



# SAINT DOMINIC ACADEMY

Empowering Women for Leadership Since 1878

## Parent Perspective

Issue No. 2, Winter 2021

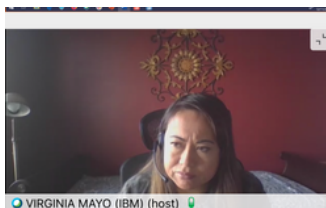


### Junior Avery Williams Featured in Publication **2020: The Year That Changed America**

Junior Avery Danae Williams' essay titled "Faith from a Distance," has been included in the book *2020: The Year That Changed America*. It is an anthology consisting of blogs, posts, journal entries, essays, and prose relating to the coronavirus pandemic and other striking events that happened this year. It will be released in January 2021 as both an eBook and a paperback. The author's name is Kevin Powell; he is an award-winning poet, journalist, civil rights activist, and Rutgers University – New Brunswick alumnus. He also grew up in Jersey City but has been living in New York City for many years now. Avery is president of the African American Appreciation Club as well as a member of Glee Club and Link Crew. When asked about her accomplishment, she stated "What makes me even more excited is that I will be elevating the voices of Generation Z with my narrative. I can't wait to be a primary source that future generations may be studying in their US History classes many, many years down the line, so that they understand how teenagers in 2020 dealt with this global health crisis." Her essay is linked below. [Faith from a Distance](#)

### Students Participate in the IBM Academy of Technology STEM Live Simulcast

The SDA community joined the IBM Academy of Technology STEM Live Simulcast on Friday, December 11th, with a sponsored Cyberday4Girls via zoom on the topic of "The Internet of Me: Protecting My Online Identity". We had 192 students and teachers in attendance! Cyberday4Girls was led by IBM Fellow, Virginia Mayo Policarpio, SDA Class of 1997, now an IBM Distinguished Engineer at Global Technology Services. The event was filled with a wealth of information on how to stay safe online, engaging demos, and lively discussions!



JOIN US FOR

### Upcoming Events!



**Tuesday, Mar 2**

The Voice Watch Party via  
Zoom 8PM



**Friday, Mar 5**

No School: DASS Convocation  
2021- Faculty/Staff



**Thursday, Mar 11**

Alumnae Zoom Call



**Friday, Mar 12**

End of 3rd Marking Period



**Tuesday, Mar 16**

Virtual Honor Society  
Inductions 6:30 PM



**Saturday, Mar 20**

Annual Spring Thaw



**Monday, Mar 29**

Easter Break Begins



**Sunday, Apr 4**

Easter Sunday



**Monday, Apr 12**

School Reopens



**Thursday, Apr 15**

Alumnae Zoom Call



**Friday/Sat, Apr 16 - 17**

Spring Musical Peter Pan



## Class of 2021 College Acceptances

Albright College  
Anna Maria College  
Auburn University  
Biola University  
Clarkson University  
Clemson University  
Coastal Carolina University  
Elon University  
Fairleigh Dickinson University  
Florida State University  
Fordham University  
George Mason University  
Illinois Institute of Technology  
Jefferson  
Kean University  
Louisiana State University  
Lynn University  
Manhattan College  
Marist College  
Michigan State University  
Monmouth University  
Montclair State University  
Mount St. Mary's University  
New Jersey City University  
New Jersey Institute of Technology  
Northeastern University  
Nova Southeastern University  
Oklahoma State University  
Pace University-New York  
Pennsylvania State University  
Pepperdine University  
Providence College  
Quinnipiac University  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
Rider University  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rutgers University  
Sacred Heart University  
Saint Joseph's University  
Saint Peter's University  
San Diego Christian College  
San Diego State University  
Seton Hall University  
St. John's University  
Stevens Institute of Technology  
Stonehill College  
The College of New Jersey  
University of Bridgeport  
University of Delaware  
University of Georgia  
University of Hartford  
University of Massachusetts  
University of Michigan  
University of Nebraska  
University of New Haven  
University of Rhode Island  
University of Saint Joseph  
University of Scranton  
University of South Carolina  
University of Toronto  
Wentworth Institute of Technology  
Western New England University  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

## Valentyna Simon '20 Featured on the Kelly Clarkson Show and NBC Nightly News



Valentyna Simon and her classmates at Chapman University are in the national spotlight this week for a viral TikTok video they posted to surprise a professor who went above and beyond to engage his students during the fall semester. The video has generated more than 23 million views and will be featured on NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt and Kate Snow on Sunday, Jan. 17, at 6:30 p.m., as well as The Kelly Clarkson Show on Thursday, Jan. 14, at 2 p.m. In addition, the video appeared in a Southern California ABC Eyewitness News segment.

