On Friday, April 17, Lourdes Academy recognized outstanding alumni, distinguished stewards and Athletic Hall of Fame inductees at its annual Awards & Recognition Dinner.

This year’s dinner, held at the Oshkosh Convention Center, recognized George and Judi Prescott ('65) as its Outstanding Alumni. The Prescotts built their grocery franchise to include nine stores, employing 1,600 people. They established a Dollars for Education program to help employees earn money for school, and a Home Owners Program for employees to assist with home improvements or a down payment. The Prescotts have left a tremendous mark on the community through their volunteer efforts as well. Most notably, they have dedicated their time and resources to help fund Parkinson’s research, a disease which George was diagnosed with in 1999.

The Distinguished Stewardship Award went to Jeff and Mary McBride. Jeff and Mary are parents of a current Lourdes Academy student, as well as three alumni and were recognized for their years of service to the school. The McBrides have been involved in the music and athletics programs, and have helped at numerous Lourdes Academy events.

This year, Lourdes Academy inducted both an individual and team into its Athletic Hall of Fame. Dick Sedlacheck ('69) was a standout track star at Lourdes Academy in the late 1960s setting records that still stand today.

The 1974 State Championship Football team was also inducted. More than 24 members of the team came back to Lourdes Academy to celebrate their success along with a member of the Oshkosh Northwestern’s team. Jim Wedde recollected for the audience how what seemed like the worst assignment, covering a team that had only one win in the previous season, turned into one of the most memorable years of his career.

In addition, Lourdes Academy recognized 6th grade English teacher, Kathy Horejs, recipient of the Teaching with Excellence Award, and Tom Baum ('64), recipient of the Education & Leadership Award. Past principals Ali Fett and Erin Nugent were recognized for their years of service too with a brick on the recognition wall.

Award nominations being accepted

Lourdes Academy is accepting nominations for awards to be presented at the Awards & Recognition Dinner next spring. Awards include the Outstanding Alumni, Distinguished Stewardship and Athletic Hall of Fame. Visit www.lourdesacademyoshkosh.org/pages/Lourdes_Academy/Alumni/Alumni_Nomination_Forms for award details and nomination forms.
Students attended a STEM information night in February to learn more about Project Lead the Way’s hands-on curriculum.

Lourdes alumni are bringing their business savvy back to their alma mater to launch a new initiative that will incorporate Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) principles into the curriculum. Joe Kaufmann (’75 – Industrial Engraving), John Leschke (’76 – Affinity Health System), Heidi Sweet (’89 – Epic Systems) and Matt Stromske (’90 – Singlewire Software) are among a group of business leaders committed to helping students develop the skills needed to succeed in the global economy.

The 24-member Partnership Team of staff and business representatives started meeting in January to kick off Project Lead the Way (PLTW), the nation’s leading provider of STEM curriculum.

Through PLTW, students develop critical and creative thinking skills and problem solving skills and learn to apply these skills in real life situations.

PLTW also gets students thinking about careers in STEM fields at an earlier age. PLTW will be launched in grades 4-6 in 2015-16 and will be expanded over four years to cover kindergarten through grade 12.

“Our mission is to prepare students for life, college and a relationship with God,” said Lourdes Academy President Bob Biebel. “As a system, we can start addressing the skills gap at a young age and encourage STEM skill development throughout a student's education so that they are best prepared to make informed decisions about colleges and careers.”

Hats off to the Class of 2015

Lourdes Academy said farewell to its 53rd graduating class on May 31. Sixty-four students earned approximately $685,000 in scholarships to schools throughout the country. Forty-two students will be pursuing degrees in the UW system with nine students venturing out of state to Georgia, Florida, Indiana, Minnesota, Iowa and Kansas.

This bright group of young men and women will pursue degrees in fields including medicine, engineering, business, education and the arts. This year’s valedictorian, Evan Degler, will pursue a degree in Business from UW Madison; and salutatorian, Cecily Vandenhousten, will study Theology at Benedictine College. Congratulations to the Class of 2015.

