach Ernie Ardolino

To Mr. A, Arlington Catholic was home.
Beloved by the community, he mentored
thousands of students with warmth, wisdom,

and an unforgettable smile. Whether you knew him as Ernie, Dad, Grandpa, Papa, Mr. A, or Coach, you knew you were in the presence of a legend—a man who brought light, laughter, and joy to every room he entered.

We have established a scholarship fund in Ernie Ardolino Sr.'s memory to honor his unwavering dedication to sports, education, and Arlington Catholic. This scholarship will allow deserving students to pursue their goals while carrying forward his inspiring spirit.



As one former student so beautifully shared:
“Mr. A was an incredible man—so full of life that he was nearly bursting at the seams with jokes and smiles. Daily, he truly brightened the lives of every student within earshot. An A+ quality human, Mr. A will live on forever in the memories of those who he made laugh.”

We invite you to contribute to this meaningful cause and help us make a lasting impact. Every donation, big or small, brings us closer to preserving Ernie’s memory and supporting the next generation through this unique initiative.

To donate:

- Visit this [link](#).
- Under “Give to What You LOVE!” select Financial Aid.
- Under “Honorary Gift,” write Ernie Ardolino.
- Mail checks to:
Arlington Catholic
1 Chestnut St
Arlington, MA 02474
ATTN: Michelle Casey

Thank you for your generosity in honoring Ernie and making a difference.

If you have any questions, please reach out to:

Michelle Famolare Casey
Director Of Advancement
Saint Agnes School/Arlington Catholic High School
mcasey@achs.net

Campus Happenings

100 Days to Graduation Celebration

On Tuesday, February 11, our seniors celebrated a major milestone—100 Days to Graduation! They gathered in the AC Gym, where our Alumni

Relations Ambassador, Sister Barbara McHugh, spoke about the significance of becoming an Arlington Catholic alum. The celebration continued with a special treat and a fun-filled photo booth.



Cougar Coffeehouse

We had an amazing turnout for our very first Cougar Coffee House! A huge shoutout to our talented students and faculty who took the stage, and heartfelt thanks to the family, friends, and faculty who came out to support them. Special appreciation goes to Mrs. Schukis and Mrs. Gould for organizing such a fantastic event—thank you for making it all possible!



Reunions

o's and 5's...It's your reunion year!

Reunions are run by members of each class and are held every five years. If your graduation year ends in a '0 or '5 your reunion year is 2025! **CLICK HERE** to view a message from our Alumni Relations Ambassador, Sister Barbara McHugh, CSJ about planning for your upcoming reunion.

Class Notes and In Memoriam

Submit your class note for the next edition of Fidelitas!

This is a great chance to let your fellow alumni know what is happening in your life. Whether you've just hit a major life milestone, recently traveled somewhere new, or began a new business venture, we want to hear about it!

Click below to submit a class note today!

Submit a Class Note

In Memoriam

If you are aware of a graduate of Saint Agnes School or Arlington Catholic High School who has passed away, we would be most grateful if you would email Sister Barbara McHugh at sbarbara@achs.net.

Update Contact Information

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