Simon and her classmates compiled the video to honor James G. Brown, Ph.D., a professor in the College of Educational Studies at Chapman University. With COVID-19 limiting in-person classes at the California university, Simon said that she and her fellow students wanted to thank Dr. Brown for doing an outstanding job engaging the class virtually to break down the “we/they” thinking that divides the world.

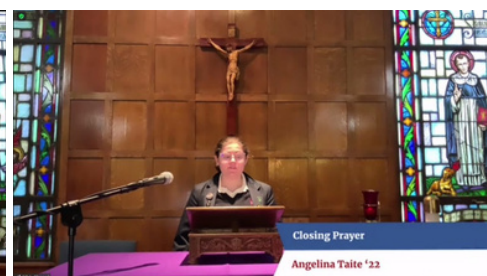
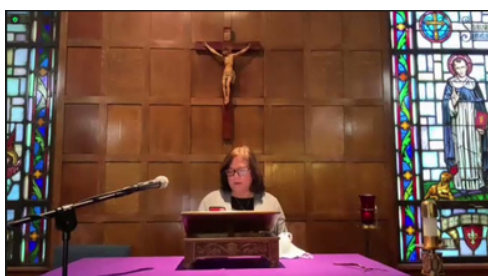
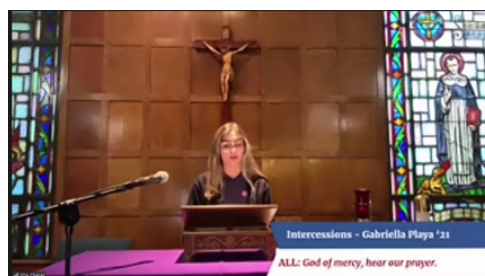
The class recorded the video during their last Zoom session with Dr. Brown, leaving their cameras off as they penned heartfelt messages of thanks to their professor for having such a meaningful impact on their lives. When Dr. Brown questioned why students had their cameras off, Simon announced that they had a surprise. Students then turned on their cameras to show the messages to the longtime professor, who became emotional at the touching tribute.

The Class of 2020 Salutatorian, Simon, attended SDA beginning in the seventh grade. While there, she was president of the Glee Club and participated in the Disney Youth Education program. Simon also served as a peer minister and a Link Crew leader and spent many weekends volunteering at Saint Dominic Academy events. In recognition of her contributions to the school, Simon was awarded the Spirit Award and the Honors Medal for Music.



## Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

We have marked the beginning of the Lenten season. Our students in an extraordinary way led our Ash Wednesday prayer service, both virtually and in person. Students contemplated the changes occurring within themselves during these forty days of Lent, and beyond. Lent is a time to give things up but can also be a time to 'do more'. Taking note of distractions in life that take time away from building a strong relationship with God. Students considered how they could redirect their time and gain focus over Lent. May the Lenten Season Be A Time Of Reflection And Renewal.



**SAVE  
THE DATE  
May 13th 2021**

Join Us Virtually for the  
**SDA Gala to Benefit  
the Academy's Scholarship Fund**

## Parent Association News

The Parent Association is always looking for volunteers for the events they sponsor. Please contact the officers of the Parent Association if you are interested in helping.

### 2020-2021 OFFICERS AND THEIR LEGACY

JANE MATTIELLO President  
(REAGAN '22)

GIGI DIAZ '78 Vice President  
(CASSANDRA '19 & AMANDA '21)

KRISTIN MARTIN Treasurer  
(COURTNEY '21)



## TUITION RAFFLE

*Sponsored by Parents' Association*

**\$7,000.00 GRAND PRIZE**

**DRAWING DATE: MARCH 17, 2021**

**DONATION: \$75.00 PER TICKET**

\$7,000.00 prize can be used for tuition at St. Dominic Academy or can be transferred directly to any school/college/university for the 2021/2022 school year. Prize can also be paid to a financial institution in payment of a student loan or part of a student loan.

