



DURING CATHOLIC EDUCATION WEEK

The York Catholic District School Board Salutes Our:

2017 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

Gaetano Barrila

LAWYER,
ENTREPRENEUR



A graduate of St. Elizabeth CHS in Vaughan, **Gaetano Barrila** said that the work he does at his law firm and as a volunteer in the community is an extension of what he learned in high school. "Everything I do on a daily basis is based on my Catholic Education," said Gaetano. "I was involved with student life at St. Elizabeth and enjoyed helping others; it inspired me to continue to give back to the community as an adult." Gaetano credits his high school extracurricular activities: cross country, swimming, soccer, athletic council, and especially the jazz band led by teacher Peter Renzetti, for developing his confidence. His math teacher, Anthony Cuddemi also played a major role in helping to develop his leadership skills. Today, Gaetano volunteers as a Knight of Columbus, and is a member of the Strategy and Fundraising Committee, and Golf Tournament Committee for St. Andre Bessette Parish. His entrepreneurial spirit began in high school when he started his own tutoring business in Grade 11, something he maintained until he graduated from university. After a few years of practicing at a local law firm, Gaetano started his own firm. He said he enjoys helping people address their legal needs, which may include buying a home, starting a small business, or arranging their wills and estates. The core values of his boutique law firm are similar to the Catholic Attributes of the Month that YCDSB students are taught. In 2015, Gaetano's law firm was awarded the Small Business of the Year Award from the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce.

Daniela Belcastro

REGISTERED
NURSE



A graduate of St. Joan of Arc CHS in Vaughan, **Daniela Belcastro** is making a difference by providing family-centered care to sick kids and their parents as a Registered Nurse at the Hospital for Sick Children (Sick Kids). Daniela works long 12 hour shifts in the emergency department where she provides care to children of all ages. Children visit the ER for a range of issues such as trauma, broken bones, and cuts. For some families, the ER is where children first get diagnosed with cancer. One of Daniela's major roles is to educate families about kids' medical conditions and to provide emotional support to families during times of crisis. Prior to working in the ER, Daniela worked in Sick Kids Neonatal ICU where she was devoted to caring for critically ill newborns, and providing education and empathic support to new parents. "I try to lend a hand to hold when parents are struggling with tragic occurrences," said Daniela. "Catholic virtues that I learned in school, such as compassion and empathy, play a role every day in my work as a nurse. Wanting to help others is something that is rooted in my faith." Daniela's passion to serving others also led her to volunteer in a hospital in Haiti and in "pop-up" clinics in impoverished areas in India. "At St. Joan of Arc, there was always a teacher or a friend I could confide in. I learned that acknowledging someone's stress and simply listening can help someone heal."

Matthew Chan

ARTIST



Matthew Chan completed high school in 2011 at St. Theresa of Lisieux CHS in Richmond Hill. During his final year, he began a work placement with the Day Program and Craft Studio at L'Arche Daybreak, a charitable organization that celebrates the gifts and lives of people with intellectual disabilities. Since then, he has continued working as an artist in the Craft Studio, making greeting cards, paintings, candles, and other artwork that are displayed at L'Arche art shows and sold to help support the charitable organization. Matthew has Autism Spectrum Disorder and an intellectual disability. Since he was young, he has used his artistic skills to express himself in ways that go beyond traditional communication. He has a natural gift for art and enjoys depicting vibrant images of nature, particularly birds and other animals using bright water colours and acrylic paints. When he was a student at St. Theresa of Lisieux, he created an annual calendar to raise money for his art supplies. Matthew played on his school's bocce team and was recognized at the 2010 International Bocce Tournament where his artwork was chosen to be printed on to the athlete's T-shirts. "Matthew's faith often inspires his work," said Michelle Kim, his former teacher. "He touches the lives of all who come into contact with him and his artwork."

