

The Excalibur II



Vol. 3, Issue 2

Nazareth Alumni Newsletter

January 2026



Graduates, right, watch fourth quarter from the balcony.

Alumni Gather in Something Like a Skybox



Organizer Deanna Philippe '99, Matthew DeSimone '00, Erron McLean '99 and Steven Griffin '99.

About 20 graduates and former staff turned out at noon for an alumni event to cheer on the Varsity B basketball team as they beat Holy Cross, 55-50, on December 6.

The event, organized by **Deanna Philippe '99**, a class captain, was held in the gym balcony and featured sandwiches, snacks and drinks along with the close, back-and-forth game on the court. After expenses, money raised from the \$20 tickets will go to the school.

Among the younger alumni there was **Boysing Samuel '04**, who came at the urging of classmates who invited him after he missed his class reunion last year. Also in attendance were **Rick Dolan**, a long-time teacher and a figure in the school's athletic department, and **Louis Gerogiannis**, a former coach at the school.

Philippe first organized an alumni basketball event in December 2023, when the JV and Varsity took on Bishop Loughlin on a Friday night before a much bigger crowd. Attendance this year was lighter, and Philippe thought they might go back to a weekend night game next year.

But as for this year's outcome, she said, "I'm happy."

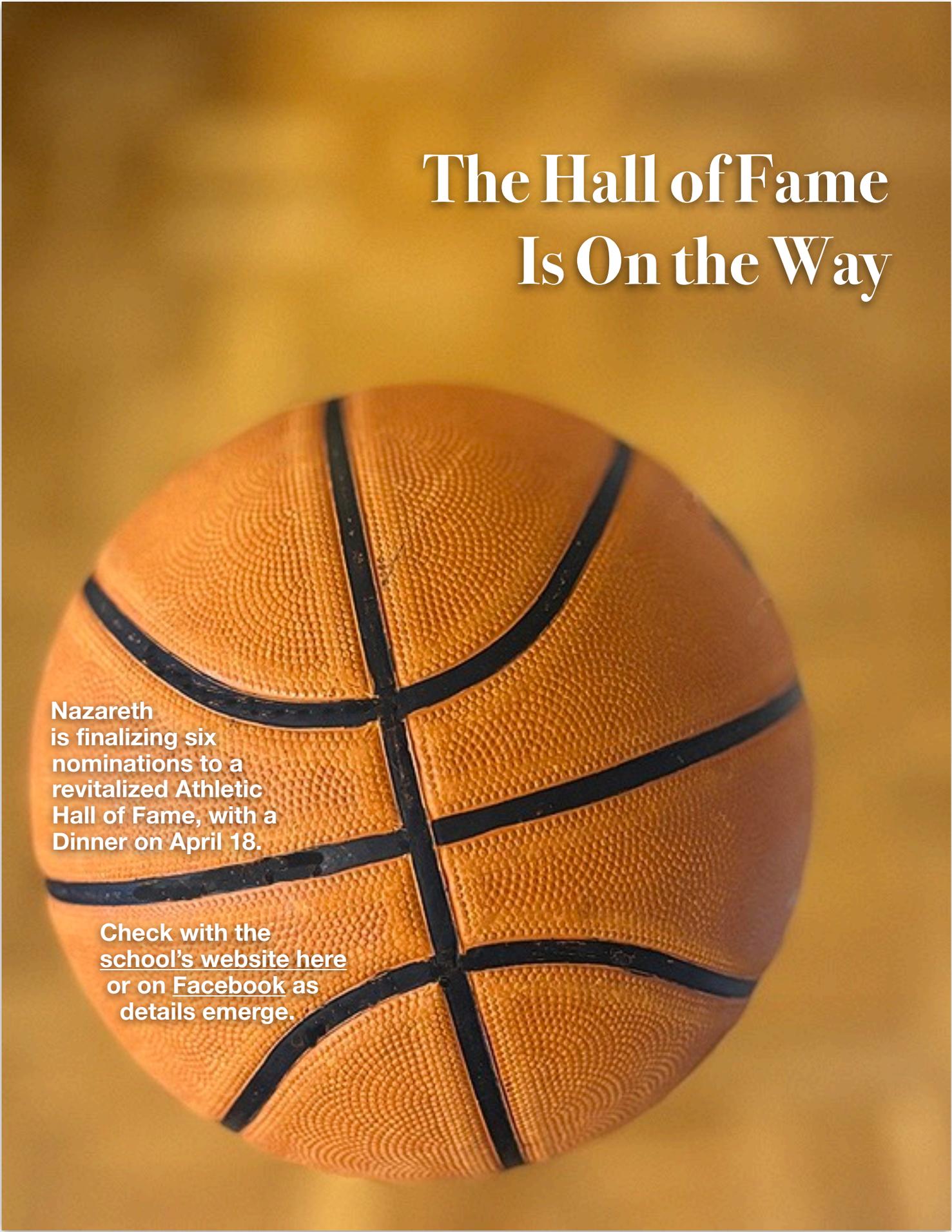
One Grad Follows Another to Bench

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Solar Panels Coming to the Roof

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The Hall of Fame Is On the Way



Nazareth
is finalizing six
nominations to a
revitalized Athletic
Hall of Fame, with a
Dinner on April 18.

Check with the
[school's website here](#)
or on [Facebook](#) as
details emerge.

Younger Alumni Are Urged To Answer 10 Quick Questions

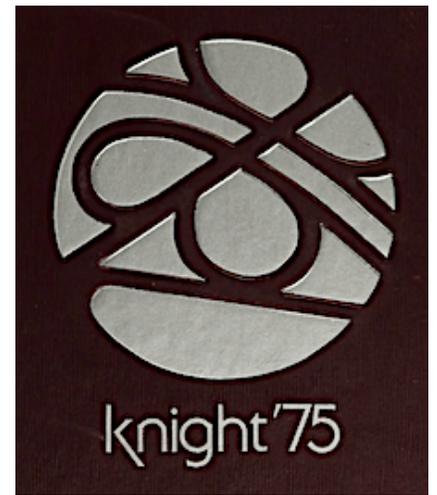
An online survey aimed at Nazareth graduates from the classes of 1990 to 2020 is being extended for a month to give more alumni a chance to participate.

"It has likely been a while that

