CELEBRATE
CELEBRATE

JUAN DIEGO
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
I’ve found,  
That the best moments in life,  
Are the ones where time stops moving, The clock stops ticking.  
Where the knots in your head, unwind.  
When I think of the “good times,”  
My important days don’t come to mind. Rather,  
The small ones,  
The unimportant things,  
The days with no futuristic significance, take place.  
The warmth of sun on bare skin.  
Dancing to a song alone in your basement. When a dog you don’t know,  
Is happy to see you.  
The taste of water when you’re exhausted.  
My reasons for living,  
Aren’t what I hope my future holds, but the moments I don’t yet know.  
The world stops turning when I’m laughing with my best friend, when my brother is goofy because he needs attention.  
When someone I know looks good in a certain color.  
My mind is at ease when I’m dodging a flag,  
Or when I play a perfect G flat.

Sometimes,  
My favorite part of the day,  
Is blasting my music and dancing away.  
I reserve ten minutes before school to snuggle my dog, ten more to slowly drink my morning coffee,  
Five to tell my parents goodbye.  
I walk on the gravel part of the path, Because it makes it more interesting, little stones beneath my shoes.  
I sleep with a teddy bear,  
Because I don’t think people should care.  
And I have a silly crush on a silly boy,  
Because I’m still only seventeen.  
And I’ve found life worth living in the little things.

In the fall, Tynli will attend Utah State University and plans to major in chemistry and sociology with a focus in criminal justice. She’ll be playing trombone with the Aggie marching band and hopes to share more of her poetry there. As a senior this past year at Juan Diego, Tynli received an award for excellence in government and politics and excellence in the performing arts.
My previous school was so large that the graduation took hours even though the announcers of the graduates’ names were speed-reading and had two students walk up at the same time from both sides of the stage. The 900+ graduates, along with all of the faculty, family, and friends, filled the cavernous space at UVU. Our JD graduation felt much more meaningful and intimate. I enjoyed seeing the families and friends of each graduate in the audience and the alternating laughter and tears throughout the ceremony. Some of my juniors were there cheering on their graduating friends, and it touched me to see how, figuratively, that torch is passed.

The traditional roses scattered across the walkway added to the sanctity of the occasion and were an appropriate representation for the passion and sacrifice of our students’ last four years. The transformation of the auditorium was so impressive that it took me a minute to get my bearings when we walked up the steps behind the curtain and came out on the makeshift stage to proceed to our seats. What a surprise when I turned around and saw the illuminated images behind us.

Samantha Lengerich’s message that as students of JD, you will always have your own infield cheering you on stresses to me the community and camaraderie of JD as a whole. I had the song “Yes I Will” playing in my head for the rest of the day. Including that video at the commencement was a sweet touch, but it also left me thinking that I need to be in that “Yes I Will” place myself.

Overall, attending the graduation as a new teacher at JD was yet another reminder that we are part of something special here.
If there were ever a class who is ready for the world, it’s the Class of 2021! This class has navigated online and in-person learning, stayed connected and supportive in a socially distanced landscape, and created new ways to be successful, and they can’t wait for what the future holds.

Take care of yourself, take care of one another, and thank you for taking care of Juan Diego!

Saint Juan Diego, Pray for Us.

Keep up with the class of 2021 online at
- @JDCHSalumni
A GLOBAL FAMILY

“Being a host family for Juan Diego international students has been such a rewarding experience for our family. We have been able to learn about different cultures and have helped these students learn the traditions and the culture of the United States. We have loved showing them Utah, the beautiful state we live in. Fishing and camping are some of the fun times we have shared with our students. Sharing our Sunday tradition of dinner with the entire family is something we also enjoy. We see growth in their academics and their social skills as they come to Juan Diego as sophomores or juniors and then graduate to go on to universities. We have great support from all the international coordinators in the program. It has been a blessing to be called “Mom & Pop.” We love these kids like our own and love getting a text or email from our former students as they are having children and growing up. What a great gift hosting has been for us.

Thank you, Juan Diego!”

— The Allan Family
“I have come this far as an international student at Juan Diego, thanks to the loving support and opportunities for involvement, growth, and development JD and its people have given me. My lovely friends, supportive hosts, caring teachers, and excellent International Department faculty I have met along my journey here have helped bring the best out of me. Without a single one of them, my high school experience in the US wouldn’t be as complete as it is. Within only three years, this place has become my home and its community has become my family, fulfilling a missing piece in my heart when I am 8,238 miles away from my family in Bangkok, Thailand. Juan Diego made me who I am today, and I am proudly grateful to graduate from this amazing high school.”

— Danaya (Pam) Amornnimit, Class of 2021

### INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS’ HOME COUNTRIES

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Jasmine Aguilar  
Class of 2021

Confronted with an empty refrigerator and only cross-country running fuel (Clif bars and applesauce) in her backpack, Jasmine Aguilar quickly realized that her summer stint in the dorms at the University of Utah was for real. Aguilar admitted, “I’m used to my mom cooking and having food for me ... I have been eating a lot of macaroni and cheese and ramen lately.” Aguilar is taking part in the PathMaker Scholars Summer Research Program at Huntsman Cancer Institute, a program that sponsors underrepresented students in biomedical cancer research and helps them prepare for a future career in research, medicine, and education.

From May 31 to August 6, Aguilar will be living in a dorm with two students. She appreciates the diversity among the PathMaker students, both ethnically and pedagogically. For example, the students in her dorm represent three different research groups: cancer, cell-based, and engineering. Incoming freshmen are not her only peers this summer; she also interacts academically and socially with older classmen who are in the program. “I dedicate my time on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. attending classes, participating in PathMaker Program meetings, and reading in the afternoons.” She is enjoying the meetings every Friday, when they have a different speaker, and she continues to learn but in a different setting. Last week, she “had a blast” at a watermelon carving social.

