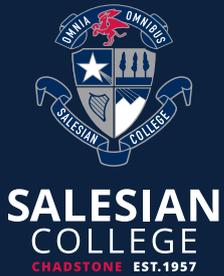




Winter 2020



GRIFFIN

**FEATURING PAST STUDENT AND
CEO OF THE REACH FOUNDATION,
SASHA LAWRENCE**

Stronger Together

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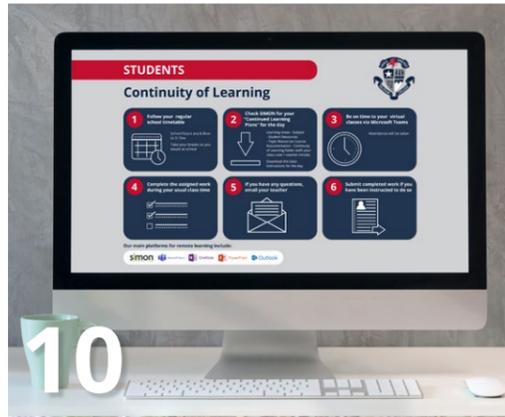
Featuring Class of 2007 past student and CEO of the Reach Foundation, Sasha Lawrence

SHARE A STORY

We seek out past and present students who inspire and encourage us to strengthen our Salesian community. Whether they have impacted thousands of people or just those nearby, what unites them are their foundations and values. If you have a story to share, or know someone who does, we want to hear from you.

Email
publicrelations@salesian.vic.edu.au

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IN THIS ISSUE

In what seems like overnight, the world has been catapulted into enormous change, uncertainty and the need to rapidly adapt to our immediate environment as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this 'Stronger Together' edition of the Griffin, we explore the power of community and the value of a collective approach. As the remote Continuity of Learning Plan delivers, students continue to experience quality learning, teaching and pastoral care.

With the global economy in lockdown and pivoting becoming the new norm, we listen to Class of 2007 past student and CEO of The Reach Foundation Sasha Lawrence, who at the age of 29 years is steering a philanthropic ship in the midst of chaos. Clear in purpose, Sasha links his moral compass to his time on school grounds 13 years ago. "When I make any type of choice or decision, I ask myself if it is reflective of my values and my morals, and if it's not, am I willing to compromise? To this day, that has been the greatest thing I've learnt from Salesian."

Sasha remains focussed on thinking ahead of the game, and highlights the value of trusting his team, the power of humility and the role compassion plays with self and others, for right now, "No one is the expert. We're all learners, and we all need to be curious and humble enough to say so."

While classrooms present differently to what they have been for the last 63 years, the essence of who we are remains. College Captain Robert Amendola reflects on our foundations, for these values are our "touchstone" that we look to in times of uncertainty. "Integrity, respect, belonging, joy and dynamism are not only our College values; they are the roots of our identity. The common anxieties we are now facing as we learn from home have not secluded us from each other. Rather, they have brought us closer than ever, as we continue to elevate each other with motivation and encouragement."

Turning to those who have relevant life experience and advice to share can provide us with hope and purpose during crisis points. College Vice-Captains Adam Stone and Jacob Curry speak to Class of 1963 past pupil and Vietnam War veteran John Stretch, who shares advice on maintaining a positive mindset against all odds. "Learn to live with uncomfortable emotions, although this may be extremely tough. This is something I learnt early in the jungles of Vietnam. This may be the greatest challenge of all, but enduring tough times is a great achievement and gives us confidence in other areas of our lives."

Suzie McErvale
Head of Development and Marketing

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Rob Brennan
Principal



“The COVID-19 outbreak has... demonstrated the power of a community driven by a common purpose.”

When we met to discuss the theme of this edition of the Griffin magazine, never were we to know just how relevant and topical our theme of working together to achieve great things was going to be.

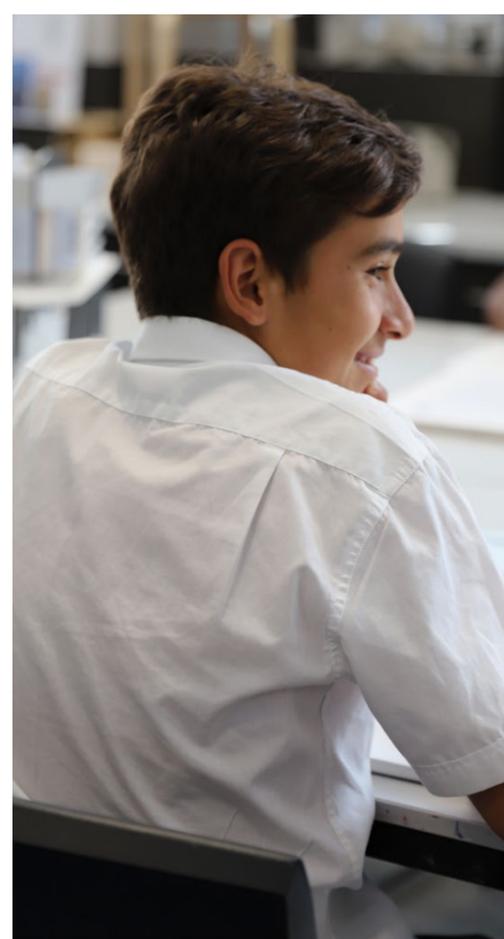
As a College, we have always understood that working together increases our chances of success. History is littered with stories of people banding together to achieve greatness, as is evident in our College history. One such example was at the recent ACC Swimming Carnival, where a group of dedicated students teamed up to win the ACC Second Division Championship, something that would not have been possible without the contributions of all members of the team.