*Tickets are non-refundable / No cash option is available*



## SDA'S National Honor Society Presents... Bedtime Stories for Read Across America

National Honor Society Students & Faculty Volunteers will pair one on one with your child, via Zoom for a ½ hour read aloud and discussion. It's the perfect way to wind down the little ones before bedtime!

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays in March  
March 18th, March 25th, and March 30th are still available  
Time: 7:00pm- 7:30pm  
Age Range: 3 year olds to 9 year olds  
(older siblings welcome to join the Zoom!)  
To sign up, please fill out this form:  
<https://forms.gle/GriwJ1vc2cDTLqHg6>

You will receive a confirmation email with a Zoom link and the name of your Reader(s). There is NO cost and you can sign up more than once! Looking forward to fostering a love of reading all month long!

## SDA Welcomes Alumna and Author Maureen Edwards '88

Thank you and congratulations to author and alumna Maureen Edwards '88 for her visit and generous donation of her new novel "It Is What It Is". Maureen Edwards inspiration comes from her extensive experience in education. Edwards served as a teacher, a special education director and supervisor, a learning disability teacher consultant, and an adjunct professor. Her work gave her a keen insight into the delicate relationship between teachers, support staff, administrators, and the communities they serve.



## Junior Carolina Rial Competes on NBC's The Voice



Saint Dominic Academy congratulates junior Carolina Rial, who will truly "lift her voice" when she competes on NBC's The Voice this coming March! Tune in to watch her outstanding performance and cheer her on each week! SDA will post weekly updates as Carolina performs for judges Kelly Clarkson, John Legend, Blake Shelton, and Nick Jonas. Look for our very own, Carolina Rial on The Voice on March 2nd, 2021!

## THE VOICE premieres Monday March 1 and Tuesday March 2

*Those nights will be HOMEWORK FREE for all, so that students and staff can all watch Carolina compete!  
More information on Celebratory Watch Parties for SDA students and staff were sent this week!  
Carolina premieres Tuesday March 2nd.*



## BLUE DEVIL PRIDE

### Students Take the Spotlight



Maddie Branigan '23  
The Hudson Reporter  
Athlete of the Week!  
Read all about it  
[here](#).



Cross Country runner  
Kayla Sullivan's Senior  
Spotlight in NJ.com.  
Read all about it [here](#)

### Blue Devils Ready to Get Back on Track

The indoor track and field team returns plenty of veteran athletes used to competing among the state's best. **Milani Bethel** is back after a junior season that was highlighted by a pair of silver medals and one bronze at the group final. Bethel earned First Team All-HCTCA honors in the 400 last season as well as an Honorable Mention in the 55 hurdles. Fellow core senior **Charlotte Hennessey** also returns after earning an Honorable Mention in the 3,200 last year. Rounding out the senior returning all-country trio is **Kayla Sullivan**, a few months removed from winning HCTCA Runner of the Year in cross country. She earned indoor Second Team honors last year in the 1,600 and 3,200, and will look to be a force again this year at the long distance events. Senior **Caroline O'Donnell**, fresh of a First Team All-HCTCA honor in cross country, is expected to contribute in the 800 and up, and could even contribute at the hurdles. Sophomore **Lainey Nguyen** will likewise race in the 800 and up after a strong cross country season where she earned Second Team honors. Third Team honoree and junior **Madison Cortes** will compete at hurdles again. All three competed in the indoor group finals last year. Sophomore twins **Gianna** and **Emma Servideo** are promising newcomers who also bring a lot to the table. Sophomore **Rachel Feur** is another newcomer who shows promise in relays. Sophomore **Nicole Davis** is the team's best shot putter. **Emma Lee** after her contributions to the cross country team. **Téa Baramidze** is a senior back on the rise after recovering from an injury last season. After earning Second Team honors in cross country, she seems to have rounded back into form.



### Swimming Update:

The swim season is underway! Senior members and captains **Gianna Artusa**, **Amber Kelly**, and **Olivia Smith** return with hopes of winning meets and dropping time in their final season. Returning junior members include **Kirsten Argueta**, **Marcella Figueroa**, and **Liv Lekovish**. Figueroa, who is the current record holder in Hudson County for the 50 Freestyle and County Champ of the 200 and 100 Free, says she is really looking forward to some fun competition and being able to spend time with teammates. Returning sophomores, **Whitney Pryor** and **Ariel McClary-Weaver** join **Ella Scarsi** and **Mia Martinko**, who both had impressive showings at County Champs and HCTCA Finals. The team also added two new members, freshman **Kiera Ang** and **Ciara O'Reilly**. This year, the girls will compete in weekly virtual meets against the schools in Hudson County almost every week through March. Even though it may not be the season everyone hoped for or expected, it will be nice to see the girls compete and spend time together as a team.