Kicking off a “Year of Inspiration” - Science Edition -

This fall the Shield will kick off a “Year of Inspiration,” highlighting alumni who have been inspirational in their field. Do you know an alumni who has been an inspiration in the field of science, or perhaps influenced you in that area and guided your career path? Please share their name and why they should be considered for this issue. Nominations are due by August 1 by contacting Karen Boehm at kboehm@lourdesacademyoshkosh.org or 920-426-3626, ext. 546.
Duty to church, community and profession drives volunteer efforts.

It would be easier to compile a list of the organizations that John ('70) and Kathy (Flanagan-'74) Bermingham have not been involved with than to try to track the ones they have. They have served on both non-profit and for-profit boards touching nearly every aspect of the community including youth, business, government, the arts, education, literacy and family services to name a few. As their lives have changed, so have their interests. But at the root of their service is the desire to make Oshkosh a great place to live, work and play.

John and Kathy remember their parents being active in Oshkosh and instilling in them a sense of volunteerism. Kathy's mother, Carol Flanagan, was on the Board of Trustees at Lourdes, and John's father, John Bermingham III, was on the committee that built Lourdes High School.

That sense of service seeped into John and Kathy's lives while they were still in high school and continues today. “Lourdes had a lot to do with our involvement,” John said. “It inculcated a spirit of service.”

Both John and Kathy went away to college and started dating when they returned after graduation. It was here that they started their own tradition of service while continuing the legacy their parents began.

John’s first volunteer commitment when he returned to Oshkosh was serving on the Lourdes Board of Trustees from 1979 to 1985, including one year as president. Kathy was involved on the Lourdes Auction, Strategic Planning and Weekend Around the World committees at Lourdes from 1986 to 1999.

For Kathy, volunteering has been an evolution in baby steps. She was a board member and treasurer of First Presbyterian Preschool, a room parent and active helper at St. Frances Cabrini and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Elementary Schools, and a leader for Children’s Liturgy of the Word at St. Mary Church (now Most Blessed Sacrament).

“I was very involved in whatever my kids were involved in,” Kathy said of her early volunteer experiences. “My volunteering morphed into the community as the kids graduated.”

Kathy has served on numerous boards including Winnebago Conflict Resolution, Boys and Girls Club, Oshkosh Public Library, Oshkosh Family, Oshkosh Service League, Oshkosh Opera House Foundation and Legal Auxiliary of Winnebago County – many of these as president.

Of all her commitments, the organization that is closest to her heart is the Oshkosh Y. She served a nine-year board term from 1996 to 2005 and is now in the fourth year of a second nine-year term.

“I love the Y and what it stands for,” she said. “I grew up at the Y. I’ve enjoyed seeing how it’s gone from its downtown location to an incredible community resource with the 20th Avenue location, ice skating rink and soccer field. It’s a great asset. I believe in all that it does for families, individuals and kids.”

John’s involvements have also matured over the years from ‘in-the-trenches’ work to governance.

John has served as the Governor of the State Bar of Wisconsin, and president of the Winnebago County Bar Association and Legal Services of Northeastern Wisconsin, Inc. He has served as president of the Oshkosh Commercial Development Corp., Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce, Winnefox Library System, Paine Art Center and Gardens, Oshkosh Area Community Foundation (OACF), Verve (formerly CitizensFirst Credit Union) and Oshkosh Family, Inc., and as Statutory Trustee of St. Mary Parish. He continues to serve on the City of Oshkosh Redevelopment Authority, Oshkosh Convention and Tourism Bureau and Evergreen Retirement Community, as well as other boards and organizations.

John has enjoyed and learned from each of his experiences but he too feels a particular connection to two—the OACF, which allowed him to serve a wide range of individuals and organizations in Oshkosh, and Verve. John has served on the board of Verve since 1988. During his tenure, he’s had the privilege of working with talented CEOs who have helped him develop as a board leader.

“My volunteer experiences have made me a student of government,” John said. “When you volunteer for a non-profit board, it’s for the good of the whole community, but when you volunteer for a business board, it’s about how your decisions will affect shareholders? It’s a keen mental exercise to change that focus.”

Having a hand in so many different organizations has allowed John and Kathy to see connections throughout the community and the potential for collaboration.
“I see the relationships between involvements,” Kathy said. “I can look at things an organization is struggling with and build upon what’s worked in other organizations. We’ve sat on just about every board and it’s neat to see the connections.”