Aguilar is involved in three labs that are, in her mind, equally interesting. The first lab involves Pacific Islander women and the effect that their lifestyle has on endometrial cancer. The second lab is researching the connection between truck drivers and increased risk of colorectal cancer. The last lab seeks answers for the racial disparities present in colorectal cancer cases. While initially disappointed that she was placed with her fourth choice in labs (as a future dermatologist, her first choice was the melanoma lab), she has since settled in and appreciates how much she’s learning. She has been assigned a principal investigator, Dr. Charles Rogers, who serves as her mentor and directs her research. In August, Aguilar will be presenting her abstract regarding the risk factors of truck drivers and colorectal cancer. With an uncle currently fighting stomach cancer, Aguilar is especially interested in proactive measures concerning cancer and correspondingly comments on the research being done on truck drivers. She states, “People have noticed it’s an ongoing issue but haven’t done the research to find out why. It’s something that can be prevented.”

Interview by Kirsten McHugh
Jennifer began singing when she was 8 years old. It all started in talent shows and then it went on to recitals. The first genre she sang in music class was opera. She was told that if she could sing opera, she could sing anything, and so she focused on opera first. She then went on to pop music, from “Rolling in the Deep” by Adele to “If I Were a Boy” by Beyonce. She has had quite a journey since then. She began singing Mariachi music, which originated in Jalisco, Mexico. Since then, it’s been one of her strongest genres to sing, meaning she can dominate the genre.

When she was 12, she began to do competitions. One of her first was Access Broadway, held in Las Vegas. She won second place and then went to New York City for the state competitions. She also did three competitions in restaurants in which she won first place. During that year, she released a CD of 13 songs. It was sold in Guadalajara, Mexico, where she had the pleasure of sing in one of the biggest festivals. Three years later, when she turned 16, she released a new song, heard in Canada, Alaska, Brazil, China, and more. Now 17, she does concerts, sings downtown, and performs for the Mexican Counsel. She’s won an opera competition that now defines her as one of the best vocalists in Utah. She is preparing to go to Mexico again for a concert, and she is preparing for a bigger music career.

Jennifer Diaz
Class of 2022

Written by Kirsten McHugh
Interview with Kirsten McHugh, JDCHS English teacher

McHugh: Tell me a little about how the idea for your company came to fruition.

David: My company started in 2020, but if you were to look back, it technically started all the way back in freshman year, 2018. Mrs. Fankhauser assigned us a health project which involved a video. This taught me the very minimal basics of what I needed for sophomore year.

I was in the AP Seminar class and we had to film these practice presentations. I had a phone and a tripod and I knew how to use iMovie, so, thus, I offered to help film and edit these presentations. I was lucky enough to have this opportunity to get into the door into the film industry world. I kept at it. I got better gear, but I was doing projects for fun. I would rarely get paid; I just did videos solely for the fact that I loved videos.

It wasn't until junior year, when I was sitting in Ms. Sawyer's stats class. She was going on about the fatal flaw in the education system: You get good grades so you can go to a good college, and you go to a good college so you can get a good job. She asked us to see the flaw in this logic. Someone raised their hand and said, "Is it the job part?" Sawyer then elaborated. The education system needs to strive for the idea of not a job but something self-sufficient. When you do not rely on someone for handing you a check, you are self-sufficient. This just clicked with me. I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to take these film skills and then maybe after college start a film and photography company.

A couple months later, I was sitting in psychology class and Ms. Iverson was talking about a kid from Utah who hated the shaved ice stands around Draper, so he decided to open his own. He's now made millions on his shaved ice company (I forget the name of the company but supposedly it's really good!). Something just all came together. Why wait?

McHugh: Exactly. Why wait? So what did this mean for your own business idea?

David: In 2020 I started my company, called OutsideBox Marketing (@outsideboxmarketing). It started with videos but along the way I took up Instagram marketing, web design, ad design, photography, and many other skills. It was hard at first, leaving my job and taking the risk of starting a company. At first it was hard to find a client, and five months later I finally found my first client, a ramen place in Lehi. I would get clients here and there but it was never as steady as I wanted it to be. It wasn’t until this spring, when I had people reaching out to me and not vice versa, when I knew I was on the right track. The company has grown exponentially this past year and I can't wait for it to grow even more.

McHugh: How has this experience impacted your opportunities for furthering your education?

David: With my company, things just sort of fell in place. It helped me get my business scholarship for the global business scholar program. I got three scholarships at the University of Utah. Purely for the fact of being a business scholar, I got a scholarship that is based on my GPA. I also got the U’s flagship scholarship, but the one I am most proud of is the Lassonde Founders scholarship. Although there is little money, it still leads to tremendous opportunities for collaboration with other founders. Being a founder means that I have to form another company at my own time at the U. and it also grants me a place of residence at Lassonde, a prestigious dormitory at the University of Utah.

McHugh: Parting message?

