

The Excalibur

The Online Nazareth RHS Student Newspaper



Valedictorian Kennedy Batista at the Senior Dinner

The Journey Continues

A Reflection by Kennedy Batista,
Class of 2022 Valedictorian

My four years at Naz have been a rocky, surprising, challenging journey. I didn't enjoy my junior high experience, leaving me with the impression that going into high school would be a "nightmare". I had low self-esteem and felt disheartened by the idea that because I had to put a lot of effort into just doing decently in junior high, I would have no chance in high school or college. Now that four years later everything has finally settled and the next chapter of my life will begin shortly, I'm glad to say that I have no regrets about my decision to choose Nazareth and I'm hopeful for the future.

Freshman year was a challenge simply because I had to get used to a new school environment. It was such an awkward time - figuring out how to talk to new people, getting accustomed to all the rules we had to follow, using a Chromebook as well as Google Classroom every day, and

being challenged academically. I was surprised by how well I was able to get through freshman year, especially with tough classes like English Composition and AP Human Geography. I realized that for the classes I struggled with, extra effort was required! I spent most of my time by myself, as a kind of "recluse" who didn't participate in much and spent most of my time doing schoolwork, watching YouTube, or playing video games. I became friends with a few of my classmates and teachers during freshman year but, for the most part, I still stood by myself. At that time, I didn't know how much they and other friends in the future would help me in life.

I could hardly believe that I was on the Principal's list for my entire freshman year. I thought it was a fluke and that the next year would be much harder. Freshman year was a big hurdle to get over at first, but, once I got through the

(cont. on p. 2)

June 2022 – Issue 3

Graduation Edition



- Special Events -

- 5/13 Last Day of Senior Classes
- 5/19 Fine Arts Show
- 5/25 Senior Prom
- 5/26 Sports Awards Night
- 5/30 Memorial Day
- 6/2 Senior Dinner
- 6/3 Graduation
- 6/4 60 Year Anniversary Soirée
- 6/10 Last Day of Classes
- 6/13-23 Exams
- 6/27 Last Day of School

The Journey Continues (cont.)

beginning stages, things got relatively easier as time went on until the end of that year. I learned to be comfortable in unfamiliar situations, and I realized that if you don't get out of your "comfort zone" and try new things or face your fears, then you will never grow and improve yourself.

My sophomore year was the hardest because of all the AP and Honors classes I took as well as the unforeseen difficulties due to Covid-19. I am truly grateful to God every day for protecting me and my family from the virus, but virtual learning was one of the most mentally draining experiences I have ever had. My sleep schedule wasn't the best before Covid, but once virtual learning started, it was decimated. When classes were over, I would immediately go to bed because I was so exhausted from sitting in a chair for an appalling amount of time, staring at a screen, and when I woke up, I spent all night doing my homework. I felt like I wasn't learning anything due to the lack of sleep, the constant stress of doing homework and seeing the tragic news during 2020, and the difficulties we all faced during remote learning.

I understand that it was a hard time for everyone, especially the teachers who had to revamp all their lesson plans, tests, and projects, but it was truly a struggle for me to make it through that most challenging year of high school. I thank my friends for always being there for me and cheering me up during that time. I'm also glad that I didn't have to take the Regents Exams because I only had to focus on my finals and AP exams. Although sophomore year was my least favorite year, I learned how to find the "light in the darkness" and to see the positives in a negative situation.

Junior year was a complete blur. Now that we had hybrid learning and everyone was more comfortable doing classes online, things got dramatically easier. However, as a result of what happened during my sophomore year, I felt demoralized. At first, I thought it was just laziness or procrastination, but even with things I enjoyed or wanted to do I just didn't have the drive I had before. I left things for the last minute and would have to push myself to get through them. As that year ended, I realized that I do not want to be in that state of mind again – seemingly drifting aimlessly, unsure of where I wanted to go in life, and waiting until the final moment to get things done.