many of you have heard from us and vice versa," the original invitation said. "We would like to change that by asking if you would participate in a short survey about you!"

A simple 10 questions, many of them multiple choice, make up the **survey, which can be taken by clicking here.** The survey was developed by **Renée Volny-Darko '93**, an alumni class captain and new member of the school's board of trustees (see below). It asks about what you have been up to, how you have or have not stayed in touch with your classmates over the years, your talents and interests, and things Nazareth could offer to alumni to generate more connections.

The school seeks to drive events and generate ideas to renew and strengthen alumni outreach. The plan is to send results to respondents and to cover it in a story in a future edition of Excalibur II.



Grad at The White House



Louis Anthony Cirillo '78, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians, was at the White House on January 16 for the launch of the Rural Health Transformation Program, billed by the government as a major federal initiative with \$50 billion in funding to improve rural healthcare access, quality, and sustainability.

You can read more about the visit [here](#) in a Facebook post.

Class of '75 Sets Reunion For April 18

John Keenan '75 reports that his class has settled on Saturday, April 18, for their 50th Reunion and has picked Wheeler's Restaurant in Sheepshead Bay as a venue. "If there are any interested parties, please reach out to me at my email: jkkeen2009@gmail.com" Keenan wrote.

'93 Graduate Joins Nazareth's Board of Trustees

Renée Volny-Darko '93, a practicing, board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist and one of Nazareth's class captains, has joined the school's board of trustees.

"I hadn't actually thought about it until I was asked," she said. "And I thought this would be a really good way to give back to my alma mater."

"I was a full scholarship student at Nazareth and I had a really good experience with that," she explained. "I became salutatorian of my class, and I thought this would be a great full-circle way of coming back

and having a different experience with Nazareth so that I can continue to contribute."