David: Overall, if it weren’t for the amazing education and wonderful teachers that I had at Juan Diego, I wouldn't be where I am today.
Mike Melonas

Teacher by day, artist by night

Story by Melissa Osmundson, Class of 2022

Creating art is often an escape for many. Mr. Melonas, a well-respected math teacher at Juan Diego, has been painting and teaching for a long time. Having both math and fine arts degrees, he is far from ordinary. Mr. Melonas has been working on the Skaggs Catholic Center campus since the beginning, originally teaching math and science in middle school. He currently teaches AP Calculus AB and BC classes. His bright and motivated students are what inspire him daily to teach. On the other hand, the simple beauty of this world is what inspires his creative side. While he loves watercolor, he finds himself using acrylics to paint most often. Landscape and still life subject matter, including dropped clothes, old shoes, and misplaced toys, are his go-to genres of painting. “I’m constantly struck by the beauty of our world—inspiration is everywhere if you look closely,” says Mr. Melonas. Despite working at this school for so long, few people are aware of his hobby, as only a handful of students and close colleagues know. In addition to teaching and painting, he finds creativity in dance as well. He toured with the Greenwich Ballet out of New York for a while, but soon realized that being artsy didn’t offer him many stable job opportunities, so teaching math was the best option for him. If given the choice, Mr. Melonas wouldn’t be able to choose which career he would prefer for the rest of his life. Although art and math are very different, he finds beauty in the simplicities and complexities of both.
National Blue Ribbon

Honoring student success inside and outside the classroom

The fall of 2019 kicked off the 20th anniversary of our campus, and after 20 years of educating students throughout our halls, Juan Diego Catholic High School was honored as an Exemplary High Performing School by the U.S. Department of Education with the National Blue Ribbon. This honor was the first for a Utah high school since 1997, making this achievement all the more remarkable. With high student achievement in both English and mathematics, this placed our school among the highest in the country (top 15%) as well as ranking it among Utah’s top high schools in graduation rates.

Dr. Galey Colosimo credited this historic award to all who call themselves a Soaring Eagle by saying, “Receiving this award is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff, students, and the commitment of parents and the community to the education of our children. Any recognition like this is a community effort and demonstrates the values we place on having our students be successful beyond the classroom.”

OTHER OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Challenge Index is the oldest high school ranking system in the country, beginning in 1998 in both Newsweek and The Washington Post. It is the only list that does not rely on test scores, which are more a measure of student family income than school quality. It is also the only list that compares private and public schools, as it ranks high schools by a simple ratio: the number of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge tests given at a school each year divided by the number of seniors who graduated that year.

During our 20th year of operation, the Jay Mathews Washington Post Challenge Index placed Juan Diego at 352nd in the nation out of 22,000 public, charter, and private schools. Juan Diego’s ranking places it as the top high school in the state of Utah—landing the school in the top 2% in the U.S.
Since our inaugural year, Juan Diego has been a beacon of educational excellence, inclusive of all faith backgrounds, socioeconomic classes, gender, race, and academic abilities. With our rigorous academics; robust campus life; and diverse extracurriculars, clubs, and athletics, Juan Diego Catholic High School has much to offer our students. More than 98% of Juan Diego's students graduate, with 94% enrolling in colleges and universities nationwide, all of which helped Juan Diego earn our FOURTH consecutive BEST OF STATE 2021 for Private Schools K–12.

Along with the honor of Best of State 2020 for Private Schools K–12, Juan Diego Catholic High School also received the coveted Best of State Statue, or BOSS®, which is an elite award given to the most outstanding Best of State Medal winner in each award division. The BOSS® award is an impressive 20-pound, solid bronze statue that is a 24-karat gold-plated sculpture standing atop a black granite pedestal on a gold-plated bronze base. Only Best of State Statue winners may use the Best of State Statue image and may do so in perpetuity.

The 2020 honors, in addition to the Best of State and BOSS® awards received, were also given to Juan Diego Catholic High School head basketball coach Mr. Drew Trost, named Best High School Coach in the state of Utah, and the Juan Diego Catholic High School Senior Service Project was recognized as Best Special Interest Education Program.

Juan Diego Catholic High School was recognized as the 2020–2021 Best Catholic High School in Utah by Niche. The Niche Best Catholic High School ranking for the 2020–2021 school year is based on a school review from both students and their parents. These reviews include factors such as ACT/SAT scores, a school's student-to-teacher ratio, and the quality of colleges and universities that their students consider attending, among other data-driven factors.
PROFILES IN EXCELLENCE
Machel (Whetman) Devin
Class of 2003

As a member of Juan Diego’s second graduating class, Machel stays connected with the community as a mother of two students attending St. John’s and by serving on the Juan Diego Board Marketing Committee.

Machel graduated from the University of Utah with a degree in mass communications and business. She’s spent her entire career in the creative agency scene—working with local and national brands to develop creative solutions to their business problems. In her current role as account director at Enlisted Design, Machel leads a team of strategists and designers to create next-level brands, products, and consumer experiences for folks like Allbirds, JOJO’s Chocolate, Stance, BOXI, and many startups in the technology and personal care industries.

Machel believes that little things have big impact and ultimately make a big difference. This idea inspires her personally and professionally, as she navigates life’s ups and downs, with a focus on motivating positivity and joy in herself and everyone around her.

Empowering women in business is a passion of Machel’s. As a working mother, she understands the challenges that other women face when trying to balance a thriving career with motherhood. She’s an advocate for all women she works with and hopes to broaden her impact to women outside of her current professional network.

Flash back to 15 years ago, when one late-summer evening, Machel was introduced to the love of her life, Michael Devin, by another JD alumni. Years later, Machel and her soulmate / husband, Michael, have two brilliant, beautiful children—Eva and Carter—who have both been on campus since they were just babies. Being a mom is Machel’s greatest accomplishment and biggest challenge, making it the most fulfilling role in her life. As a family of four, plus their darling pandemic puppy, Sawyer, the Devin crew is enjoying life’s little things together: learning, adventuring, cooking, and (hopefully nearing the end of the current pandemic) surviving!

