

No Greater Love

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13)

Kendrick Castillo did not hesitate. He charged the gunman, a fellow student, pinning him to the wall. Two classmates were right behind him and disarmed the assailant, but not before shots were fired. Kendrick was fatally wounded. It was May 7th, just days before Kendrick was to graduate from STEM School Highlands Ranch. Kendrick laid down his life for his friends on that fateful day, and his great love for others was shared by his father, John Castillo, at a “Celebration of Life for Kendrick” on May 15th. In John’s words...

People have asked, “Where do you find your strength in a time like this?” Well, I have to tell you, it’s easy for Maria and me, because there’s so much love in the world. We had so much love from Kendrick.

It’s no secret to us that Kendrick did what he had to do – we’ve said that over and over. But you really have to understand who Kendrick was to understand why he would do that.

When we’re brought into this world we are an empty vessel, and we’re filled up by our parents and our communities. We’re introduced to faith, and we make choices whether we want to accept the good stuff or we don’t. Your families can take you to church, but if you’re unwilling to accept your faith, and live it, it’s not going to do much good.

Kendrick was quick to figure things out, even as a young man. If I had to describe him, the first word that comes to mind is love – love for anybody he met. And I mean anybody. He was compassionate. If you were walking down the street and stumbled, he’d walk over to make sure you were OK.

There’s risk in love – risk of being hurt, risk of rejection. Kendrick knew this and never wavered, and he knew right from wrong. But what was extraordinary to me is that you could give Kendrick a shiny object – an expensive MacBook or a vehicle – and whatever it was, he would quickly find out that it was just that a physical thing. We can’t take such things with us when we pass. Kendrick knew they were simply instruments to connect him to other people.

You heard about his upbringing in Catholic school and moving to a technology-oriented high school. I never had to worry, because Kendrick just moved what he learned in a Catholic environment right with him. He brought the pancake breakfasts that we were doing and extended that to teachers on their professional development day. He took trunk-or-treat, and took a small group and made it big, to make little kids happy.



Kendrick attended Notre Dame Parish School pre-kindergarten through 8th grade. He graduated from Notre Dame in 2015. Charlene Molis was Kendrick's principal throughout his years at Notre Dame Parish School. Following is what she said at Kendrick's celebration of life.

I have always believed that one person can make a difference. Whether it was volunteering with his dad for the Knights of Columbus, ushering at mass, or helping his classmates and teachers, Kendrick Castillo was certainly proof that one person can make a difference.

On Kendrick's very first day of preschool, we witnessed what a loving child he was. When Kendrick walked into the classroom, he saw a classmate crying across the room; the little boy missed his Mom. Kendrick walked right over to the child, put his arm around him and told him it was going to be okay. This was just the beginning of Kendrick's countless acts of kindness at Notre Dame.

His first-grade teacher, Mrs. Daly, remembered that Kendrick respected everyone and always did his best. He did everything at 110 percent: if he was dressing as a cowboy for first grade western day, he was the best-looking cowboy in class; as a pilgrim or as a Native American in the Thanksgiving play, he was the best-dressed one in the class; and when we held an all-school Mass, Kendrick was in his signature three piece suit. He loved to learn, and he celebrated life and everything in it.

Kendrick's second-grade teacher, Mrs. Schaefer, remembers his infectious smile and kind heart. She remembers his red ushering jacket at Saturday mass. He was the youngest usher at Notre Dame, and ushered from 6th through 8th grades. He was so proud to be serving the church and wanted to be just like his dad. Mrs. Schaefer also remembers the Knights of Columbus events Kendrick worked with his dad. Kendrick loved helping others and wanted to walk in his father's footsteps.

Mrs. Gates was Kendrick's sixth-grade teacher and she remembers Kendrick's ability to figure out anything computer-related. He was her go-to technology guy, and by 6th grade Kendrick was helping most of our teachers with computer issues. She, and Kendrick's fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Lamont, also recalled that, whenever we took a collection during mass, he was the only one who knew how to pass the baskets. And, of course, they both remember his sweet, gentle smile.

Kendrick loved technology and he loved science. In 7th and 8th grades he received impressive awards at the Science Fair. He won first place in Physics and Best of Show at the school level and went on to Regionals and State competition both years.

Kendrick seemed to be happiest when he was serving others, but he did so humbly, working in the background, making sure everything was done well. Whether he was producing the Annual All-School Talent Show, making and serving pancakes with the Knights of Columbus, DJ'ing the junior high dances, leading the computer club, or serving on the Student Council, he was first to arrive and the last to leave at all school and church related events.