In addition to her medical practice with her husband, a surgeon (they have six- and eight-year-old sons), she is the CEO and founder of Pre-med Strategies, Inc., an organization that helps students get into medical school, particularly underrepresented students. She has participated most years



since 2011 in two-week international medical missions in Ghana, West Africa with an organization focused on women's health.

Dr. Darko received a Bachelor of Science biology degree from Pace University, an MBA in health care leadership from Rockhurst University in Kansas City, and a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from Kansas City University.

One Alum Follows Another Onto the Bench

Duane Frankson '90 was sworn in last month as a judge in the Municipal Seventh District Civil Court in Brooklyn.

"I've always tried to be active in the community, volunteering and things of that nature, but it was always a part-time gig," he explained. "My full-time job was working for an insurance company. This kinda creates an opportunity to do it full time now.

Despite running as a Civil Court candidate, Frankson has been assigned to Brooklyn's Criminal Court. Elected Judges are part of New York State Unified Court System and are assigned to the area of greatest need. Brooklyn's Criminal Court is one of the busiest in the state.

"I am happy about the assignment. It gives me an opportunity to act on my campaign promise to build a culture of justice rooted in faith, hope and love" Duane said.

After Nazareth, he went to the University of Mary Washington for a BA in economics in 1994. He received a master's degree in the same subject from Brooklyn College in 1999 and then attended Brooklyn Law School, graduating in 2004.

On moving from economics to the law, he explained, "It really isn't a change. The legal field is really broad and you can really apply a lot of different specialties to it. There are folks in law school some of them have poli-sci backgrounds, communications, history."

"The law is really about analysis and making arguments, and the same thing was the case in economics."

He attributed to teachers he had at Nazareth some of his ability to analyze situations and make arguments.

"My instructors, like Mr. Cantone and Dr. Polito, in history



Frankson, at left, with nephew David Gibson and mother, Daisy Frankson, as he is sworn in last month by Justice Keisha Alleyne, who held the seat before him.

and social studies, Dr. Afifiye in chemistry, Ms. Ellis (now Mrs. Fisher) and Mrs. Mistretta in math. I didn't think I was a good student, but they were encouraging and helped give me the confidence I needed to do well."

A CHSAA champion in wrestling at Nazareth, He went on to earn a second-degree Black Belt in judo and started volunteering as a judo instructor at Nazareth in a Police Athletic League program run by football coach Tony Desimone.

Frankson also served on Nazareth's board of trustees as well as on the boards of The Sarah Woode Foundation and the Berean Community and

Family Life Center. He is now on the board of the Berean Baptist Church in Brooklyn.

He ran in November in a special election for an open seat in the Seventh District, getting 30,015 votes.

His original Civil Court seat opened up after the 2024 election of another Nazareth grad, **Keisha Alleyne '92**, to the New York State Supreme Court.

He and Alleyne worked together at an insurance company, and he says she was "instrumental" in his decision to run.

"She really encouraged me to run," he explained. "So it's just a Nazareth story at the heart of it."

What's on the Horizon for 2026 and Beyond

Greetings fellow alums and best wishes to you and yours for health, happiness and prosperity on 2026.

We hope you have enjoyed this periodic newsletter, which we are planning to increase to four issues a year. We always welcome "tales" and updates about our alums. We are grateful for the effort that **Tim Healy**, board member from the Class of '71 has put into its publication. A great service to the Nazareth alumni(ae) community!!!

In the year ahead, Nazareth is hoping to continue its enrollment growth amidst the challenges of rising operational costs, the decline of Catholic elementary feeder schools in Brooklyn, the rise of competing charter schools and keeping tuition at an attractive price point.

Some of our alumni-oriented plans for the coming year are:

1) To launch an appealing and robust **Marketing Program and Campaign** to better educate parents about the great opportunities Nazareth has to offer.

2) To bring back the **Sports Hall of Fame Induction** night (save the date, April 18, 2026, more details to follow).

3) To plan a **"Gala Reunion"** at Nazareth in the early spring of 2027. Plenty of details coming up on that one, too. We certainly hope many of you can join us for that event!!!