Machel is grateful for the relationships she built as a student at JD; many of her closest friends today she met as a student. With her own children on campus, she has extra appreciation for the community that exists at Skaggs Catholic Center. She is incredibly proud and thankful to her friends who have careers in the Utah Catholic School system as both teachers and administrative leaders.

Connect with Machel online at

LinkedIn — @macheldevin
Celeste Chaney

Class of 2006

After graduating from Juan Diego in 2006, Celeste earned a degree in journalism at the University of Utah. Over the next few years, she worked her way up in marketing, from a copywriter at Clearlink to the director of marketing at a tech startup, until she left the corporate world to pursue her passion for creative writing, at the end of 2013.

Two years later, she completed and published her first novel, In Absence of Fear, a sci-fi thriller about mass surveillance and government conspiracy. The book received Honorable Mention at Foreword Review’s 2015 Book of the Year Awards and was later recognized at the Utah Book of the Year Awards. The audiobook is being released on Amazon, ACX, and iTunes in the spring of 2021.

Several months after publishing her novel, a serendipitous encounter with a producer at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival led Celeste to screenwriting. She has since completed two feature-length screenplays, which have advanced as finalists in various competitions and fellowships over the years, including Tribeca Film Institute’s AT&T Untold Stories Competition, the Alfred P. Sloan Filmmaker’s Fund, the Scriptapalooza Screenplay Competition, ScreenCraft’s Film Fund, The Stowe Story Lab, and the 2019 and 2020 Sundance Labs.

In 2019, Celeste wrote, produced, and directed her first short film, a psychological thriller called “Cradle Song” that follows a sleep-deprived new mother as she confronts a family legacy of neglect and mental illness. “Cradle Song” was selected to screen at six film festivals in 2020 and was a Gold Winner at the World London Film Festival.

She has since adapted the short film as a feature and is actively working to get “Cradle Song” and her first script, “DARK ROOMS,” into production.

Celeste continues to work as a marketing consultant and ghostwriter, helping startups, local businesses, and Fortune 500 companies find and tell their stories. In 2018, she ghostwrote a TEDx talk about blockchain technology and online privacy.

She has recently embarked on her first nonfiction project, a book about the history, art, and architecture of the Skaggs Catholic Center, which will be completed later this year.

Celeste lives with her husband, Ted Roxbury, and their four-year-old son, Theo, in Suncrest.

To learn more about Celeste’s creative projects and to watch her short film, visit www.celestechaney.com.
After departing Juan Diego in 2009, Eugene Kim attended the University of Utah David Eccles School of Business, where he majored in business marketing. After departing the U., Eugene built a career in advertising and digital marketing before pivoting into entrepreneurial ventures. Alongside his gajug (family), Eugene manages international manufacturing relationships in South Korea, Vietnam, and Pakistan while overseeing distribution operations in the U.S. In 2018, Eugene was a founding member of Bean Yard Coffee House, a mission-oriented coffee roaster with strategic partnerships in Costa Rica and Mexico. Through Bean Yard, the coffee-growing communities of Chiapas, Mexico, are able to construct and maintain education centers for coffee farmers and their families. Eugene also lends his talents and expertise to our Juan Diego School Advisory Board as an active board member.

On the horizon, Eugene has set his eyes on the technology industry with his nutrition management application, GitFit, and has joined a residential development project in Costa Rica.

Happily married in the wake of 2020, Eugene and his lovely wife, Rosalyn, share their lives with three dogs in Holladay, Utah, and are anticipating that their family will soon grow. If given free time, Eugene can be found skiing, climbing, biking, hiking, lifting, or pursuing his newfound passion for photography and videography.
Megan Stephanz and Denver Hoggatt met through their participation on the Juan Diego Catholic High School swim team when they were a freshman and junior, respectively. They each swam all four years in high school under Coach John Moran and have fond memories of the grueling but team-building swim practices and the excitement and camaraderie surrounding swim meets. They both succeeded well in their academics, with mutual acknowledgement of Mr. Melonas’s A.P. Calculus courses as their favorite classes, and Megan graduated as one of her year’s two valedictorians.

Both Megan (Class of 2012) and Denver (Class of 2010) went on to the University of Utah after graduating from Juan Diego. When not pulling all-nighters in the Warnock Engineering Building or caffeinating at the campus library cafe, they nerded out on anime, and Denver began training for triathlons. Denver received his bachelor’s in computer engineering in 2014, and his master’s in computer engineering in 2017. Megan attended on a full-ride scholarship and completed both her combined bachelor’s and master’s in materials science engineering in 2017.

Megan now works for Micron as a dry etch process engineer. She uses plasma to etch precise features into the silicon wafers used for Micron memory chips and is responsible for anticipating and fixing problems that might occur within the process steps she owns, as well as driving continuous improvement. Denver works for Code Corporation as a firmware engineer. He ensures that the coding and hardware involved with the different barcode scanners being created cooperate and function as intended.

They were married January 1, 2020, at Timber Moose Lodge in Heber eleven years after they first met on the swim team at Juan Diego, and ten years after they started dating. Denver continues to keep the swimming up, having completed two full Ironman Triathlons as well as other triathlons, open-water swims, and runs. Megan is an avid bookworm and loves to curl up with their two beagles, Charlemagne and Eleanor, and read anything fiction she can get her hands on. They purchased their first home in February and are currently in the process of moving in, with the hopes of a housewarming party in the summer.
After almost five years since graduating from Juan Diego, Halston still has many thanks to give. He always asks himself where he would be in life if he decided not to transfer into the computer basics class and be taken under Dr. Duane’s wing. After leaving Juan Diego, Halston continued his education at Utah State University, where, as a sophomore, he was the recipient of the coveted Robin’s Award for Achievement of the Year and graduated on the dean’s list with a bachelor’s of science in cybersecurity in 2020.

