

*"Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the LORD."*  
Ephesians 2:20-21

## MEET THE BROWNS: MAKING THE SACRIFICE

**G**ordyn Brown, a sophomore at Billings Central Catholic High School, just received his driver's license this past summer. That amazing feeling of freedom coursed through his body.

But as every good parent does, his mom, Jessica, brought her son back down to earth, "Now you get to bring your sister to school every day!"

It's a practical decision for the Browns. They live in Park City, driving the 27 miles, 44-minutes from their house to



St. Francis, to Central every school day. But the Browns would not have it any other way.

Seated on 25 acres, Jessica and her husband, Patrick, have their own little farm. The rural life suits them. They raise donkeys, horses, goats, along with their dogs and cats. Patrick is a farrier by trade – the technical term for a horseshoer. They both rescue and rehome donkeys. During the summer, the family pitches in!

"Donkeys are much smarter than

horses," Jessica says with conviction. "They're only stubborn if they don't trust you. You have to earn it!"

Being far outside of Billings, Gordyn and Kristyn naturally attended their local schools to begin their education. Sadly, the school's culture never quite fit their kids. Due to a conflict, Jessica started to seriously consider options.

She recalls, "We attend St. Thomas Church, and one day, I saw St. Francis sitting across the parking lot, newly opened at the time. I looked at Patrick and said, we need to get the kids into the Catholic schools." Patrick reflexively replied, "We can't afford it!"

Determined, Jessica pushed forward. A good friend, Mrs. Mary Clark – K-4 Science Teacher at St. Francis, gave them a tour. Jessica signed Gordyn and Kristyn up for a "Shadow Day" – a day for prospective students to experience the schools.

When she asked her kids afterward, they burst out, "Everyone was so nice. And nobody yelled. Can we go?" Jessica and Patrick made the decision. They still couldn't afford tuition, but they resolved to make sacrifices.

Patrick took up a job as an enforcement officer with the MT Department of Transportation Motor Carrier Services. He inspects commercial trucks – a key position enforcing and ensuring safe roads. Jessica began a position at St. Thomas Church in communications and, later, youth ministry. She now works for the Catholic Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

As recipients of the Duffner Family

Scholarship this year, Jessica states, "The tuition help, from the parishes, ACE Scholarships, BCS and the Foundation, we wouldn't be here without assistance!"

When beginning at St. Francis, Gordyn was behind academically. But his teachers helped along the way. A recently discovered learning disability, dyslexia, has provided additional answers. "Ms. Umphrey has been so helpful!" Jessica gushes. As the Accommodations Coordinator at



BCCHS, Mrs. Olivia Umphrey ensures each student gets the support they need to succeed.

Outside of class, Gordyn is a football player and altar serves at all-school masses. His dream is the Airforce, like his grandfather before him.

Kristyn, an 8th grader, is academically inclined. "She's always reading a book!" says her mom. She's a two-sport athlete, playing volleyball in the fall and softball in the spring.

"It's all worth it," Jessica concludes. **+**

**W**elcome to The Cornerstone, your quarterly newsletter from your family at the Billings Catholic Schools and Foundation. In these pages, you will read stories of tremendous students, families, and alumni; school updates and happenings; invitations to events; and of course, ways to continue your support of our schools.

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PART 2:

# THEN, NOW, TOMORROW: 50 YEARS OF BACET

Through the 1980's, BACET slowly and steadily amassed more in funds to support our Catholic Schools.

BACET's establishment informed a related discussion on the long-term vision of Catholic schools in Billings. In 1982, at the direction of Bishop Murphy, representatives from Billings' Catholic parish began a 5-year process of consolidating the schools into one Kindergarten through 12th grade system. Holy Rosary School became St. Francis Primary for K-2nd grade students, St. Pius X School became St. Francis Intermediate for 3rd-5th grade students, and Kate Fratt Memorial School became St. Francis Upper for 6th-8th grade students.

At the time, few Catholic schools across the nation had attempted such a transformative model. Billings Catholic Schools progressive outlook became a model of transforming Catholic education in a community – a model that continues to be emulated to this day across the nation. As a result of consolidation, BACET made ready impact for the entire system, rather than each individual school.

Heading into the 1990's, Catholic Schools faced headwinds to their

mission. The biggest issue: replacing the front lines of religious education – the Sisters who taught in classrooms and led schools for decades.

As vocations to religious orders declined, there were fewer new, young religious to take up education throughout the 1980's and 1990's. The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth led our Billings Catholic Schools until 2001. Sr. Valarie's 41 year presence at Billings Central ended in 2010.