I thought that senior year would be a relatively easy year, but it was hard because I had to make some tough choices, including the choice of where to go to college. In the end, I picked St. Francis College because I believe in the high morals that the school demonstrates. There were other great schools that I could have chosen, but ultimately the school's firm belief in family and compassion captivated me. I liked how welcoming the school was, reminding me of the reasons why I chose Nazareth. The school showed me that the faculty, staff and students really do care about us and are willing to help us reach our goals.

As a senior, I was influenced by two stories that caught my attention in my AP Literature class. The main characters in *Death of a Salesman* and *Frankenstein*, Willy Loman and Victor Frankenstein respectively, resonated with me. I was struck by how much I related to them and saddened by how their stories ended. I reflected on those stories, as well as other stories that I've watched and read, and I began to come to a better

understanding of the problems I have been facing. I realized that I have been struggling with anxiety, feeling demoralized, and being negligent in how I treat myself and others. My life is now taking a new direction as I learn how to overcome those problems and make good choices, such as the decision to continue my journey at St. Francis College.

When I was first writing my valedictory speech, it was rather dreary; it wasn't something people were going to enjoy! Then I got an email from Mr. Meyerend, asking if I wanted to write this reflection. I agreed because I thought it would be a good opportunity to reflect more deeply on the years I have spent at Nazareth, but it also sparked the idea of how I should write both the reflection and the speech. I wanted the speech to be joyful, thanking everyone for what they've done, celebrating the joyful occasion of the graduation, and sharing the messages that I most wanted to share about time, life, and relationships.

I wanted the reflection to be franker and more upfront, more fully expressing everything that I wanted to share about my experience at Nazareth. When I was presenting my speech, I was just happy - celebrating, living in, and enjoying the moment. Through this reflection, I have tried to share in greater detail what has helped me to navigate the challenges of these past four years. As we all continue our long and at times bumpy journey, let us cherish the present, learn from the past, and be hopeful for the future.

Prom 2022 – Dinner & Dancing at El Caribe!



Left to right: Carl Jennings, Kennedy Batista, Amber Ford-Forbes, Enelys Plaza, Nicholas White, Skyler Nelson, Juan Espinal, Corey Campbell

Jayden Neptune and Demetria Baptiste – No sports injury is going to keep me from the Prom!



Andrew Meristil and Vanessa Dorestant



Left to right: Dylan Augustin – showing off his artwork – with Jaden Bartholomew and Tariq Deane



Making Memories That Will Last a Lifetime

Senior Prom 2022

By: Briana Patrick, Class of 2024

One important part of a student's senior year is none other than the PROM! With getting all dolled up, taking pictures that you will hold so dear and keep as wonderful memories, and dancing and laughing with your friends, the prom is that time of year in a senior's life that will be unforgettable. The class of 2022 looked absolutely stunning in their fancy outfits and looked amazing in all their photos.

I spoke with one of the seniors, Chartania Cantave, also known as Cece, and I asked her some questions about her time at the prom. Now although the prom is a wonderful and fun time, it's also stressful. According to Cece, she had a stressful time getting ready. She had to rush a bit when getting ready and was supposed to be picked up at 6:00 but instead got picked up at 7:00. There was also a lot of traffic and she ended up arriving a bit late. Nevertheless, she said it was a magical experience and was fun. She loved seeing everyone dressed up and would love to do that day over and over again!

I then asked her to share one memory that she will never forget, and she replied by saying that it was when she was taking pictures outside and everyone passing by was complimenting her and telling her congratulations and how nice she looked. The last question I asked her was about something she enjoyed at the prom, and she said that she enjoyed hanging out and being with her friends. And that is exactly what the prom is about - spending time with your friends and getting dolled up, taking pictures and creating memories.

This year's prom was spectacular, and we can only hope that it will be bigger and better as the years move on!

