



NATIVITY PREPARATORY SCHOOL of Wilmington  
**TRAILBLAZER**

Founded by the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales

[nativitywilmington.org](http://nativitywilmington.org)

GRADUATION EDITION 2021

**CLASS OF**  
**2021**



**CONGRATULATIONS**

ALEXANDER BARCENAS  
GARY BLALOCK  
ISRAEL CAMPOS-GALAN  
MOISES CAMPOS-GALAN  
GABRIEL GUZMAN-JIMENEZ  
KORAN HAMMOND  
NASIR LOGAN  
ROMAN VITELA

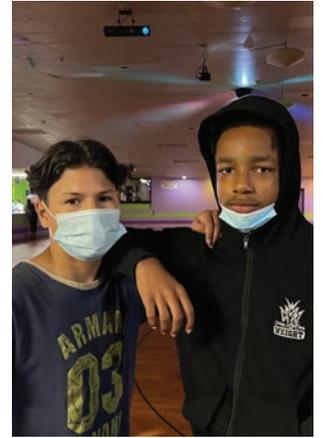
*Our wish for all our graduates  
is that they continue  
on in their journey  
to find a vocation  
that brings them  
happiness and success.*

**OUR 2021 GRADUATES  
HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED TO:**

FREIRE CHARTER SCHOOL WILMINGTON  
HODGSON VOTECH  
SALESIANUM SCHOOL

“A GOOD VOCATION IS SIMPLY A FIRM AND CONSTANT WILL IN WHICH THE PERSON WHO IS CALLED  
MUST SERVE GOD IN THE WAY AND IN THE PLACES TO WHICH ALMIGHTY GOD HAS CALLED HIM.”

– ST. FRANCIS DE SALES



**NATIVITY PREPARATORY SCHOOL | GRADUATION EDITION**



## A Message from the President, Rev. Dr. Eric Ruoss

Dear Members of Nativity Prep,

This has been a year of challenge and opportunity for Nativity Preparatory School of Wilmington. Clearly the demands of the covid virus have presented challenges for all educators including our teachers who have been challenged to personalize the impersonal screen. In addition, they have been challenged to teach new virtual classroom etiquette. Most importantly, they have been challenged to teach our students how to become good stewards of their time and how to learn independently, apart from the controls of the classroom.

This year has also presented us with tremendous opportunities. We have taken advantage of the opportunity to learn more about how our families function and about how to most effectively deliver our program. We have been given the opportunity to identify the truly valuable elements of the Nativity experience, and to augment those elements within a plan for reentry into the full Nativity experience in September. We have also been afforded the opportunity to identify ways in which we might broaden our approach to funding for this important program of education for the young men of Wilmington.

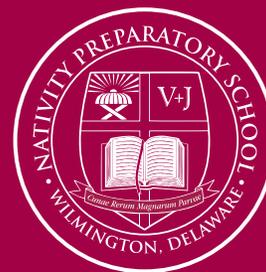
All of you have been an important part of meeting these challenges and seizing these opportunities. You have recognized that a true gift is given from the heart to the right person, at the right time, in the right form, and expects nothing in return.

Such giving is a complex event that involves a deep knowledge of oneself and the sensitive understanding of the other. To one degree or another each of you has shared this knowledge and understanding with the boys of Nativity Prep through your gift this year. For this kindness and for your generosity—we are all truly grateful.

Thank you.

Faithfully,

Eric Ruoss  
PRESIDENT



### 2020–2021 Board of Trustees

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Brian Ferry, Esq.  
David J. Ferry, Jr., Esq.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ENROLLMENT:**  
Please contact Yachira Torres, Principal  
ytorres@nativitywilmington.org

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON GIVING,  
VOLUNTEERING, OR VISITING NATIVITY PREP:**  
Contact Andrew Schieffer, Director of Development  
aschieffer@nativitywilmington.org

## President Transition

**T**he Board of Trustees announced the transition of the President role from Dr. Eric Ruoss to Brian Ray, effective July 1, 2021.