Lastly, another area that has grown considerably in the past few years is the volunteer **Alumni(ae) Class Captains Volunteer Program**. (Read



JOHN WUESTMAN '68
Board Chair, 2024-25

about it further below.) I hope it peaks some of your interest to perhaps volunteer some of your time, energy and ideas. A number of alums are thinking of class reunions and this is a compelling and successful way to organize them.

I close with the hope that you will consider a contribution to this year's annual

"Spirit of Nazareth" Campaign which has grown more and more successful in the past two years. We are **most grateful** for your generosity and support.

Be blessed and healthy and **Thank You** for keeping the "Spirit of Nazareth" in your lives.

Want to Update Your Classmates About You?

Just fill out the form at <https://nazarethrhs.org/alumni/alumni-news-updates/>

Want to Send Us Some Feedback?

Reactions? Story ideas? Questions? Please send email to advancement@nazarethrhs.org.

Want to Make a Donation to the School?

You have a number of options, all explained at <https://nazarethrhs.org/giving/>

Openings for Class Captains

The Class Captains program still has openings for representatives from 32 classes from the school up to and including the year 2019.

Class captains help Nazareth help maintain current contact information with alumni, share information on reunions and alumni events and offer guidance on enriching alumni connections.

The unrepresented classes are 1970, 1975-77, 1981, 1986-87, 1990-92, 1994, 1996-98, 2000-01, 2003 and 2005-2019.

The current group has 28



members representing 22 classes of graduates.

If you would like to represent a class not already on the list or to learn more, contact: **Denis Wuestman** at: dwestman@nazarethrhs.org.

The periodic group meetings are held via Zoom.

Sunnier Outlook

Plan for solar panels gets back on track for Nazareth after a federal curveball

Installation of solar panels on the roof at Nazareth to save 15 percent on electricity bills is back on schedule for summer.

Joe Donley '70, who has represented the school on the project, said that early last year the school entered into a power purchase agreement with an investor to install solar panels in the summer of 2026 at no cost to the school. Nazareth could then buy power from the system at a discount compared to Con Ed's prices.

The initial deal "was predicated on various government solar incentives," Donley explained. "As a result of the 'Big Beautiful Bill,' those incentives are no longer available."

That put the project in limbo until the broker, Mission Energy, offered a revised deal, pending further inspections, that made economic sense to the school.

The power purchase agreement was one method of getting solar power for Nazareth. The school could have covered the upfront cost of the panels and



From the start, plans call for panels to cover most of the main roof, but not the gym.

installation and then have had greater savings. "We just don't have that kind of excess capital," Donley said of the upfront expense. "The cost would likely be well over \$1 million, probably closer to \$2 million.

Donley, a retired litigator who served 12 years on the school's board of trustees ending in June 2024, said the talks with Mission Energy began more than a year ago. The school pays around \$200,000 a year for electricity.

School Taking Steps to Shrink Its Carbon Footprint

In addition to the solar panel project, the school is converting to LED lighting and considering other energy-related actions.

Like the solar panels, the change to LEDs, beyond saving money long-term, is part of an overall move to lower the

building's carbon emissions as required by a series of new and complicated laws that will apply to almost all buildings in the city.

The school has converted about '75 percent of its lighting to LED and has begun looking into having motion-detection

light switches throughout, according to **Joe Donley '70**, who is working on the project along with **John Barrett '73**.

"It's an effort to stay one step ahead of the Department of Buildings," Donley said, "and hope for the best."



Photo Courtesy of IGDB

The character Daredevil from the video game *Marvel Rivals*,, one of two games that Nazareth's team plays against other schools

A Nazareth Team That Plays In Different Arena

One of Nazareth's newest teams doesn't have to worry about home games versus away games.

They compete online.

This fall, 15 students played video games in an "esports" league against students from nine other Catholic high schools in the Brooklyn and New York dioceses. They got off to a rocky start but are learning how to play as a team.

"They love it," the coach, **Manny Trama '88**, the school's IT director and technology teacher, said in November. "They're getting better because they're practicing on a weekly basis. We're starting to do more in-house practices now because it's a lot easier to teach

maneuvers inside the game when everyone can see and physically talk to you. Which I'm happy about because I want them to practice all together."