What Does It Mean to Be a Kingsman? A Reflection By: Daniel Korede

Editor's Note: Daniel has been a featured writer in every edition of Excalibur for the past two years.

September 2018 - I attended a public high school in Williamsburg for no more than a week before I received news that I would be transferring to a new Catholic school. "Wait what?! More uniforms? Strict rules? Expensive tuition? Give me a break." My initial response was anything but open-minded. I hadn't attended a private school before, but I thought it would be a restrictive environment that placed a heavy financial and academic burden on students and was filled with condescending, stuck-up people. I didn't think we could afford it, and even then, I didn't think it would be worth it. Despite my judgmental first impressions, I gave it a chance. I didn't know it then, but this school would eventually change my life, showing me just how wrong my expectations were. This school is Nazareth Regional High School. As I reflect upon the last four years of my high school career, I'd like to consider this question: What does it mean to be a Kingsman?

My journey began in my freshman year. I was a bashful but somewhat eccentric kid who was still trying to adjust to the new environment. I knew virtually nobody, save for an old school classmate and a family friend. Months flew by, and I had already settled in with a good idea of what the Nazareth community was like. Many of the teachers and staff were warm and welcoming. The school culture and overall vibe of Naz were a pleasant surprise. It was nothing like I had first pictured a private school to be. Ms. Davis, Mr. Samerson, and

(cont. on p. 5)

What Does It Mean to Be a Kingsman? (cont.)

Ms. Cruz would become some of my favorite teachers because of their distinct teaching styles, personalities, and memorability. The diversity also made Nazareth stand out to me. As someone with a Nigerian-American background, the diversity helped me feel more at home. Admittedly, it took me a while to warm up to many of my classmates but that quickly changed when I joined the track and field team and several clubs, including the Media Arts Club and Brothers United. I met some of my closest friends to this very day, including Courtney, Nick, Carl, and Dylan, thanks to the various activities offered. "I'm kinda starting to like this place." This year would set the stage for the rest of my high school experience. I learned that being a Kingsman means being open to new experiences and relationships.

Sophomore year rolled around, and this was around the time I hit my "ambitious" phase. I had already set plenty of long-term goals for myself and had the drive and motivation to achieve them. I was ready to join the football team, take several AP classes, make new friends and go to more events. I kept my "Nothing's gonna stop me" attitude for a while. Life was good. Then March happened. The COVID-19 pandemic shook the world and affected everybody. Nazareth was no exception. We all had to do remote learning, bringing the classroom to our bedrooms, and everybody had mixed feelings about this learning model. Some hated it, while others didn't mind. I was excited at first, but it didn't take long before I became sick of it and wanted to go back to the way things were. I woke up early every morning to log into my classes on my school Chromebook. This became the "ad nauseam" routine for a while. My patience and mental fortitude were tested. The isolation and lack of interaction with my peers hit hard at times, but I did the best I could. I grew content with my circumstances and adapted to the new reality. I joined several more clubs virtually, including XBSS and the Excalibur Newspaper Club, which ironically gave me a chance

to contribute much more than I had before. Despite this major hurdle, the Nazareth community adapted quickly and remained resilient amidst adversity. I started to understand the family aspect of the Nazareth community. To be a Kingsman means to have an unbreakable bond with fellow Kingsmen.

Junior year was by far my most challenging year. This year fostered much of my character development. In the beginning, things generally didn't change much, and the remote learning carried over from the second half of my sophomore year. I was still stuck inside with little to do, while the routine remained the same. Nazareth introduced the hybrid learning model to slowly bring students back into the building. "Another chance to be in the school? Count me in!" My eagerness soon faded because the day I returned, the school felt like a barren wasteland. Only a few of my classmates showed up. But it was a start, and things began to turn around. I became more involved with XBSS by joining more meetings and helping set up virtual events such as Mass. Having the privilege of attending the XBSS Student Leadership retreat was one of the most valuable experiences I had in high school. While it was fully virtual, I made lasting friendships with students from other schools across the network and developed some crucial leadership skills that will benefit me in my future career. To be a Kingsman means to endure challenges and remain resilient in the face of ongoing hardship.