Dr. Ruoss has served as President of Nativity Prep for 4 years, returning to the Wilmington area from New York City. He has been a long-time believer of the mission of Nativity Prep, starting when the school was founded by establishing an endowment at Tatnall for Nativity graduates. After 50 years in education, Dr. Ruoss took this as an opportunity to transition out of the role of President and pursue other opportunities in the field of education. Brian, who was previously serving as Director of Institutional Advancement, assumed the role of President. During

this time, the school was able to reach \$1 million in total fundraising since 2007.

Before joining Nativity, he was the Head of School at Saint Edmond's Academy in Wilmington from 2015–2020. Brian is no stranger to the Nativity model. Before moving to Wilmington, he lived and worked at two Jesuit schools in the Washington, D.C. area – Georgetown Preparatory School (Bethesda, M.D.) and Washington Jesuit Academy, a Nativity model school.

“My time at Saint Edmond’s was special, however returning to a Nativity model school is my calling. Working to find educational opportunities for the young men of Wilmington that need it most is what motivates me each day. Nativity Prep is a solution to the

transition and turmoil so many boys experience in the city, giving those young men an opportunity for a different path.”

The Board of Trustees is thankful to Dr. Ruoss for his calm and purposeful leadership over the past four years, allowing the parents, students, and faculty & staff to experience a sense of safety and calmness. With this foundation in place, the Board is enthusiastic about the transition to Brian with a belief the school is positioned to take its next step. We thank Eric for his work, and welcome Brian to his new role within the school.



## PRINCIPALLY THINKING

### Teaching and Leading During Covid-19

By Yachira Torres

**A**s the Principal of a tuition-free, Catholic middle school for boys located at the crux of the Browntown, Hedgeville, and Hilltop neighborhoods, I could feel the rumbling of poverty, under representation, and systemic racism rearing their ugly heads as a lack of resources, funding, and training would soon expose just how deep the side effects of injustice go in Wilmington, DE and beyond.

This year’s Teacher Appreciation Week meant so much more to Nativity Prep than in previous years. We all know that Teacher Appreciation Week is a national celebration highlighting the grit, creativity, commitment, and drive of individuals in one of the most difficult, deeply gratifying, heartbreaking, and uplifting professions in the world.

For educators, the past 15 months have had us swinging on a pendulum, rocking between joy and despair, tethered by deep faith and unrelenting hope. We were lauded as heroes at the beginning of a global pandemic and were celebrated for our ingenuity and compassion as we navigated the intricacies of distance learning for ourselves, our students, and their families. We could not have imagined what was coming, but we all knew it would transform our careers and our lives forever.

On March 13, 2020, the clock was ticking louder than usual for

Nativity Prep and every school across the world. Some of our families did not have access to the necessary technology for distance learning, and all of them were about to experience, first-hand, the level of resilience required to accomplish their daily responsibilities.

We did exactly what educators do, day in and day out, we faced the challenges head on and did the best we could with what we had: through the celebration of our strengths behind a screen, through the criticism of our weakness for fearing for our safety, through breakthroughs and breakdowns. We persevered!

Nativity Prep has been open every day since September for in-person instruction using a hybrid model and to all of our students since April. Our small class sizes and strong donor base have been nothing short of a blessing. At 1515 Linden Street, we take nothing for granted to ensure that our young men are provided access to any and every opportunity to become intellectually competent, athletically competitive, and emotionally aware of who they are and who they will become for the socioeconomic mobility of their families and for the betterment our community.