They even notched a win on the last day of the regular season day against Mount Saint Michael Academy from the Bronx.

Nazareth players competed in two kinds of games during the fall season — *Marvel Rivals* (that's a character above) and *Super Smash Bros*. In the first of those games, two teams of six take on the roles of iconic Marvel heroes and villains to achieve objectives against each other. The game is designed to emphasize teamwork and strategy and to take advantage of the combined superpowers of the characters.

Super Smash Bros. is another platform fighting game where players use well-known characters from various video game franchises to attack opponents and knock them off the stage. That game is played with teams of three.

Like other teams at the school, Nazareth's squad plays as part of the New York Catholic High School Athletic Association, and that organization's esports league is

overseen by EGF, a national network that can also let member schools compete against local, regional and national opponents.

Nazareth is the only Brooklyn team in the league, with Msgr. McClancy Memorial representing Queens. The rest come from the New York Archdiocese, including Monsignor Scanlon in the Bronx, which won last year's championship.

Trama hopes to field a team for the spring season as well, starting in February, and expand into the EGF league's online Chess competition and another game called 2K, a sports simulation game.

Recruiting has been interesting: "They all want to play video games, but as soon as you tell them it's competitive they say 'Oh, I'm not that good at this,'" said Trama, who reminds them "you'll never know how good you can be unless you try."

Putting aside the skills developed playing video games (think teamwork, and, of course, drones), Trama mentioned that he initially expected skepticism from some about the notion of esports.

"In the past 15 years," he said, "I kinda understand it a little bit more."

Not the Only New Team

Beyond esports, Nazareth plans to field a girls' flag football team this spring. Robert DiRe, the principal, will coach, with an assist from English teacher Tiffany Davis.

PASSINGS

A Celebration of Life service is scheduled on January 31 for **Jimelle Ilona Fraser '91** at the Caribe Funeral Home on Utica Avenue. You can check for further [details here](#).

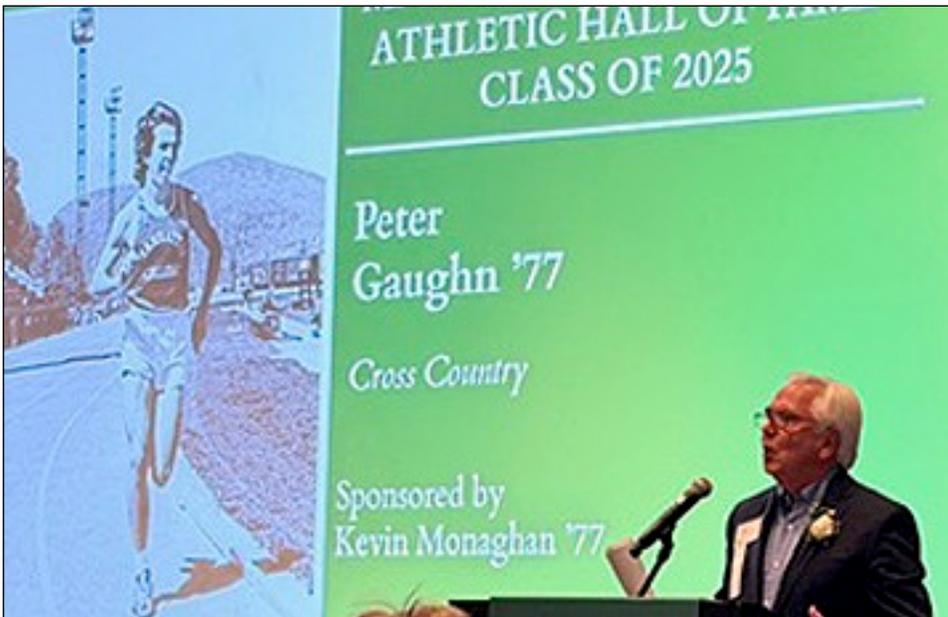
Arthur O'Hagan '69, a former member of the NYPD who had been living in Mesa, Arizona, passed away in December, according to a [Facebook post](#) by classmate and fellow military veteran Don Edgell, which you can [read here](#).