To John and Kathy, the volunteering isn’t about creating a legacy or even being remembered for their work decades from now—it’s about the relationships they’ve enjoyed along the way. And Oshkosh, with its hometown values, has been an ideal place to develop friendships. “Our ability to engage and establish long-lasting connections has been unlike anything we could have done somewhere else,” John said. “Our relationships set us apart from other parts of the country.”

Outdoor enthusiast shares nature and environmental education

What started as a hobby for Janet (Penzenstadler) Wissink (‘71) has developed into a lifelong passion to learn about, educate and share her love of the outdoors.

As a young grade school student, Janet’s aunt ‘took her under her wing’ to teach her to art of bird watching. That connection was the impetus for many of Janet’s future volunteer activities.

“I am passionate about birds and caring for our environment,” Janet said. “What began as an interest in birds for me has become a passion for learning more about nature and the environment, and sharing what I have learned.”

Janet credits Lourdes for instilling in her the importance of community and volunteerism early on. But it was after high school that her love of the outdoors blossomed. She joined the Winnebago Audubon Society in 1982 as a charter member and is still involved today as the group’s president.

“This group of people took my interest in nature to a whole new level, and I have been actively involved with Audubon ever since.”

Through the Audubon Society, Janet coordinates programs for families and children such as monarch tagging and a frog night hike.

She chairs the Oshkosh Bird Fest, which celebrated its fifth year in May. The committee initiated the application to Bird City Wisconsin by the City of Oshkosh and organized the annual Bird Fest to educate the community about the importance of birds, providing good habitat in our own yards and creating a healthy environment for birds…and for people.

Birds are not her only passion. Janet serves on the committee for the Menominee Park Shoreland Restoration Project—an effort involving UW Oshkosh students, school children, Boys Scouts and neighbors to create a natural buffer along Miller’s Bay in Menominee Park by planting native plants.

She is currently a citizen science monitor for the DNR Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey, has been involved with the International Crane Foundation, and completed a salamander survey. Janet also serves on the steering committee for the Wild Ones Fox Valley Area Chapter “Toward Harmony with Nature” conference held annually in Oshkosh.

Janet’s efforts can be seen throughout the community. She has served on the planning committee for the Society of Oshkosh Brewer’s Casks & Caskets Homebrew Event, which last year raised $12,000 for local food pantries.

And for 10 years, beginning in 2001, she was on the committee of family members who raised over $350,000 for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in memory of her great nephew, Jarid Kumbier, with an event called “A Day on the Farm.” The event grew from 500 people the first year to 7,000 people in 10 years.

“I find it rewarding and challenging to do these things for others and for my community,” Janet said. “Caring for our environment is important to me, and I love to share what I have learned about birds, bugs, frogs, and plants to instill respect for all of what nature has to offer us.”
The story of The Princess and the Pea has been a favorite among Lourdes Academy students, being successfully performed first in the 70s, a second time in the 90s, but this year, the third time was the charm.

Once Upon a Mattress tells the story of a childish prince who is looking for a princess but is failing due to his overbearing and power-hungry mother. However, this all changes when an unorthodox princess comes from the swamps and sweeps the prince off of his feet.

This year on March 26-28, Lourdes Academy students put on a lighthearted and updated performance of Once Upon A Mattress at the Grand Opera House. With the help of the “musical dads,” the newly designed set was built extravagantly with large and colorful props despite some sudden changes along the way.

Thanks to some of the “musical moms,” the stage was bright as well. This year the moms designed new and elaborate costumes with many different patterns and fabrics to help set the mood for this funny and whimsical musical while also making the students stand out on stage.

Parent volunteer and certified dance instructor, Michelle Gruber, choreographed the musical dances with creative and complex moves and formations to help the students shine.

Several foreign exchange students were given the opportunity to participate in the play. Vicki Yoo from South Korea, Cezary Kruszewski from Poland, Tianyo Ma from China, and Olivier Ndorimana from Burundi showed their acting, singing, and dancing skills on stage while Dominik Gregora from the Czech Republic shredded the bass down in the pit.

Even with all of the updated additions, the students were the ones who really shined on their own. The stage crew was punctual and adaptive with the set pieces. In addition, the crew made sure the Grand Opera House did not burn down from a curtain incident after it was set on fire by a stage light. It was rumored that a friendly spirit from the Grand kept the ensemble and audience safe from the smoldering curtain.