Greater numbers of lay-Catholic, professional teachers began to populate the classroom. Of course, while religious take a vow of poverty, lay teachers must receive a just compensation. Nationwide, Catholic Schools required increasing tuition because of increasing expenses.

Facing these realities, BACET stepped to the fore of the challenge. To sustain the schools and its students, BACET began an endowment campaign. Merilynn Miller, a fundraising professional in Billings who has raised tens of millions for Billings area causes, was the first professional staff of BACET to lead the campaign. Gonsler Gerber, a fundraising consultant from Chicago, Illinois was retained to help.

At the same time, a providential development occurred; the State of Montana provided its own "gift" to non-profit organizations towards helping build endowment funds. In 1994, Governor Racicot convened the Governor's Task Force on Endowments and Philanthropy. As a result of its work, the 1997 Montana legislature passed a unique solution; the Montana Endowment Tax Credit

With laws favoring endowment creation, BACET began a strong push for the future of our schools while educating BACET supporters towards the newly enhanced tax benefits of "planned gifts" – a term few donors had heard prior. As a result, BACET effectively launched a new business in charitable gift annuities that continues to this day. Through this new business model, supporters could contribute to BACET, utilize a significant tax credit, and receive future income for their retirement. BACET raised millions of dollars that strengthened the distributions to the schools, students, and teachers.

Beyond fundraising, new modes of endowment allocation came to the fore. Since the 1980's, universities began pioneering a new



model of endowment growth that showed significant opportunity for endowment appreciation. BACET transformed its investment model to growth and a reliable distribution method that the schools could count on each year.

*Stay Tuned for Part 3 of 4 - Coming in March's Cornerstone*



FAITH • FAMILY SPIRIT • ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

# BACET HEROES

## LOWELL AND ELIZABETH DUFFNER



Mrs. Elizabeth Duffner worked as the volunteer librarian at St. Pius X Catholic School for decades. She loved her students and her books.

To her husband, Lowell, she was "Tiz." Their 60 years of marriage are a testament to their love for

each other and their family. Together, they had three children, Jan, Diane, and Stan, all who attended our Catholic schools.

In Tiz's later years, with the onset of Alzheimers, Lowell lovingly cared for his wife and ensured her care. After her passing in 2006, Lowell's last words to his late wife every night were, "Goodnight Tiz, I miss you."

Lowell worked as an accountant, rising through the ranks until owning his own firm. He was recognized by the Montana Society of CPA's and the American Institute of CPA's in 1988 and awarded the George D. Anderson Distinguished Service Award in 2011.

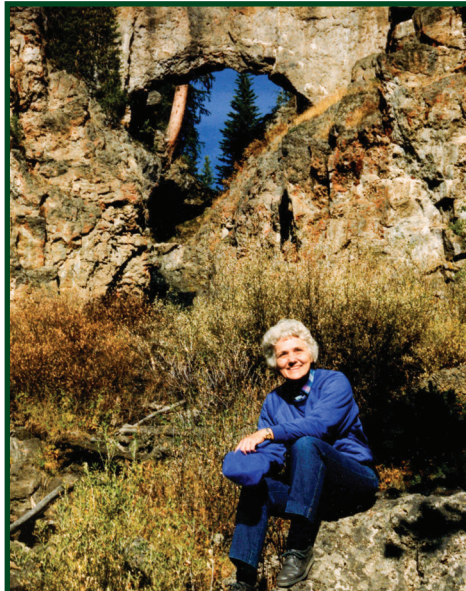
Lowell's warm humor, inquisitive nature, and genial disposition afforded him and Tiz many friends. Mr. Duffner's modesty was always apparent - living in the same house on Colton Blvd., driving the same cars.

As man of deep faith, he took stewardship seriously. He loved Billings Catholic Schools. Without grandchildren, he felt all the students of Catholic schools were his grandkids.

To care for his grandkids, Lowell and Tiz provided significantly through their estate, establishing the Duffner Family Scholarships. These scholarships provide \$40,000 to students annually.



## DOROTHY PORTER



From the age of 13, Dorothy Mary Porter worked: first at a community newspaper, and then a candy factory in Chicago. At the outset of World War II, at the age of 16, she worked in armatures at a defense plant.

Why work so hard? To help pay for her Catholic

school education at Immaculata High School, her ballet, piano, and trumpet lessons, and to afford higher education at the College of St Teresa in Winona, Minn..

Upon graduating with degrees in Foods and Nutrition, she worked in many healthcare institutions in dietetics including Cook County Hospital, Chicago's Children's Hospital, Saginaw General Hospital. She rose to Chief of Dietetic Services at the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute.