Paul St. Clair, who did his first three years of high school at Nazareth with the Class of 1971, passed away in late December. He was a musician and he taught history at a SUNY school upstate. For details, [click here](#).

Michael J. Stone '83, who owned and operated a campground upstate, died in November at a hospital in Syracuse. For an online obituary or to send condolences, [click here](#).

Sharon Thomas '86, died in a hit-and-run auto accident in New Jersey on January 16. [Click here for details](#).

To notify us of someone's passing, send an email to advancement@nazarethrhs.org with a link to an online obituary.



ON THE BIG SCREEN: Peter Gaughn '73, a track star during his time at Nazareth, also made a mark in the Class of 1977 at Manhattan College (now University), where he was inducted into their Hall of Fame on November 8 for his cross country, indoor and outdoor track performance at that school.

FOR A LIFETIME: Former Nazareth Football Coach Dom Laurendi, right, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Catholic High School Football League on October 27. He founded Nazareth's football program in 1981 and coached for 14 years before leaving to start a football program for Xaverian High School. He is seen here with Nazareth's current football coach, Gary Gooden '85, who played on teams Laurendi coached to consecutive citywide championships in the 1980s.



Wondering Whatever Happened to That Teacher?

Are you interested in finding out what became of a particular teacher you had at Nazareth?

[Click here for a form](#) to ask about some of the hundreds of people who have stood at the head of classrooms on East 57th

Street. If there is enough interest, we'll try to publish a brief update about them in an upcoming issue.

We're hoping to be able to get a representative sample from three time frames, the 1960s and

'70s, the 1980s and '90s and then anyone from the year 2000 to the present.

There will be space on the form for you to list a favorite memory about, or characteristic of, the faculty member.

Nazareth Earns an Initial Beacon Fund Award

Nazareth received a check for \$25,000 last month from the newly established Beacon Fund, which describes itself as "designed to shine a light on schools that exemplify both academic excellence and strong partnership in serving SSP students."

SSP, or Student Sponsored Partners, was incorporated in 1986 to provide tuition assistance and other help to students in high school. The group serves 34 Nazareth students, and SSP says it works with more than 1,100 students at 23 private high schools across the city.

Among the reasons SSP gave for choosing the six schools receiving the Beacon awards were "a track record of academic excellence, a proven record of strong partnership with SSP, and financial need."

Demauli Griffith '27 – an outstanding junior who is a member of student government,



Students in chapel during ceremony.

National Honor Society, and on the cheerleading team – gave an address at a December 16 ceremony describing how thankful she is to be an SSP student and what a unique and special opportunity it is for her to get an education at Nazareth.

"I want to thank SSP for their continued partnership," Principal **Robert DiRe** said, "and appreciate them for the many wonderful students who could not have afforded to attend Nazareth without their hard work and dedication."

Nazareth, which plans to use

the award for additional student aid, was the only Brooklyn school to receive an award. The other five schools were La Salle Academy in Manhattan, and then four Bronx schools: Msgr. Scanlan High School, Mount St. Michael Academy, St. Raymond Academy for Girls and St. Raymond Academy for Boys.

SSP said the six schools "represent what it means to be an SSP partner school – combining outstanding educational outcomes with a spirit of shared mission and dedication to students' futures."



Former Teammates

A group of alumni gather annually on the first Friday in December at The Joyce Public House in Manhattan. Most are from the mid to late 1970s, although any grads are welcome. Pictured here last month are eight players from the 1977 CHSAA championship basketball team: Jerry Heaney, Kevin Boyle, Jerry O'Shea, Mike Becker, Larry Guidarelli, Dennis Sconzo, Kevin Greaney and Tommy Dean.