City of Wilmington  
Delaware



City Council

May 3, 2021

*Sponsor: Council Member Yolanda M. McCoy*

**WHEREAS**, it is the sense of City Council to honor individuals and organizations who have demonstrated outstanding achievement and deserving of recognition and acknowledgement; and

**WHEREAS**, teachers across the country have been recognized during Teacher Appreciation Week since 1953. This year from May 3 – 7, 2021, it is even more important to recognize those who have remained committed educating our youth during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, educators often go unnoticed for their selfless care of the children in our communities. Wilmington-based educators who serve the youth, our future leaders, often provide critical, life-changing, and life-saving services. Ms. Yachira Torres, Principal of the Nativity Preparatory School in the 6<sup>th</sup> District, is one such person. She joined our community in 2018 and has been instrumental in connecting with the students and networking with administrators, bringing new and fresh ideas to the school and strengthening the school's spirit of community and inclusivity; and

**WHEREAS**, Nativity Prep is a tuition-free all male Catholic middle school. Its mission is to serve and educate young men, regardless of their religion, culture, or background to help them reach their full potential. Principal Torres' commitment to supporting the individual needs of Nativity Prep students is a real-life example of the school's mission. The dedication of their staff to aid and empower these young men in finding and cultivating their God-given talents and gifts to develop and grow into servant leaders is desperately needed and greatly appreciated; and

**WHEREAS**, the Nativity Preparatory School's pledge is that every student commit each day to one built on integrity and pride, a community of selflessness, respect, dignity, responsibility and service. In this spirit Nativity Prep teachers help grow the future leaders, movers and shakers of this City and State.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON**, that this Council is pleased to commend the Nativity Preparatory School, Principal Torres and its teachers for the outstanding commitment and dedicated service they provide to our community. We honor them today, during Teacher Appreciation Week, and every day.



*Akira Hernandez*  
Deputy City Clerk

*"Wilmington: A Place to be Somebody"*

# CLASS OF 2021

## Ms. Myers' Reflections

**T**he Class of 2021 has had a very challenging task as they learned to demonstrate resiliency in ways they could have not imagined. Through the roller coaster of school requirements and ever-changing schedules, they have managed to strike a balance between productivity and social-emotional wellness. These evolving Salesian scholars are the embodiment of brotherhood. They have learned to lean into one another and have come to grasp a new understanding of accountability. It has been my honor to watch them evolve over the past four years into young people who are ready to embrace a new, and sometimes uncertain, future. I will miss their literary think-alouds, inquiries, and their zest. This class is a class of leaders with compassionate hearts. I am confident that they will transform the spaces they enter, for indeed they have already transformed Nativity and its members. Class of 2021, our school community will miss your presence, but we are looking forward to the success of your futures. Best of luck, Gents!



**Alexander Barcenas**  
Friere Charter School Wilmington

I have a lot of favorite memories like going to DeSales and going skiing, but the one that stood out to me the most was when we won the soccer championship because the guys that we played against were like three times taller than us, and we thought that we were not going to win. Our first four matches were rough because we kept on losing. We had three 8th graders on our team that helped us out a lot! We also had two grads who helped coach our team. We won the championship!



**Gary Blalock**  
Paul M. Hodgson Vocational  
Technical High School

I have many favorite moments at Nativity even though I had some hard times here. My favorite moment is between staying at DeSales and going jet skiing. At first, I never wanted to even go to DeSales, but when I actually listened and participated, I had a lot of fun. The food was great. Another thing we did was go mini golfing that was really fun, and I am very grateful that I was able to go.



**Israel Campos-Galan**  
Salesianum School

My favorite memory at Nativity is when the soccer team won the championship. That moment is the best because I never played soccer and thanks to Nativity, I won my first championship. It was also the best because we earned it with all the hard work we put in, but thanks to Nativity I had the best team and experience.



**Moises Campos-Galan**  
Salesianum School

My favorite memory while at Nativity was my 7th grade year when we won the soccer championship. It was a very fun time for all my teammates just to be there. Even though there was a lot of crying and a lot of arguments, we somehow made it. I will never forget the people I played with and Ms. Torres doing her best to be a coach, something she had never done before.



**Gabriel Guzman-Jimenez**  
Salesianum School

My favorite memory while at Nativity was winning the soccer championship in my seventh-grade year. It was in 2019 during our Fall soccer season. At the beginning of our season, we did not expect to win. This also added to our emotion and celebration of when we won. It was a once in a lifetime experience.