Dan Perretta

EXECUTIVE
CHEF



Dan Perretta, an alumnus of Father Michael McGivney CA is an innovative, eclectic and highly-skilled chef, making his mark in the culinary world. He is the Executive Chef of the Aviary and the Office restaurants in Chicago, and is thankful to have been mentored by world renowned Chef, Grant Achatz. When Dan was in high school he was passionate about cooking, but saw it as a hobby. It wasn't until FMM staff members, Vivek Naidoo and Adele Castriota, encouraged him to do a co-op placement in the kitchen at the Sheraton Hotel, that he realized it could be a career. "Those teachers took an interest in me, and helped spark the idea that my interest in cooking could be my calling." Dan studied Culinary Arts at George Brown College, where he later returned to teach. He worked at Toronto restaurants: Senses, Harbour Sixty Steakhouse, and Colborne Lane where he met Chef Claudio Aprile, who introduced him to the culinary world outside of Toronto. He then seized the chance to cook at some of the world's top restaurants: The Fat Duck in the UK; El Bulli in Spain, and Per Se in NYC. After serving as a Sous Chef at Alinea in Chicago, he was promoted to his current role as Executive Chef of affiliated restaurants, the Aviary and the Office. "I never thought I could achieve this level of success when I was in school. My Catholic education played a role in this success. It taught me respect, compassion and love; values that helped me thrive in the kitchen, especially in this industry which can be harsh, competitive and cut-throat at times. When you're in Grade 11 and 12, it's easy to get derailed and follow the wrong path, but my teachers and faith helped me stay on track."

Nicole Servinis

ASSOCIATE
PRODUCER



Nicole Servinis, an alumna of St. Robert CHS in Markham loves the variety that her job as Associate Producer for ET Canada provides. "Every day is different," she said. "I can be working in the studio, out at a shoot, or working a red carpet event." Her work in entertainment media has allowed her to meet celebrities and travel to Paris to attend fashion shows. Nicole also integrates corporate brands into TV segments, and hosts and produces ET Canada's online videos, often acting as the beauty and fashion expert. Nicole worked her way up the ranks at ET Canada after an internship as part of her degree program at Ryerson. Nicole's career in media began in high school when she did a co-op placement with Rogers TV. Her high school career studies teacher, Denise Zucchetto, and English teacher, Catherine Bumbaca were among the staff at St. Robert who helped guide her interest in English and Languages into a career in media and journalism. "As a Catholic student, I developed certain core values such as trying to stay positive and having faith, being inclusive, open-hearted, and open-minded," Nicole said. "These values drove me to fully devote myself to high school." Nicole was a member of St. Robert's anti-bullying club, newspaper, school play and student council. "I encourage students to get involved and say 'yes!' There's so much you can get out of high school; you never know what opportunities each new experience will bring."

Michael Wolscht

FIELD
ARTILLERY
OFFICER



Michael Wolscht is an alumnus of Our Lady of the Lake Catholic College School in Georgina, and serves as a Field Artillery Officer in the Canadian Armed Forces. He was stationed at CFB Shilo in Manitoba where he trained and led a group of highly skilled and motivated soldiers. In early 2017 he was deployed to Iraq where he provides direct operational support to Canada's Armed Forces, including the Canadian Special Forces. He says the greatest challenge in his role is remaining calm when working in an extremely stressful environment. "It is important to pass clear and concise orders to my team," said Michael. "In my line of work, a wrong decision can be the difference between life or death." Michael recognizes that his Catholic education helped prepare him for a career in the military and that the emphasis taught on Catholic virtues go hand-in-hand with the military ethos he learned at The Royal Military College of Canada. While at OLL, Michael played for the soccer, volleyball, badminton and ultimate frisbee teams, and was also a member of the school's mentor program, yearbook committee, concert band, athletic council, and student council serving as president in his senior year. He also volunteered in the community with the Knights of Columbus. "I was surrounded by many motivating and positive staff in high school, but two in particular, my comm-tech teacher and student council advisor, Ann Bourgeois-Brand, and principal, Frances Fraser, made a significant impact on my individual readiness for a career in the military. They helped me develop my leadership skills and taught me the importance of diplomacy. Addressing school issues in a clear, concise, and professional manner prepared me for my interactions with my senior Chain of Command in the Armed Forces."