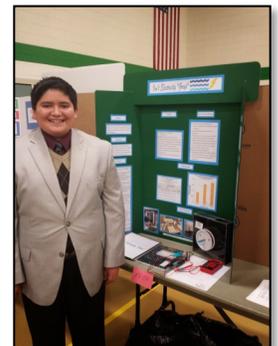
While Kendrick was a serious student, he also had a quick wit and a sense-of-humor. He often collaborated with his junior high teachers to play practical jokes on his classmates.

In the Spring of 2015, Kendrick and his parents chose STEM for his high school. He was so excited to be attending a school that would continue to develop his love and passion for Science and Technology.

At his 8th grade graduation, in May 2015, it was an easy decision to give Kendrick the Principal's Award. The award goes to a student that embodies Notre Dame School Spirit. Kendrick had his faith as his foundation, he used his talents to do good, he was service minded, and he treated others with love and respect. Truly, he was, the epitome of a Christian young man.

In closing, Kendrick was an inspiration to everyone lucky enough to know him and, even now, is still inspiring us through his acts of selfless courage. I would like to add that the Castillo's are wonderful parents. God gave them Kendrick and they gave their child all the love and support he needed to be the best for the world.

In honor of Kendrick, let us adopt the many virtues that defined this remarkable, extraordinary young man: love, kindness, humility, integrity, respect, compassion, honesty, generosity, courage, charity, loyalty and friendship. We love you Kendrick. We are all better people for having known Kendrick and he is now our guardian angel.



Congratulations To High School Graduates

Notre Dame Catholic School hosted a potluck dinner for its alumni graduating from high school. This has been an annual event for 15 years and is always well attended. The ND class of 2015 shared their post-high school plans:

Jordyn Abeyta graduated from Mullen High School and is attending the University of Colorado in Boulder. She is majoring in Integrative Physiology.

Anthony Battista graduated from Mullen High School and is attending Colorado State University.

Jenna Cookson graduated from Bear Creek High School and is attending CSU, majoring in Political Science.

Amina Emilia Guardado-Paulis graduated from Bear Creek High School and is attending the University of Nevada Las Vegas majoring in Pre-Med.

Emma Hahn graduated from Mullen High School where she received a participation award. She is attending Benedictine College majoring in Special Education.

Sofia Jerez graduated from Mullen High School. She is attending the University of Denver and is majoring in Criminology.

Ben Jackson graduated from Mullen High School and is attending Auburn University and is studying to be an airline pilot.

Quy Le graduated from Mullen High School where he was a National Merit Finalist. Quy was also the Salutatorian of his graduating class. He attends Washington and Lee University where he is majoring in Math and Political Science.

Sara Miller graduated from Mullen High School where she received the Torch Award all four years. She achieved Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude and Summa Cum Laude recognition on the National Latin Exam. Sara also received the U.S. Figure Skating graduating senior's award silver distinction. She received a \$1,000 scholarship from the Men's Club at Light of the World Parish. She is attending Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

Joseph Montelongo graduated from Bear Creek High School and is attending Red Rocks Community College and will attend Metro State University.

Cindy Ngo graduated from Mullen High School and is attending the University of Colorado in Denver.

Anthony Nguyen graduated from Lakewood High School and is attending the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Eric Percin graduated from Legend High School and is attending Colorado State University, majoring in engineering. He received the Green and Gold Scholarship. In high school he received the Legend Practical Arts Student of the Year 2019, MATLAB Simulink Design Award, and BEST Robotics 1st place Software design.

Jordyn Perez graduated from Mullen High School. She is attending the University of Colorado in Denver and is majoring in Finance and Business Administration.

Dominic Sell graduated from Mullen High School where he received a Biology and Chemistry award. He is attending Metro State University.

Sara Stacks graduated from the Dakota Ridge High School and received a Senior Legacy Award. She is in the Arapahoe Community College nursing program. She received a scholarship to ACC from her current job.



Graduates (cont'd):

Raymond Suniga graduated from Dakota Ridge High School and is attending Metro State University majoring in design.

Madelyn von Ree graduated from Addenbrooke High School and is attending Metro State University majoring in Music and Psychology.

Johnathon Wilson graduated from Bear Creek High School and is attending Red Rocks Community College.

Teachers & Staff We'll Miss

Teaching in a Catholic School is more than a job; it is a vocation, a calling to do much more than deliver information to students. It requires a dedication to reach the whole child – spiritually, morally, academically and physically – and ultimately, to help lead those young souls to God. That is the main goal of a Catholic education.