Memorial Mass Held and Donor Mass Planned

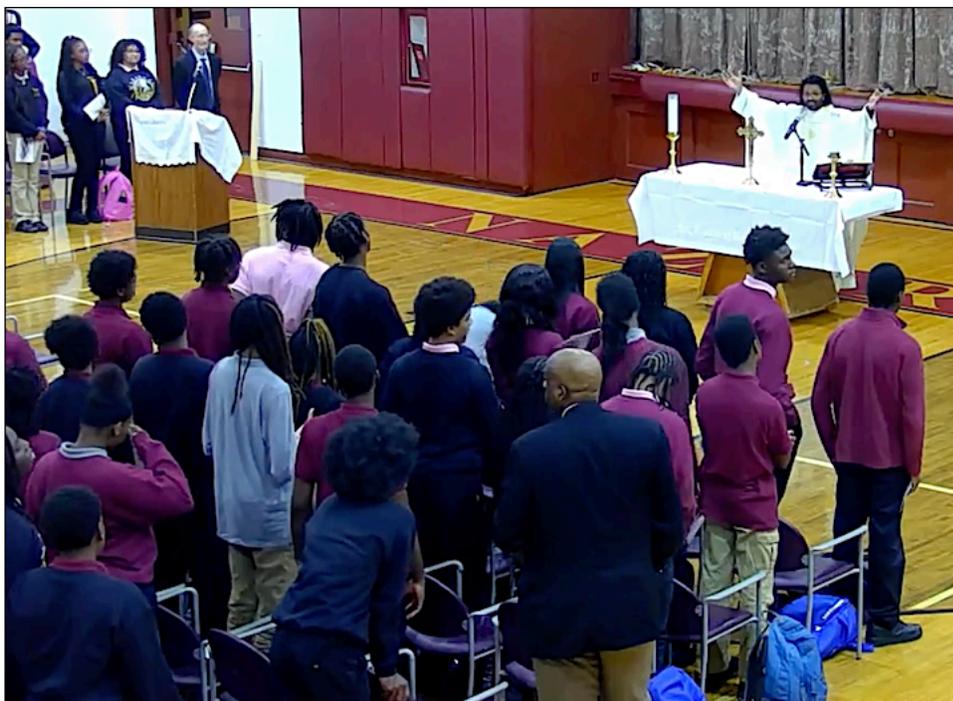
Nazareth held its annual Memorial Mass in the gym on November 10 and plans a Mass for donors in early spring.

The November Mass, celebrated by Fr. Liju Augustine, at right, was streamed live online and was attended by the whole school.

More than 225 names submitted in memory of beloved classmates, family and friends were read aloud (and appear below).

You can submit names for the future [here](#).

The Donor Mass will also be streamed live online. For details, check on the [school's website](#) as the date approaches in early spring.



Names Read at Memorial Mass

Jack Ahearn '71
Eric Allen '75
Andrew Amede
Victor Amede
Eugenia Antoine
Sylvia Arty
Michael Attreed '69
Tomas Báez '73
Maryann Ballew
Robert & Evelyn Barrett
Teresa Mary Barrett
Daniel Bartling '70
Robert Bauer '72
Joseph Beilouny '70
Michael Beilouny '76
David Bishop '90
James Blair '67
Thomas J. Bonfiglio
Brian Bozzone '70
Ed Bradley '68
Fennel Brown
Raymond N. Brown Sr.
Gerry Buckley
James Bullock '04
William Byrnes '69
Jeannette Cafouros
Jerry Cahill
Kevin Callaghan '70

Dennis Cameron '82
George Campbell '04
Lydia Caputo
Sam Carrai
Madeline Carroll '80
Mr./Mrs. Frank Caruso
Victoria Caruso
Thomas Catapano '68
John Cheng '70
Robert Chimino '79
Michael Ciccone '71
Patricia Cimino
Michael Conklin '68
Tom Conlin '72
Kevin Conroy '71
Allen Cooley '68
Brother Corby Duffy
Tom Coughlin '72
John Courtien '72
James Cove '70
Father George Cowan
Shirley Coy
Rose & Michael Coyne
Walter & Susan Cronk
Jose Cruz
Brother Tom Cully
Steve Cunetta '76
John Cunneen '72
Eddie Cunningham '67