The band played their hearts out while being patient with the actors beat count problems during rehearsals. And, the actors blew the crowd away with their amazing voices and jokes despite some slip ups along the way.

If you want to see a Lourdes performance of Once Upon a Mattress, you will have to wait at least 10 years due to the “10 year rule” set in place by Lourdes choir teacher and musical director Julie Ringlien. Her rule states that Lourdes will not put on a play that they have performed in the last 10 years.

The musical could not have been a success, of course, if it wasn’t for Ringlien’s amazing leadership and band director Michelle Sorenson leading the musicians in the pit. The directors, students, costumes, and times may have changed, but the musical success of Once Upon a Mattress still earned the same “grand” applause as in years past. 🎉

A $3,000 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation 2015 Initiative Scholarship was presented to Lourdes Academy senior Christina Pearlman and Middle/High School Band Director Michelle Sorenson at a recognition luncheon hosted by retired U.S. Senator Herb Kohl.

The Herb Kohl Initiative Scholarship recognizes students who have demonstrated a high level of motivation, have shown strong promise for achieving success in college and beyond, and have overcome significant personal obstacles or adversity.

Michelle Sorenson was recognized and awarded for demonstrating superior ability to inspire the love of learning in her students, motivating others and providing meritorious service both inside and outside the classroom.

The Herb Kohl Educational Foundation has been recognizing educational excellence annually since 1990 with $1,000 Initiative scholarships and fellowship grants throughout Wisconsin. In celebration of the foundation’s 25th anniversary, Herb Kohl tripled that scholarship amount to $3,000 per recipient. Since it was established in 1990, the Herb Kohl Educational Excellence Foundation has awarded $9 million to Wisconsin students, teachers and schools.

Lourdes student, teacher receive Kohl awards

Band director Michelle Sorenson and senior Christina Pearlman received Herb Kohl Initiative Scholarships.

“I inherited a small alligator named Lucifer from my sister Mary’s Biology class that raised holy hell after one summer at our household. It was worth it!” ~ Mark Mueller (1967)
UPCOMING SEMINAR
Live & Learn—10 Myths About Estate Planning
Monday, September 7 • 6-7:30 p.m.
St. Raphael Parish, 830 S. Westhaven Dr.
Lourdes Academy, St. Raphael the Archangel Parish and the Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Green Bay are teaming up to host an eye-opening presentation on planning for your financial future, Live and Learn—10 Myths about Estate Planning.
Julie (Schuster) Maslowski ('92), attorney with Young, Schuster and Maslowski LLP, will address critical issues in estate planning. Proper estate planning is effective Christian stewardship and offers thanks to God for His goodness to you. Learn to prepare your estate in a way that will have a lasting effect on the people and organizations closest to you heart.
This seminar is free of charge and open to the public. Make reservations by contacting Mark Lindekugel at St. Raphael at 920-233-8044.

UPCOMING REUNIONS
Class of 1985 - 30 Years
Saturday, August 8, 2015
• 4:30-5:30 p.m. - Tours at Lourdes High School, 110 N. Sawyer Street (enter door #7, back parking lot)
• 5:30-6:30 p.m. - Cocktails at Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel, 1 N. Main Street.
• 6:30 p.m. - Dinner at Best Western Sarah Schneider: 414-630-9924 or sarahschneider1@yahoo.com

Class of 1965 - 50 Years
Friday, Sept. 11, 2015 • 6-9 p.m. (Lourdes H.S. Only)
Lourdes High School, 110 N. Sawyer Street
Alumni are invited to a gathering at Fratello’s (1501 Arboretum Drive) with alumni from Oshkosh HS following the gathering at Lourdes.
Saturday, Sept. 12, 2015 (with Oshkosh High School)
The Waters, 1393 Washington Ave.
John Dempsey: 920-426-1327 or dempsey2@att.net

Planning a reunion? Contact Shannon Gibson at 920-426-3626, ext. 541 or sgibson@lourdesacademyoshkosh.org for assistance. Lourdes Academy offers free mailing lists and facilities usage for Lourdes class reunions.
Watch for reunion updates on the Alumni link at LourdesAcademyOshkosh.org.