**Koran Hammond**  
Salesianum School

At Nativity I have lots of fun memories with me and my friends. Fifth grade was one of my favorite years because all the students who were in that class are who I started my Nativity journey with. I loved to play learning games with my 5th grades friends. One game I liked the most was reading contest. In 6th grade there was some new students who I gained friendships with. In 6th grade, I liked to tell jokes and play during recess with my friends. Now in 8th grade I love to play basketball and football with my friends in my class. Overall, I'd like to say my favorite memory was being with my friends every day.



**Nasir Logan**  
Salesianum School

At Nativity I have made so many great memories I could not keep count. I have many memories, but this specific memory sticks out the most. We, the basketball team, won the championship. I played my best game that game. I had 16 points and got MVP of the game. Also, that same year, my brothers on the soccer team won their championship and that whole week we were the main topic.



**Roman Vitela**  
Salesianum School

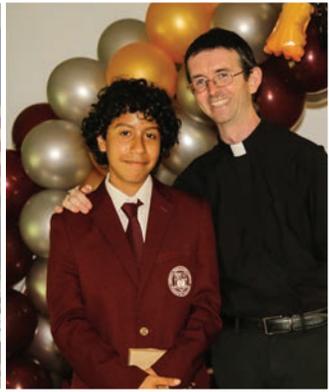
My favorite memory from my time at Nativity Prep was when we went to the Wake the World. It was so much fun hanging out with everyone from our school while on the jet ski and water tubing.

*“Have patience with all things—  
but first with yourself.  
Never confuse your mistakes  
with your value as a human  
being. You are perfectly valuable,  
creative, worthwhile person  
simply because you exist. And no  
amount of triumphs or tribula-  
tions can ever change that.”*

— ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

# CLASS OF 2021 GRADUATION





# WE VALUE YOUR SUPPORT OF OUR STUDENTS



Nativity Prep relies entirely on the generosity and commitment of benefactors who believe strongly in our mission and in the future of our students and alumni.

Your gift to Nativity Prep contributes to a transformative education which supports Wilmington's most underserved young men.

Please donate to our boys using the enclosed Annual Fund envelope or online at [nativitywilmington.org](http://nativitywilmington.org).



## MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION

You can donate cash or stock to help a Nativity Student. A Nativity education is tuition-free to our students, but costs over \$18,000.



## SPONSOR A STUDENT

Become a scholarship donor and make a life changing difference for a Nativity Prep student.



## ADOPT A CLASS

A year-long sponsorship of a class. To learn more more, please contact the Development Office at 302-777-1015.



## BE A VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Nativity Prep. Call Yachira Torres, Principal, to learn more.



## DONATE INCENTIVE PRIZES

Nativity students work hard to earn incentives. Your donation of restaurant gift cards, tickets to fun events and/or gifts they can purchase at our school store are always appreciated. Contact the Development Office at 302-777-1015.



## MAKE A PLANNED GIFT

Consider naming Nativity Preparatory School of Wilmington in your will or as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy. Contact the Development Office at 302-777-1015.



## DONATE ITEMS

Nativity welcomes the donation of school supplies, paper products (tissues, toilet paper, paper towels), individually wrapped snacks, juices/waters, recess equipment, and cleaning supplies.

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2021 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES!

We wish you much success as you continue the next leg of your journey!



**ZYAIRR BISSOON**  
*St. Elizabeth High School*  
University of Delaware



**DANIEL NELSON**  
*Salesianum School*  
DeSales University



**JORDAN BURDEN PATRICK**  
*Urban Promise*



**NYSAMERE RIDLEY**  
*Salesianum School*  
University of Delaware



**BRIAN CARBAJAL**  
*Archmere Academy*  
University of Delaware



**SAHAJ SINGH**  
*Salesianum School*  
University of Delaware



**ANDREW DELOATCH**  
*Salesianum School*  
University of Delaware



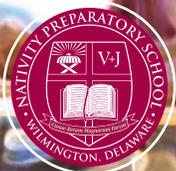
**MASHON TILLER**  
*Salesianum School*  
Delaware State University