John Cusack '68
Brother Cyril
Richard Czerwinski '68
Arthur D'Amato '67
Kevin Davitt '72
John De Paulo '67
Malachi Deberry
Michael Deering '74
Dremmler Desil '06
Ed DeSimone '82
Tatiana Desir-Wolff '86
Carmen Diaz
Terence Dillon '77
Marie & Frank DiLorenzo
William DiPalermo '69
James Donnelly '71
Daniel Dougherty '71
Tom & Mary Ellen Duffy
Bob Durkin '72
Robert Durkin '72
Kevin Durrant
Brother Fabius
Esther Faracco
Madeline & Patrick Faracy
Anthony Farina '67
Edward Feeley '67
Gerard H. Fitzgerald
Paul Florentino '73
— Continued on Next Page

Names Read at November Memorial Mass

— Continued From Page 8

George Fogg '97
Jeannette & Italo
"Frank" Freccia
John French '71
Louis Galantucci '69
Christopher Gallagher
Daniel Gallagher
John Geary '72
Joseph Ghiold '73
James Giery '71
Desmond Gillespie '78
Ann Gillespie '84
Bobby "Coach" Gioia
Tim Girardot '72
Paul Gleeson '68
Michael Glynn '70
Gary Gray '88
Joe Graziano '67
Delmar Griffith
Joseph and Anna Grimaldi
Joseph Guastella '68
Maurice Hartley
Trevor Hartley
Jeffrey Harvey '68
Henry Higgins '67
John & Olwen Hinds
Peter Holmes
James Horty '67
Robert Hussa '67
Jennifer Ihrig
Marty Ingram '67
Joan Jennings
Joe Jichetti '72
Kevin Kearney '70
Brian Keenan '84
Thomas & Nora Keenan
Tom Kelly '69
Tom Kelly '78
William Kelly '71
Donald Kennelly
John Kenniff '67
Richard Kent '72
Kenny Kirkland '73
Brother Labre
Charles Lapp '67
Michael Lavin '75

John Lennon '75
Tom Lenti '72
Elvira Lenzo
John Lewis '73
Stanley Long '67
Victor Machiano '66
Michael Maffai '69
John Malazzo
Fred Marra Sr
Paul Martini '82
Charles Mascialino '68
Brother Matthew Burke
Vito Mattioli '91
Joe Mazzocchi '82
Dennis McCarthy
Eugene McCarthy '73
Mike McDade '72
Thomas McDonough '69
Pat McGettrick '72
Patrick McGettrick '72
Denis McHugh '82
Donald McLeod '70
Jacqueline McLeod
Bernard McPartland '71
Dominic Mercorella
Jean Elmer Michel
Pete Milano '76
Frank Modica '81
Andre Mohammed '95
Dorothy & George Moore
George Moore
James Morgan
Corine Morgan
Paul Morris '74
Harold Morris
Robert Muccigrosso
James Muccio '68
William Muldoon
Dennis Murphy '80
Steven Napoli '75
Chrystal Natalie '99
Oba Nilaja '14
Robin Norton
Liam O'Conner '72
Det. Maureen O'Flaherty '80
Joseph Occhiogrosso
Thomas Occhiogrosso '81

Richard Organisciak '68
Fred Papavero
Richard Picardi
Maureen Pistilli
Greg Preziose '85
Don Pucillo '72
Andrew Quigley '79
Theresa Ragno
Roselio Recio
Donald Regan '71
Nora Reiter
James Reynolds '73
Thomas Rhatigan '69
Ernesto James Richards
Robert Rizzotti '87
John Roach
Raymond Roden '69
Al Romano
Robert Rorke '73
Patrick Russell '69
Michael Russo '75
Kaseem Ryan '90
John Salerno
Steve Sanfillippo '73
Thomas Santoro '84
Robert Sauter '72
Jim Serpico
Richard Settani '66
John Shayne '72
Kenneth Sheridan '66
Sheri Smith '97
Cecila Socci
Sparv Taitt '92
Chris Thomas '77
Will Tracy '72
Kevin Tracy '73
Pat Tracy, '71
Pearline Trapp
Frank Trioso '82
Chris Tucci
Brian Tully '72
Louis Vaccaro
Vanessa Velez '91
Steve Viani '71
Michael Wallace '81
John J. Wright Sr.
John H & Carolyn Wuestman