Throughout his time at Utah State University, he started multiple companies, mentored others, and was named president of the Entrepreneurship Center on campus. After graduating from USU, Halston decided to pursue and successfully complete his master’s of science in Information Technology Management. Halston looks forward to continuing his education even further by enrolling in a Ph.D. program in the near future.

Since graduating, he has continued to establish his software development agency to help others leverage technology in this day and age by creating web and mobile apps for people, as well as working on a new SaaS startup for the film industry, Komyt.io. In 2019, Halston was named one of Utah Business Magazine’s 20 in their 20s, which was an amazing recognition and accomplishment. He has taken on a range of new hobbies, including writing multiple screenplays and will be directing my first feature film later this year.

Halston recently got engaged to his high school sweetheart, Carlie, and together they have one lovable dog who looks more like a mini wolf, named Luna. They purchased their first house in May of 2020, and he achieved his high school dream of owning a Porsche 911 by age 21 (probably highest on the accomplishment list). When the pandemic is over, Halston and Carlie hope to travel as much as they can to make up for lost time, as well as finally get married.

A big ambition of his is to not only receive VC investment for his SaaS startup in tech but also have a film play at Sundance Film Festival or the Austin Film Festival within the next couple of years.
The spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social formation of our students is visible in every aspect of school life. Teaching techniques, coaching practices, student activities, and experiences are developed using three fundamental Catholic tenets: community, faith development, and learning.

Campus Life at Juan Diego represents both an organizational structure and a renewed commitment to enrich the journeys of faith for all who are involved at Juan Diego Catholic High School.

The mission of Campus Life is to create opportunities for all members of our community to experience the school’s motto—Spiritus Donorum, the “spirit of giving”—in a truly personal and transformational way. Through our campus prayer life; celebrating the Eucharist together; teaching and living the themes of Catholic Social Justice; and participating in class and group retreats, Christian service programs, and our Campus Life Student Leadership opportunities, our goal within Campus Life is to bring our community closer to one another and Christ.

Dave Brunetti,
Director of the Department of Campus Life
Juan Diego Catholic High School’s “Give Me Jesus” video was created to be an expression of prayer and unity at the start of Holy Week. The video proved to be the perfect path to highlight the wonderful talents of the Juan Diego students, vocalists, and instrumentalists. “We shared the video with the larger Catholic community in Utah in hopes it will be a powerful reminder of what is being done in our school at Juan Diego and other Catholic schools in our diocese,” said Dave Brunetti, director of campus.

The imagery of Antelope Island was inspired by Jesus going into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. “Students (all of us actually) lead such busy, full lives, so we wanted the song to be performed ‘away’ from all the hustle and bustle,” said Brunetti, perhaps inspiring those who may see it to walk in the footsteps of our Lord: to go out into the wilderness and be present to hear God’s voice.

The video portrays a broad spectrum of our JD students, from all backgrounds, all parts of the valley, and many faith backgrounds. “They loved the journey to Antelope Island and being part of the video. We’re grateful for the responses we have received,” said Brunetti. Wanting to do something other than the standard Lenten piece, “Ashes,” John VanWagoner searched everywhere for a hymn that would be suitable. Trying to continue on the current trajectory of creating music with a more gospel or contemporary sound proved to be a daunting task. Keeping the process in the family, John and his wife, Marianne, principal of Saint Francis Xavier Catholic School and a musician as well, searched for hours for a song that could be arranged to fit the mold. They ultimately found Danny Gokey’s version of “Give Me Jesus.” “We loved it from the first time we listened to it,” said VanWagoner.
Each musician came into the studio to record their part individually. Rodney Strong, one of Salt Lake City’s most sought-after keyboard players, recorded the piano track, and Jonni Lightfoot, who was a bassist for Air Supply for 16 years, recorded the bass guitar track, while VanWagoner recorded the guitar tracks. The rest of the parts were handled by students. Dennise Vallecillos, director of orchestras at Juan Diego, arranged and prepared the strings, which were recorded at school as an ensemble.

All in all, they recorded 47 tracks of audio, which added up to a combined 80 hours of recording and mixing in preparation for the video. “It was certainly a labor of love. Some nights I would stay up till 2-3 a.m. mixing and tweaking the song,” added VanWagoner.

Issac Goeckeritz brought the video to life with his incredible vision. It was cold and windy on the day the video was filmed at Antelope Island, but the students were troopers and really stepped up to make the video what it is. “I could ramble forever about the talented students that participated in this endeavor, but I can sum it up by saying I have never felt so blessed with such a wonderful group of students,” VanWagoner concluded. “They each bring something unique to our learning environment. I am blessed!” Juan Diego Catholic High School’s “Give Me Jesus” video was featured on the Diocesan website during Holy Week and can be viewed on Juan Diego Catholic High School’s YouTube channel.
TITLE-WINNING TRADITION

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP TALLY

- Region Championships — Softball
- State Championships — Boys’ Lacrosse
- Football — Girls’ Basketball
- Baseball — Boys’ Cross Country
- Girls’ Soccer — Girls’ Cross Country
- Girls’ Tennis — Boys’ Soccer
- Hockey — Boys’ Tennis
- Boys’ Basketball
- Girls’ Lacrosse
- Girls’ Track
- Boys’ Track
- Golf
- Debate
Retirement Well Wishes to Athletic Director Chris Long

Thank you for your service!