**JAEDEN FITZHUGH**  
*Tower Hill School*  
University of Delaware



This encouraging title flows from Saint Francis de Sales' writings. He believes that—along with God's wonderful gift of grace—we can all fulfill these words. His popular common-sense spirituality gets its vitality from its implications. For De Sales, sainthood is open to everyone. DeSales believes that the roots of holiness sprout in the soil of our weaknesses. They make us see we need others for sainthood to blossom in our lives. This reminds me of what my mother once said: "We start becoming a saint, when we believe we can't." I think Saint Francis de Sales would agree with her. Enjoy!



WHERE GIFTS flourish EVERY DAY

## DEVELOPMENT NEWS

The Nativity Prep community mourns the recent passing of two supporters of the school. **Foster Friess**, a long-time Wilmington investment advisor transitioned into Wyoming resident, passed away on May 27, 2021. Foster and his wife, Lynne, believed that Nativity Prep offered the young men of Wilmington an opportunity for a better path in life. They supported the school from its beginning years. Nativity Prep was one of 10 charities that was highlighted during Mr. Friess' celebration of life. This year, as part of Foster Friess' desire to leave a legacy, one of his friends, **Leigh Johnstone**, nominated Nativity Prep to receive a \$100,000 gift. Given Foster's history with the school, he was happy to agree to this gift. Leigh passed away earlier in the year on February 18, 2021. At his passing, his wife Katherine and their family agreed to direct in-memoriam gifts to the school for which we are so grateful. Leigh and Foster were both generous and kind men, who believed in the opportunity Nativity Prep gave to the young men of Wilmington through education. We are thankful for their support and continue to share in their families' prayers.



The **St. Mary Magdalen School** community has been a generous partner with Nativity Prep over the years, especially at Christmas. They have traditionally adopted several families to help make it a merrier day. This year they wanted to reach further. Through the coordination of Principal Patrick Tiernan, the community provided a Christmas present for every student, a bag filled with all the food items for a Christmas dinner, and gift cards for local grocery stores. The Nativity Prep faculty and staff delivered all of the items to each of the students' homes as a surprise. We are thankful for the generosity of the St. Mary Magdalen School community!

Nativity Prep partnered with **Legion of Transformation Camps** and created a fitness challenge for our student, faculty, staff, and donors. The month-long February Fitness Challenge, culminated with a one-day virtual and in-person (COVID compliant) event (virtual or in-person) at Newark Legion of Transformation gyms! Thank you to Mitch Vannoy and Mitzi Oliver for coordinating and running this event!



**Serpe's Bakery** partnered with Nativity Prep this year to help with the food insecurity needs of our families. Each Friday Serpe's provided baked goods to be sent home with the students to ensure the families were nourished over the weekends and Nativity Prep added fresh lettuce, chard and spices grown in our garden. We continue to look for partners to help us meet the needs of our families. If you or your business could provide food security for our students and their families, please contact Andrew Schieffer, Director of Development at 302-777-1015 or [aschieffer@nativitywilmington.org](mailto:aschieffer@nativitywilmington.org).

*"It is to those who have the most need of us that we ought to show our love more especially."*

— ST. FRANCIS DE SALES



## Majin Labrador's Determination Fuels Growth

**M**ajin Labrador is a 2016 Nativity Graduate who completed his time here and moved to West Chester for high school. He graduated from West Chester High School during one of the most difficult times to be a senior. Throughout his high school career and especially during 2020, Majin has worked diligently on his academics—maintaining a 3.6 average for all four years. In addition to being a member of several foreign language clubs, computer information and technology groups, Majin has volunteered to help young children of color with their math and science work and in robot-fighting competitions. Like many seniors and college freshmen during the 2020–2021 school year, Majin struggled and opted to take a break from his Computer Science major to reevaluate his career path. He has since started his own business—doing voiceovers, building computers, and filmmaking. His hard work and determination has helped him to continue to grow into a Salesian Gentleman who often looks back to the community that loves and supports him; creating videos and assisting with technology issues that we have at the school. Majin has been a wonderful student to teach, and an amazing graduate to watch grow.