This past year, several of our long-time Notre Dame teachers decided to retire from teaching. Four of them have dedicated thirty years or more to this school, their students, and to the service of our Church.

Mrs. Kathleen Daly taught at Notre Dame for 35 years. She started teaching in the sixth grade, but eventually landed in first grade, an age she loved to teach the most. Not only did she teach them early reading and math skills, she also helped these little ones learn about God and their faith. Thanks to their memory books, holiday projects, “lucky bucks” and many wonderful fieldtrips, former Notre Dame students carry fond memories of her class. When coming back to ND to visit, or bumping into Mrs. Daly elsewhere, she always remembers them, has a hug for them and loving words of advice and encouragement.



Mrs. Joan Martinez, or “Miss Joan” as she was fondly referred to in our Notre Dame Early Learning Center, was also part of our teaching staff for 35 years. As the Director of the ELC for many years, she and her staff built the loving bridge for those little souls transitioning from their warm, loving homes to a warm, loving preschool and prekindergarten environment. When these children graduated to the “big school”, they were more than ready to continue learning. Former students will remember her quiet nature and her patience and kindness for preschoolers which knew no bounds.

Mrs. Lorraine Schaefer taught Notre Dame second graders for 31 years. Remembered by students for her popcorn parties and special reading corner, Mrs. Schaefer’s chalk boards were also memorably decorated by her very artistic uncle with colorful scenes from nature. One of her most important missions was to prepare her students for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. It was such a special time for these little ones and for the entire parish community to welcome them into full Communion in the Church. Mrs. Schaefer and her husband, Tom, continue to be very involved in the parish, and she is often seen giving her former students one of her loving hugs.





Mrs. Linda McDonnell taught our Notre Dame fifth graders for 30 years, providing this year-long, very important transition from the elementary grades to middle school. Prior to that time, she spent ten years teaching at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School. Former students fondly recall the masks they made and the “Dia de los Muertos” procession they participated in every year around Halloween. Another special highlight that Mrs. McDonnell always ensured they experienced was the 5th grade Mass with the Archbishop at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Denver. For many, this was the first time they had been provided the opportunity to visit this beautiful Catholic cathedral and Denver landmark.



In addition to these four teachers, two more retired in 2019, as well. **Mrs. Carol McEncroe** spent 12 years teaching Kindergarten & Pre-K classes. Now that she is retired, we hope that she has more time to enjoy playing her cello. **Mrs. Jeanne Glass** taught for many years in the Cherry Creek schools, and then we were blessed to have her for four years at Notre Dame, teaching art and beautifully decorating the halls of Notre Dame.



We thank all these devoted women for their faith and dedication toward Catholic education!

We also wish to extend our prayers and best wishes to staff members who left Notre Dame to pursue other opportunities. **Ms. Becky Mock**, who taught middle school science and social studies for over 15 years, left to return to her home in Phoenix, AZ, where she is teaching science. After ten years at Notre Dame in the Early Learning Center, **Mrs. Kelly Miller** left to enjoy her passion for gardening. **Mr. Mark Bocinsky**, middle school math and religion teacher, has undertaken study to obtain his Master’s degree in Theology. **Mr. Michael Amidei**, who brought beautiful music to our students and community, left to continue his musical career. In addition to these, we would like to acknowledge others who left ND in 2019: **Anna Peetz**, Registrar, whose sons attended the school, and who has served on the school’s development committee for many years; **Concetta Busnardo**, Paraprofessional for the younger grades, whose children also attended ND; and **Tori Fischer**, a ND Alum who provided assistance in the Early Learning Center.

May God bless and keep all those who have left their marks on our school community!



Notre Dame School Events of Interest to Alumni

School Mass on Fridays 8:15 – 9:15 a.m.

- Dec. 5 Advent Program in Church, 6:00-7:00 p.m.
- Dec. 11 Barnes & Noble Book Fair 8136 W. Bowles Ave. Littleton, CO 80123
- Dec. 19 ELC Christmas Program in Church
- Jan. 26-31 Catholic Schools Week – “Many Gifts One Nation” – check school website for details
- Feb. 11 Talent Show – Gym
- Feb. 26 Ash Wednesday Mass, 8:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
- March 14 Spring Fest Lakewood Country Club, 5:30 p.m.
- April 24-26 Catholic Schools Art Fair St. Thomas More
- May 1 May Crowning Mass, 9:15-10:00 a.m.
- May 7 Spring Concert in Church, 6:00-7:00 p.m.
- May 22 8th Grade Graduation in Church, 7:00 p.m

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