As far as Chris’s time here at Juan Diego … it’s just a part of the body of work that has been his career. Our 2021 Athletic Director of the Year UHSAA Region 10 started at Bingham in 1978, teaching English, health, and physical education, all while being the head wrestling coach. In 1983, because of a serendipitous conversation, Chris left Bingham and went to work at our sister school, Judge Memorial. For 17 years Chris taught American literature, world literature, and American history, was the head wrestling coach, and was the dean of students at Judge. In 1999, when Juan Diego opened, Chris came to JD, serving 10 years as the assistant principal for Student Services, and for the last 11 years as our athletic director. Other titles and accolades include past president of Utah Wrestling Coaches’ Association, Horizonte Instruction and Training Center evening principal, 1988–1999, Canyonlands Field Institute Financial Board of Trustees, Utah State Board of Education “Outstanding Contribution to Education” award winner, Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers award winner, and two-time Teacher of the Year at Judge Memorial. Chris and his wife, Laney, will have been married for 45 years this November, and Laney will be joining Chris in retirement, as she is retiring from Granger High School.

All three of their children are teachers—Amanda (Judge Memorial ’97) teaches here at JD, Ian (Judge Memorial ’99) in North Carolina, and Abbie (Juan Diego ’05) in Moab. “To say that I’m proud of our kids is a massive understatement,” Chris says.

This coming year Chris plans on traveling, doing some writing, and being around to help make JD’s athletic administration transition as seamless and smooth as possible.

Chris tells us, “I’m just a guy who was lucky enough to have a career that I loved, who showed up to work every day and did the best I could. I’ve had students who have grown to be life-long friends and, in many cases, colleagues. Danny Larson teases me and says that there isn’t anybody that I didn’t either teach or coach.” Chris counts himself both lucky and blessed … and so do we to have had Chris part of the Juan Diego family since day one! Congratulations on your retirement and don’t forget your way back to campus.
TRUE INFLUENCERS

REFLECTIONS ON THE JUAN DIEGO WAY OF TEACHING

Dave Hausser
As people worldwide return to the workplace after the tumults of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a great deal of reflection on work and its meaning in the twenty-first century. While these considerations are certainly nothing new, the quarantine and the novel experience of remote work have made the relevant questions more pertinent than they have been in many of our lifetimes. Educators have been particularly focused on the questions of work and fulfillment as we attempt to reintegrate our students back into the classroom and evaluate how best to help them succeed in future careers and, more importantly, flourish as human beings. While this task has always been at the forefront of Juan Diego Catholic High School’s mission, our experience of the past year has allowed us to refine our understanding of education and further elaborate how we can best help our students thrive in their educational pursuits and beyond. In doing so we have focused not only on augmenting our teaching skills but also on returning to our fundamental goal of developing the souls of young people to help them in their quest for the good life.

When I first arrived at JDCHS after three years of teaching in a public high school, I was struck by the scope of possibilities available to Juan Diego's students. In many public schools, I noticed that education was devolving into mere certification—teachers and administrators spent far too much time focusing on completing checklists that kept students moving through the system. In contrast, Juan Diego objected to the mere quantification of education and always focused on customizing the help it offered to each student. This was perhaps most noticeable in the symbiosis of the school's academic and campus life programs. Every school I’ve encountered aims for some form of academic excellence, but Juan Diego has been unique in its insistence that academics alone cannot provide a complete education; similarly, many charitable organizations hope the examples of their adherents epitomize the role that service plays in living a complete life. The Juan Diego education is unique, however, in its ability to synthesize these facets of life and recognize that neither is complete without a strong representation of the other. Even though each pillar of JDCHS life emphasizes a particular aspect of a complete education, both see education as something beyond training for a future trade. At Juan Diego, education cannot be reduced to credentialing, but instead it must fulfill its highest end: soulcraft.

Juan Diego’s faculty and staff play many diverse roles in the school, but all are united in their belief that the primary goal of an educator is to help each student on a journey to a fulfilling life dedicated to learning, self-reflection, and a strong relationship with God. Utah students can now find a multiplicity of educational institutions to train them for a job and prepare them for a workspace; however, in my experience JDCHS is exceptional in its institutional understanding that education is not merely a means but an end in itself—one that doesn't end at graduation but defines the entire lives of its graduates.

Dr. Colosimo has continued to foster this spirit of communal learning linked with faith throughout the difficult 2020-2021 school year. Under his direction, the school not only maintained its thorough care for soulcraft but also used the stasis born of COVID for serious contemplation and a better understanding of the Juan Diego way of learning. In the fall, each academic department went on a retreat to consider how to best educate our students, with a focus on how our disciplines enhance the most important things in life and how we could reduce the more trivial facets of the curriculum in order to devote more time to the quintessential skills of reading, writing, thinking, and speaking. After a great deal of deliberation and perspiration, each academic department created a set of essential standards that combined our content with the fundamental skills necessary to think critically about the key questions of life. We ensured that all classes moved beyond the basic content retention and ascended to higher-level thinking, in which students must explore serious problems, analyze potential solutions, and ultimately judge how to apply knowledge for their own betterment and the betterment of the world around them.
Dr. Christine Celestino
Director of Faculty Development and Curriculum

Growing up in upstate New York, next door to her grandparents’ dairy farm, is where Christine’s love for biology began, as she was heavily involved in 4-H and Girl Scouts and loved being outside in nature or around animals. After high school, she attended the State University of New York College at Geneseo, majoring in biophysics. While a student at Geneseo, she had several unique opportunities to further develop her love of biological sciences. These included a chance to study bat echolocation as well as a chance to spend a summer in Manchester, U.K., studying weakly electric fish. It was these experiences that drew Christine to continue her education with a Ph.D. in neuroscience at the University of Utah. At the U., Christine studied insect sensory systems. In addition to her research, she was also involved in the U.’s Brain Awareness Week outreach program, which brought her to high schools to teach students about the brain. During those experiences, Christine unexpectedly fell in love with education and, upon completion of her Ph.D., chose to pursue career opportunities that would help others to develop the same love for learning and science that she had.