## Brian Carbajal Receives St. Francis De Sales Medal

Congratulations to our own Brian Carbajal NP'17, A'21 on winning the St. Francis DeSales Medal. It recognizes excellence in faith development, scholarship, service, leadership, and citizenship. Well done!

# Ignite



The COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect every corner of our lives—our community, students, and families. Ignite was once again a virtual event with a phenomenal video produced by our own NP'16 graduate Majin Labrador.

The video is available for viewing at <https://youtu.be/svBys5UbjbI>

Nativity Prep is thankful to all those that participated in our virtual event.

If you missed the date there is still time to donate via check or on-line at [www.nativitywilmington.org](http://www.nativitywilmington.org)

**DONATE ONLINE**  
[NativityWilmington.org](http://NativityWilmington.org)



**The mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting.**

—PLUTARCH

### **Masters Degree**

DeSales University  
Lynne & Foster Friess  
Edmondo & Rashonda Robinson  
Kathryn & Alan Stone

### **Bachelor's Degree**

Dick Christopher  
Kim & Bob DiGiacomo  
Susan and LeRoi Hicks  
Megan & Mark Reardon  
The Ernest Stempel Foundation  
& The Stempel Family

### **Associates Degree**

Joan & Richard Angiullo  
Heather Evans  
The Fahnoe Family  
HK Griffith, Inc.  
Oblate Community at Salesianum  
Salesianum School  
Dawn & Bill Schieffer  
Daniels + Tansey LLP  
David & Patricia Zumbrum

### **High School Diploma**

Affinity Wealth  
Anonymous  
Archmere Academy  
Stacey Bacchieri  
Blackwell HR Solutions - Michelle and Brian Ray  
Ralph Deli Obizzi & Sons, Inc.  
Rev. Richard DeLillio, OSFS  
EDiS  
The Kubacki Family  
M&T Bank Foundation  
Kathryn & Kenneth Nachbar  
Susan & Mike Newell  
Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales – Provincial's  
Residence Community  
Sanford School  
Charles Schussler  
Serviam Girls Academy  
St. Mark's High School  
– Tom Fertal & Rob DeMasi  
Rev. Brian Zumbrum, OSFS

### **Nativity Diploma**

Anonymous  
Kathy Craven  
Jordan and Danielle Daniels  
The Driggs Group of Morgan Stanley  
Charles J. & Diane Frasso  
Veronica & Ed Gordon  
Brendan Haley & Rebecca Farabaugh  
Keen Compressed Gas Co.  
The Kubacki Family  
Ruth & Greg Lavelle  
Lyons Insurance – Bob Sabol  
Mary Much  
Elizabeth & Donald Nicholson  
Penna Orthodontics  
Tower Hill School  
Waldorf Risk Solutions, LLC

## **Many Thanks**

*Swigg/Real Wine Craft Beer & Spirits and Dave Govatos for the superior wines,  
and Food for Thought and Ben Porter for the delicious tastings!*

## NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT

Donations to Nativity Prep qualify for tax credits under the Delaware State Housing Authority's Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) Program. Individuals and businesses that expect to pay Delaware state income taxes can use the Neighborhood Assistance Program to provide valuable assistance to our students and graduates, while reducing their tax liability. In exchange for a qualified contribution, the donor receives state tax

credits equal to 50% of their contribution. For example, a contribution of \$5,000 qualifies for \$2,500 in tax credits.

Minimum eligible donation for a Business is \$10,000 and an Individual is \$2,500.



Delaware State Housing Authority's staff members review applications and award the credits on a first-come, first-served basis. Each year a maximum of \$500,000 in tax credits is available. As of this writing, tax credits remain available for the 2021 tax year.

Please contact Andrew Schieffer or Megan Reardon at 302-777-1015 with any questions.