### Hoops Update:

The Blue Devils got off to a hot start (4-1) in this most unusual of seasons led by sophomore **Maddie Branigan**. Senior captain **Alex Taveras** and sophomore **Samantha Fortune** have both had strong campaigns and freshmen **Kelly Clare Hester** and **Emma Lynn Smith** have been pleasant surprises for the young squad through it's first 12 games (7-5). **Olivia Gencarelli** has started all 12 games thus far and senior captain **Amanda Diaz** has been a stalwart off the bench. SDA is scheduled to play a tough final 3 games putting them on course to be one of the very few teams in the county to play the maximum allowed of 15 which in and of itself is an accomplishment. Thanks to the diligence of the girls and coaches, the team has remained competitive and healthy throughout the season.

**Race to Spring:** Please lend your support to our athletic teams and donate to the Spring Thaw Fundraiser:  
As always sponsors and help are welcome and appreciated.



## Letters

### A Message from the Head of School

Dear Parents:

Let us hope that this year, March both comes in and goes out “like a lamb”, because we’ve all had more than enough of snow and wind this winter season. What’s more, when we reflect on all we have endured from March 2020 until now, one year later, I think we are all in agreement that we need what the great Barbara Streisand sang about when she told us “happy times...happy days, are here again.” While they may not be directly upon us, we can look to the springtime as the hopeful anticipation of those happy days once again.

Here at Saint Dominic Academy, we are doing our best throughout the month of March to inspire our young ladies to “find happiness where they are” (Moana) with our plans for Virtual Spirit Week. Spearheaded by the Student Council, the young ladies will have themed tag days, lunches with classmates via Google Breakout Rooms, and even take a virtual trip to Disney to preview some of the rides via Google Meet. While it’s a different type of Spirit Week this year for sure, one only has to look at the time and preparation that the young ladies are putting into the events to see that they are working hard to make everyone as happy as possible.

That motivation to spread happiness is not limited to the halls of SDA and the Zoom cameras for our remote students. Our National Honor Society has taken an innovative and unique twist on Read Across America this March—and have launched “Bedtime Stories with the NHS” all March long! Via Zoom, every Tuesday and Thursday, they’ll read bedtime stories from 7-7:30pm. Within two days of posting the sign up sheet, we had over 30 families sign up for a read aloud with NHS students. I encourage everyone, if you have children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren aged 3-9, head over to our Instagram page, find the link and sign up for a story!

Looking toward April, we’ll be inviting the entire school to go “off to Neverland” with our talented cast and crew of Peter Pan! Streamed via the MTI website for two nights in April, this year, we’ll also be offering a virtual Q & A with our cast the week before the show and we are most pleased to announce that we’ve partnered with a sign language interpreter so that our performance will be ASL friendly. We want to make our musical as inclusive as possible for all and we hope that this addition to our musical program will be the first of many such partnerships. Along with our talented young ladies, we welcome performers from Saint Peter’s Prep, All Saints Catholic Academy, and Sayreville Public School to this virtual production.

We’ll also be celebrating our 11th graders as they move up and receive their rings, start preparing for our AP exams, which will be done via the computer this year, and look toward prom and graduation for our class of 2021 as well as our Moving Up Ceremony for our 8th graders. There’s a lot in store for the young ladies of SDA—it may look different from years past, but the tradition of celebrating the young ladies who walk our halls and virtual halls is still alive and well.

My prayers for a beautiful spring for all!

Mrs. Degnan Barbi  
Head of School



## Letters

### A Message from the Academic Dean

Dear Parents and Guardians,

A host of new terms have become a daily staple since this pandemic started. What we now refer to as our COVID vocabulary includes such expressions as social distancing, contact tracing, essential workers/businesses, flattening the curve, superspreader events, PPEs and WFH. Let me spell out the last one, Working from Home, just in case you are a little challenged like me when it comes to acronyms our young ladies use, especially on their many social media platforms.