In 2006, Christine joined the faculty at Juan Diego, teaching biology, zoology, and horticulture. Since then, she has transitioned to teaching primarily A.P. Research and Anatomy and Physiology while working with the other teachers at Juan Diego along with the faculty at the University of Utah College of Pharmacy in developing a unique summer internship program that gives JD students the same kinds of research opportunities that she had as an undergraduate. The research experience Christine provides is otherwise known as The Academy of Sciences and is in its 14th year this year, and it has been amazing to see the incredible work that our students have done in the university labs.

This year, Christine transitioned to a partially administrative role as the director of Faculty Development and Curriculum, supporting other teachers as they work to provide our students with opportunities to learn to love their subjects, much as she developed the internships to promote the love of science. When Christine is not teaching, she enjoys spending time with family, going on hikes, visiting our national parks, downhill skiing, and horseback riding.
When Nikki was a senior in high school, she fell in love for the first time ... with biology! It was the beginning of her relationship with science, one that has led her to where she is now. Some of her most meaningful and life-changing experiences have come either in nature or through a science classroom. She’s been lucky to have had several science teachers who challenged and changed the way she thinks, made her curious, and made her wonder. Her teaching career goal is to do the same for her students.

Nikki didn’t realize she was a science geek until she was about 17, in A.P. bio class. It wasn’t much longer after that that she realized she had an interest and a knack for teaching. Her principal audience at the time were the toddlers at the neighborhood swimming pool where she coached and taught. Later that grew into something much bigger. As she spent more time in coaching and teaching situations and endeavored to learn more about different topics in science, from geology to astronomy, she realized that her calling might be teaching high school science. Since she first started at Skaggs Catholic Center, 10 years ago, she has had the opportunity to teach hundreds of amazing students a variety of topics. She started as a health and biology teacher, then taught chemistry and earth science, and has now arrived back at biology. She’s also teaching physics for the first time this year. She’s especially excited to teach physics because she feels it is one of the most elegant sciences. It’s simple in its nature, it’s fun to explore, and it offers rewarding explanations to phenomena. Effective physics teaching pairs well with inquiry and exploration, her favorite modes of teaching. She is hopeful that she will continue to build the physics program at Juan Diego.

While she’s learned so much science content teaching at JD, Nikki has also learned many skills and life lessons, from how to teach more effectively online to how to be a better person. Not to mention, she has been lucky enough to be a part of the JD community. She’s been with JD through times of great joy and great tragedy. The love and camaraderie selflessly offered by people in this circle is unlike anything she’s experienced anywhere else in her life. She is delighted when students visit her—whether they are students she currently has or students she had eight years ago. The work that we do at JD is incredibly special and she feels grateful to still be a part of it.

When she’s not planning experiments or grading papers, Nikki is outside on skis, riding her bike, working in the garden, or enjoying a good book. Last year she earned her master gardener certification through Utah State University. This spring she plans to volunteer as a gardener in the community and increase her vegetable garden yield. This winter and spring, she’s been helping gear-test skis for an outdoor magazine, renovating her basement, and spending time with friends and family as much as she can.
Denisse Vallecillos

Fine Arts

Denisse Vallecillos is the director of orchestras for Juan Diego Catholic High School, Saint John the Baptist Middle School, and Saint John the Baptist Elementary School. This is her fourth year at Juan Diego, having previously taught for one year with El Sistema Utah, four years at The Waterford School, and three years at Saint Andrew Catholic School.

A native of Arizona, Denisse has always had a love for music, starting with the violin at age 9. Her desire to continue in music and pass it along to future generations led her to become a music teacher.

Denisse earned a bachelor’s in music education from Arizona State University and a master’s in orchestral conducting from Brigham Young University.

Denisse currently plays in the West Jordan Symphony and was the music director for the past three years. Prior, she also held the associate conductor position with the Utah Philharmonic Orchestra. If that weren’t enough, she is the education director and a violin coach with the Mountain Springs Music Camp, a local nonprofit, and has a studio of private violin students she teaches after school. For fun, Denisse enjoys trying out new recipes, going on bike rides with her senior dog in tow, and learning songs on the mandolin.

This coming year, Denisse is excited to use Juan Diego’s new rack-mounted digital mixer and multi-track recording system to record the talented orchestras of Juan Diego. The aim is to contribute professionally produced music for JD’s religious events, celebratory events, and video productions.

When Denisse worked as a studio musician at Huge Studios in Salt Lake City, it piqued her interest in the world of music production. As a hobby, she’s taught herself how to use Logic Pro X and plans to augment her curriculum with lessons on music recording technology and production.
Parker grew up in Sandy, Utah, and attended Jordan High School, where he played on the varsity baseball and dodgeball teams. Upon graduating from Jordan, Parker served a two-year mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Southern California. While in California, he met his now-wife, Trina, and were later married in 2008. They have three children: Brooklyn (11), Ethan (8), and Karsyn (2).

Parker attended the University of Utah, where he received a bachelor's degree in journalism and later received a master's degree in sports administration from Canisius College.