We reached the home stretch: Senior year! Going back to school in person felt like a huge relief after the remote learning "fiasco." My optimism returned, and I wanted to end high school with a bang. I started applying to colleges as early as October to get a head start. Ms. Blair and Ms. Dove were immensely helpful throughout the whole process, and their advice was indispensable in helping me make my final decision. I became much more serious about track, going to practice regularly and preparing just in time for the season. Then things took an unexpected turn for the worse. It's as if life said, "not so fast." Remote

learning would return for the third time in December due to rising COVID cases. "You have gotta be kidding me." At that point, I had already gotten used to remote learning and thankfully it only lasted for about a month. Many more events would resume, including senior trips, the senior prom, and the final frontier: Graduation! I had a phenomenal yet emotional end-of-the-year experience as I was getting ready to wrap things up. I thought about the people who stayed with me until I graduated, including my friends and the faculty and staff who were supportive along the way. We stuck together throughout the bumpy roller coaster ride called high school. To be a Kingsman means being faithful until the very end.

Now I'm a high school graduate on my way to college. I couldn't be sadder to say goodbye to what I would call a second home. If there's one thing I've learned about Nazareth, it's that it's so much more than a school community. It's a tight-knit family in every sense of the word. I learned some important and valuable life lessons and, in the process, proved my old self wrong. It paid off in the end.

"What does it mean to be a Kingsman?" It means being a part of a diverse, unbreakable, resilient, and faithful family. And thanks to my family, I'm able to take the next step in my life's journey.

Here's to the Class of 2022!



Daniel at the Senior Dinner

Spring Fine Arts Show – Essence Fest

By: Tracey Thompson

The Fine Arts Show is an annual show that takes place at Nazareth Regional High School during the spring. Students who are interested in the event have the chance to showcase their talents to the entire school. This year's show was led by Ms. Aponte and Mr. Alvira, whose show had many talented students showcasing their talents through art, fashion, and musical performances.



First, we have the art exhibit. When students and parents enter through the lobby to go to the show, they get to see various art pieces made by the students. The pieces are on display in various positions with lights hanging on the ceiling. This year's art pieces were made by Dylan Augustin, a now graduated

senior. He made his art pieces with paint and spray paint. Each painting has its own meaning behind it, which encourages observers to study them and interpret them in their own way. The crowd then makes their way to the auditorium, where the show takes place. In the auditorium the audience gets to enjoy a fashion show and various musical performances.



Spring Fine Arts Show – Essence Fest (cont.)

The Fashion Show is led by Ms. Batista. At the show, there are various types of clothing, such as dresses and tie dye shirts. Many of the clothing items were hand made. They were designed, sewn, and tested by the students in the fashion class. The materials were provided by the school, which helped the designers to reach their full potential. Then, of course, there are the models. The models, a good mix of both genders, wear the clothes and wait patiently for their signal. Then, they walk and pose while the music is playing, like they are famous models on the runway!



Now last, but certainly not least, are the musical performances. Led by Mr. Alvira, there are several different performances that showcase the students' musical talents. There are various types of music, including a jazz act by Spencer Sanders, where he sings and dances. The audience also enjoys a marching drumming band and a drum solo by Jacob Braham.

From interviews with several students, I learned that one of their favorite parts of the show was the performance of "Dancing Queen" by Gregg Crawford and Melody Lebron. That is no surprise, since they are regarded as some of the best singers at Naz.

If you are interested in showcasing your talents, don't be afraid to join next year's Spring Show! There can never be too many participants. Who knows, maybe you will be featured in the next spring show article!