One particular term, even concept, especially concerns the educational system nowadays. I am referring to learning loss. The Glossary of Education Reform defines it as “any specific or general loss of knowledge and skills or reversals in academic progress, most commonly due to extended gaps or discontinuities in a student’s education”. Does this sound like some alarm bells in us? Quite honestly, this definition clearly pins down what every parent and teacher was anxious of, from this same time last year up until now, as the entire country continues to battle the effects of COVID-19. Could these interrupted classes make our students lose what they have learned and the study habits that they’ve acquired pre-COVID?

We, at Saint Dominic Academy, recognized the imminent likelihood of “learning loss” happening among our young ladies and made it our sheer purpose to ensure that it does not. Even as we juggled between the hybrid and full-remote modes during the first semester of this school year, you have seen how our teachers have made every effort to keep track of how every student under their care is doing. Careful and consistent attendance checks are conducted in every class, where we make certain that each student has her video on and stays present from beginning to end of each class. With the few instances when these conditions aren’t met, both student and parent(s) are notified and attendant concerns are addressed as a team. The Guidance Counselors and myself have been in more meetings this year than usual, and these have proven to be very effective in keeping our young wards on track. Most times, all our girls need are little reminders here and there, and a whole lot of encouragement and assurance that they do have a school team that supports and cheers them on.

Our teachers have continually been hard at work in preparing and delivering interesting and engaging lessons. My dear parents, to say that doing so for daily virtual classes with a combo of on-site and full-remote students is difficult would be the understatement of this decade, at least. For instance, since we have been back in school for three weeks now, our Science classes have made it a point to provide students in school with laboratory experiments to make up for all the hands-on activities that they’ve missed. My Forensics class has 5 students in school who, while working on the Urinalysis and Blood Analysis labs, have a total of 4 devices (2 laptops, 2 phones) working so they can take the 12 students on remote with them as they go through each step of the lab activities. As the teacher, I have my laptop screen projected on the SmartBoard so I can keep track of my students on remote. I keep them on task by setting clear objectives and timelines for assignments. The preparation, setting up, and maneuvering involved require a lot of creativity and patience on our part, again much more than usual. Our Math, English, Social Studies, World Language, and Religion classes have likewise kept the beat. Your weekly Google Summaries affords you a picture of the excellent quality of content delivery that our classes aim to best meet and maintain.

I can confidently say that, while most public schools worry about learning loss, our team (you and us) at Saint Dominic Academy are giving, and will continue to give, our utmost at optimizing teaching and learning supports and resources available to us. All for the sake of every young woman that has been entrusted under our care. We want nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else but the BEST for them.

Most sincerely,

Mrs. Guen Claudio-Farrales  
Academic Dean



## Letters

### A Message from the Campus Minister

Nearer my God to Thee.. Lent 2021

Covid-19 has inscribed “distancing” into our consciousness. “Social” has somehow lost its weight and we now simply “distance” from one another, creating the suspicion that “that” other masked person in the supermarket or that unmasked person walking her dog is possibly carrying “the killer”. Distancing is all about separation; is all about suspicion; is all about safety in measurable space between us. “Distancing” is socially endorsed fear of the “other.”

During the period of Lent, tradition bids us practice fasting and penitence, ironically on the threshold of spring. Just as the birds begin to sing and the first crocuses begin to peep out of their snow-beds, we are reminded that we owe tears and lamentation for the One who offered Himself on the Cross for our salvation. We are reminded that we must offer some small sacrifice, some small tribute to acknowledge our debt to Him for His supreme sacrifice. But to our great shame, He does not ask us to help Him carry the cross, nor to share the brutal flogging from the centurions’ whips, nor to bear the insults hurled at Him by the mindless crowds. Rather, He asks us to love one another as He has loved us, and to come nearer to Him as He Himself came to us, in body and spirit.

Thus, even under the weight of Covid-19, and even under the seriousness of the mandate to social-distance, we must keep ever present in our minds that this distance is not an excuse to exclude our neighbors, but rather to protect them. This distance is not to separate us from each other, but rather to bring us nearer to each other in our common goal for safety. And we need to remember that this “distancing” does not prevent us from acts and words of kindness which are especially needed and appreciated during times of crisis such as we’re living through.

Let us sing together:

“Nearer my God to Thee  
Nearer to Thee  
E’en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me....  
There let the way appear  
Steps unto heaven.....”

Blessings,  
Mahalia Armea  
Campus Minister