Parker has always had a love of writing. As a writer, he really got his start in the world of journalism. For about six years, he worked as a journalist (primarily sports) in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Portland, Oregon. While in Portland, Parker won several journalism awards, including multiple Best Sports Story honors. As much as he loved that job, he felt like something was missing and wanted to do something where he really felt like he was making a difference. To that end, in 2016 Parker and his family moved home to Utah to teach journalism and English at Juan Diego Catholic High School. Parker has loved every minute of it and is forever grateful for the relationships and bonds built with the students he has taught.

Looking back on his journalism career, he once asked the question, “What if a reporter could write the future?” That question was the inspiration for his first novel, Deadline. The process of writing Deadline was touch-and-go for a few years, but Parker finished it in December of 2020, and in January, it was published on Amazon.

In Deadline, we follow Shaun White. Shaun White is average. Average looks. Average athletic ability. Average apartment. Average reporter job (with a below-average salary). He is just ... average, nothing like the Olympic gold medalist and X Games legend who bears the same name. Now that he is in his mid-twenties, Shaun has come to terms with his average existence. Sure, his life will never be glamorous or really even very exciting, but he is mostly ok with that.

Without warning, Shaun's average life takes a not-so-average turn. First, he meets a beautiful, perfect girl who inexplicably likes him. Then he gets his hands on The Pinnacle, the newest, most state-of-the-art laptop ever created. It has all the bells and whistles, and then some. He can't believe his good fortune, until he starts putting The Pinnacle to work as he churns out news stories for The Cliffside Courier. He quickly discovers his new computer isn't exactly what it seems, and it has a few very interesting “features.” The device's mysterious abilities soon force Shaun to start answering some unusually difficult questions. If you had the power to write the future, would you? What would the consequences be? And what if that extraordinary power ended up in the wrong hands? If he can't find these answers fast, things might get dangerous for him, the new-found girl of his dreams, and maybe the world.

Currently, Parker is working on a sequel to Deadline and hopes to finish and publish that sequel sometime in the next year.
Myriah Fankhauser

Director of Online Blended Learning and Educational Technology

Myriah Fankhauser has been a part of the Juan Diego community since 2012. She attended Pepperdine University and played Division 1 soccer all four years and still loves to play in co-ed and women’s leagues.

She started as a health and physical education teacher and found a passion for integrating technology in her classes. Through this passion, Myriah became the technology coach part-time for a few years at Juan Diego while starting her family, until COVID-19 made what she did with technology in education so relevant that, for her colleagues and students, she came back full-time as the director of Online Blended Learning and Educational Technology.

Myriah is an ISTE- (International Society of Technology in Education) and Google-certified educator. Myriah is currently working on revamping JD student orientations by not only integrating technology but also providing deeper training for students on how to be empowered learners, digital citizens, and innovative designers. Myriah is the proud mother of her son (4) and daughter (2) and is married to her high school sweetheart!
WINNING ENTREPRENEUR

JD freshman Erin Chan won first place and the $10,000 grand prize at the 2021 High School Utah Entrepreneur Challenge (HSUEC) final event for her concept of the Acti-Vest. Acti-Vest uses ultrasonic sensors to calculate the distance between obstacles and a visually impaired wearer to warn them of approaching objects. Chan says: “[The win] means a lot because it tells me that I can go on to support people with disabilities and help people live the lifestyle they want to live. I plan on expanding this company and using the money to further develop the vest to make it a better product.”
Where does the time go? It’s hard to believe that we have our last Juan Diego graduate. “Thank you” doesn’t seem big enough for all that we have received during our 18 years on this campus. Thank you for challenging, supporting, and preparing our children for the paths that they have chosen. Thank you for teaching them to push themselves but also to remember that there are just as many lessons in falling short. Thank you for walking alongside them as they create their own relationship with God. Thank you for seeing them and teaching them to see others.

There are so many moments and so many memories, but it is the people who make this a truly special place. This community has celebrated with us and carried us when needed, and we are grateful to be part of the Juan Diego family.

Congratulations to all of the graduates and their families and to those of us leaving this campus behind for now ... go, JD!

Brian and Elizabeth Lebrecht

In photo from left to right: Elizabeth, Maranda (‘11), Matthew (‘21), Brian, Grace (‘17), Gabriel Juarez (‘13), Marley Lebrecht Juarez (‘13) and baby Ellison, JD class of 2039.
**Want to Get Involved?**

**Volunteer Opportunities**
Parent volunteer opportunities can be found both on the Juan Diego Parent Association web page, www.parents.jdchs.org, and in e-blasts sent every Tuesday throughout the school year, listed under “Volunteer Opportunities.” Please contact the JD PA parent volunteer coordinator, April van der Sluys at aprilvandersluys@jdchs.org and at 801-984-7667 for more information.

**Booster Passes**
Booster passes grant access to Juan Diego student-sponsored events, including sporting events, performances, and competitions! Booster passes cost $75 per household and can be used by the whole family, including grandparents and children living in the same household.

Purchase Booster Passes online at gosoaringeagle.com.

For more information contact, Nate Tack (JD ’11) at nathantack@jdchs.org or call 801-994-7608.

**Donate**
Juan Diego offers an unmatched educational experience, but like other Catholic schools, donations are critical to help us bridge the gap between tuition revenue and the hard costs of delivering a world-class preparatory education. Your tax-deductible donations are the key to helping us continue to provide top-tier academics, athletics, and the arts in a values-based, uplifting environment. Interested in supporting our campus schools? Contact April van der Sluys at aprilvandersluys@skaggscatholiccenter.org.

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