Dorothy moved to Billings in 1971 as a food service officer as a Reservist in the United State Air Force, retiring at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Afterward, she served Montana Native American Reservations through Indian Health Services.

In 1976, Dorothy married Howard Porter, the president of the Billings Business College. In retirement, Dorothy loved to travel, visiting all seven continents.

A good friend and neighbor, Sister Valerie frequently invited Dorothy to Billings Central happenings and meetings with students.

Because of their friendship, Dorothy placed BACET within her estate plans, establishing the Dorothy Porter Building Fund, providing \$170,000 in facility needs annually.

## Supporter Information

Yes! Keep me in the loop with the latest from Billings Catholic Schools and Foundation.

name: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

address: \_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

city: \_\_\_\_\_ state: \_\_\_\_\_ zip: \_\_\_\_\_

note: we will never share your personal information.

## Gift Information

I/We want to support the Billings Catholic Schools & Foundation with a gift:

Tuition Assistance     The Greatest Need     BACET Endowment     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\$50     \$100     \$300     \$500     \$1,000     \$2,500     \$5,000     Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# MAYFAIR MINUTE

# MEET YOUR MAYFAIR CHAIRS FOR 2024

J.R. and Amy Reger are an active family within our schools. J.R.'s grandparents, Russ and Bev Clark, chaired Mayfair in 1977. Amy is a 1992 alumna of Billings Central.

As a pediatric speech pathologist, Amy knows the incredible work our teachers accomplish. To give back, she volunteers in the classroom, serves on the BCS Foundation board, and sits on the Development Committee. J.R. works at Iron Oil Operating. When not in the office, he's coaching his son's baseball and flag football teams. The Regers are incredibly generous of their time, talents, and treasure throughout our community!

As co-chairs for Mayfair 2023, J.R. and Amy loved working with last year's chairs Quinn and Alicia Donovan, "The Donovans are BCS champions and now lifelong friends. Being able to connect with a like-minded couple and work towards a shared goal was tremendously rewarding. With support from the team at the Foundation and the efforts by the volunteer committees, we were able to bring a vision to life. Mayfair 2023 was such a joyful event."



Understanding that great co-chairs are essential, know the value of Billings Catholic Schools, and the importance of Mayfair to students and families, J.R. and Amy reached out to Adam and Danielle Uselman to invite them to join the Mayfair 2024 team.

Although Adam and Danielle's kids just entered our schools, the Uselman's have been supporters of the Billings Catholic Schools and Mayfair for years. Adam's aunt & uncle, Ben & Joei Uselman chaired Mayfair in 1993. Adam is the president of BRUCO, Inc., a regional



cleaning supply company. Danielle is busy with their 3 young kids; twin girls Ezrie & Grace (6), their little brother Leo (4).

When asked to co-chair, Adam stated, "We feel called to evangelize and share the good news. What better way to do that than to help as many families as we can to provide their children a Catholic education?"

"We are excited to get to work!" said J.R. "It is our pleasure to support Mayfair," continued Amy. "As a family of Billings Catholic Schools, parents, and alumni, we understand that this event is vital to the immediate needs and lasting permanence of our schools."

The Regers and the Uselmans invite you to save the date: join your Billings Catholic Schools for **the 49th annual Mayfair Gala Dinner & Auction on Saturday, May 11.**

## LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

Billings Catholic Schools Foundation  
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 billingscatholicschoolsfoundation.org  
 billingscatholicschools.org  
 facebook: search Billings Catholic Schools & Billings Catholic Schools Foundation

## upcoming events\*:

Winter Sports Begins .....	Saturday, December 9
Christmas Break .....	Wednesday, December 20 – Tuesday January 2
Catholic Schools Week .....	Sunday, January 28 – Saturday, February 3
All-System Mass .....	Thursday, February 1
St. Francis Art Gala .....	Tuesday, February 20

\*Events are subject to change. If you're signed up, check your email for the most current information; or sign up for email updates today!

## Payment Information

- Check (Please make check payable to Billings Catholic Schools Foundation)
- Credit card (Please fill out information below)
- On-Line (I will make my gift online at [www.billingscatholicschoolsfoundation.org](http://www.billingscatholicschoolsfoundation.org))



Name as it appears on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Type (Visa, MC, Amex, Discover)                      Card Number                      Expiration Date                      CVV Code

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Please fill out address portion on back side of this piece.  
 Once filled out, please return this portion of the form in the enclosed envelope.  
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