Salutatory Speech 2022

By: **Adrianna Montesir**

Good morning esteemed guests, graduates, staff and alumni. On behalf of myself and my fellow graduates, I would like to welcome you all to the Class of 2022's graduation ceremony....

I initially needed a bit of help writing this speech so of course I did what any rational human being would do and looked to my best friend for advice. Her name's YouTube. In my endless search for inspiration down the rabbit hole that is YouTube, I found that the best way to tell our story is through a story. Before we get into the story of our lives, I would like to take this opportunity to thank ...

Graduates, today is the day where we ... say goodbye to the fairytale that was Nazareth Regional High School. Now when I say fairytale, I don't mean Cinderella and her glass slipper, Snow White and her seven dwarfs, or a magic genie lamp that'll make our 20 papers for Ms. Davis disappear. I mean the magic that we experienced during the last four years at Nazareth. That was our fairytale. During the time that we've spent together, we've made lasting memories and relationships that we'll carry with us wherever we go. We've laughed together, cried together, made Tik Toks together, and become each other's family. A family that we'll never forget.

Our story began in Freshman year where we were just tiny tadpoles trying not to get lost in an ocean of people. We scattered through the halls of Naz like rats in a maze and began to adjust to our new surroundings. We met the people that would soon become our closest friends and the members of our tribe. Now while freshman year was the easiest for most of us, it didn't come without its challenges. We had to get used to new friends, teachers, and classrooms, and some of us had to slay the dragon that was AP Human Geography. However, through these challenges, we learned to get closer to our peers as we quickly realized that throughout our four years here, we would never be alone.

Sophomore year was a bit of a doozy to say the least and was my hardest year at Naz. I had several honors and advanced classes, along with an AP class, so the struggle was real. I had never experienced such an immense amount of workload before and simply put - I wasn't ready for it. The constant pressure of finishing assignments and projects and studying for exams all within the same time period hit me like a ton of Chris Rocks. However, as time went on, I began to become

accustomed to all the things that were expected of me, and everything was like normal again. That is, until nearing the end of sophomore year when Covid and distance learning began.... As we started our new lifestyle, I reflected on an assignment I was given in the 4th grade. We had to come up with three quotes that we wanted people to remember us by and one of mine was, "Life is like a pack of ramen noodles." Now of course being a 10-year-old in the 4th grade, I had no idea what this meant, but during the first week of distance learning, I understood. See, we were created to stick together and to hold onto each other in times of adversity. However, like a pack of ramen noodles, there are times when we're in hot water and we end up breaking away from each other and separating. I wondered if this was what we were destined to become during distance learning, but I was quickly proven wrong. As opposed to panicking over what we were going to do, our Nazareth community adjusted and adapted well. While this new form of learning wasn't without its difficulties - Wi-Fi issues, expired links, accidentally unmuting your mics - we banded together, held strong, and rounded out our school year filled with hope for what was to come.

By junior year everyone had pretty much gotten used to our new way of life and we had our routines down pat.... Hybrid learning began. Life was going swimmingly, and everyone was prepared to begin their senior year.... Senior year went by like a blur, as if it never really happened. Classes went back to being in person and how fitting it was that we were fortunate enough to spend our last year actually surrounded by each other. Whether it was in the classroom, our senior meetings, or karaoke night, we've made memories that we'll hold onto for the rest of our lives. The stresses of final exams and dealing with the grade dropping disease known as senioritis made our final year together that much more memorable. The people who've touched our lives in ways we never thought imaginable were the ones who changed us for the better. Everything that we've ever done at Nazareth has led up to our senior year, and now, today ... We've reached the end of our story.

Our fairytale has now come to an end. As we prepare to move into a new chapter of our lives, I ask you to think for a moment and imagine: What does your new fairytale look like? Who's in it? What do you want your story to entail? What legacy do you want to leave behind? Whatever it is that you've imagined, I hope that it doesn't just stay a fairytale. I hope it becomes a reality.... **Congratulations to the Class of 2022!**



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