The world is facing a once in a hundred year catastrophe with the breakout of the COVID-19 virus pandemic. The College is not immune from playing its role in dealing with the fallout this pandemic has caused. While the COVID-19 outbreak has presented many unforeseen challenges to College operations, it has demonstrated the power of a community driven by a common purpose.

This rapidly evolving crisis challenged the College to maintain a sense of ‘normal’ for our students while also readying ourselves for a transition to remote learning, which eventuated at the commencement of Term Two. Over the course of Term Two, our staff

worked diligently to provide quality teaching and pastoral care through online platforms. While this has been an incredibly challenging time for our school community, this crisis has demonstrated that we are all invested in the same goal; of ensuring our students continue to experience quality learning, teaching and pastoral care. This common purpose was at the forefront of our minds when developing our ‘Continuity of Learning’ Plan, detailed further on page 10.

Following the advice of the Victorian Government on Tuesday 12 May, the College now prepares to welcome back our staff on 25 May, with our Year 11 and 12 students recommencing on 26 May and all other year levels



returning on 9 June. Our Leadership Team remains committed to openly and honestly communicating with parents as we continue to plan for the remainder of the school year. While this crisis is not yet over, we continue to remain hopeful and look forward to seeing the College come to life once more.

In this edition, we turn to past pupils with life experience to share, whose stories can provide us all with a sense of hope and purpose.

In our cover story, Sasha Lawrence (Class of 2007) shares with us his experience of leading the Reach Foundation through this uncertain time. In a conversation with our Vice Captains Adam Stone and Jacob Curry, Vietnam War veteran John Stretch (Class of 1963) shares his advice on maintaining a positive mindset against all odds, and adapting to a new normal. On his advice to our current students,

Analyst Nathan D’Souza (Class of 2014 Dux) acknowledges the importance of pursuing lifelong learning, in equipping ourselves for all that life throws our way.

These stories are united in acknowledging that while life will always present us with obstacles, these obstacles are always easier to overcome together. I also hope that we all gain a new sense of appreciation for the many things we take for granted in this privileged country in which we live. The freedom to move around as we choose, personal connections with family and friends, education in a school setting, health and sport, to name a few, are things that we have lost in the short term that have certainly reminded me of how much these things mean to me in my daily life. So stay safe, stay connected and may God bless us all and help us to work together to overcome the adversity we face at this time.

FROM THE RECTOR

Fr Greg Chambers sdb
Rector

My fellow Don Bosco Past Pupils,

As I write to you this year, the state of Victoria, the country of Australia and all the nations of the world are visibly under siege and attack from a deadly and persistent virus that is threatening to destroy many lives and livelihoods and to undermine both national and international economies.

As a consequence, it is very understandable that the peoples of the world are full of fear and anxiety for themselves and their dear ones at this critical moment in history, and that they are extremely worried and apprehensive about their physical health, mental wellbeing, all-round safety and long-term survival as they move towards a most uncertain future.

In such a situation, it would be easy just to give up – to give up on our **FAITH** in our God and his promises, our **HOPE** in Jesus Christ and his presence, and our **LOVE** for each other, especially those in the greatest need. However, perhaps **NOW** is the time to go the other way instead: to strengthen and intensify our perennial Christian values and to actively put our faith, hope and love to work in our daily human lives and to do so more powerfully than ever.

In fact, Archbishop Tim Costelloe of Perth, himself a past student of Salesian College Chadstone, describes things very much along the same lines in a recent publication:

'It would be easy to give way to panic: we see signs of that panic in the empty shelves of our supermarkets. But the temptation to panic must not lead to an abandonment of our Christian hope and of our trusting faith in the providence of God. While so much is changing around us one thing remains the same: God is with us, his mercy and compassion overshadow us, and his call to us to love one another as Jesus has loved us still rings in our hearts.'

As Past Pupils of Don Bosco, it is more



Fr Greg Chambers (second from left) with 1960s Past Pupils at our 2019 Hall of Fame

important than ever to stand strongly together in order to support and encourage each other through 'thick and thin' and through the 'good times and bad'. Interestingly enough, whilst the original motto of the Salesian Past Pupils Association was 'Guides and Defends' (as in 'Don Bosco Guides and Defends'), a more modern motto followed in Australia and elsewhere has been '**Remain United and Help One Another**'. How relevant is that in today's current crisis situation!

Whilst on the subject of Don Bosco and the origin of the Salesian Past Pupils Association, it is instructive to note that the 'Salesian past pupils' movement started on the feast of St John the Baptist, June 24, 1870. On that day, Carlo Gastini, who in 1847 was a past pupil of Don Bosco at Valdocco, Turin and later in 1870 taught book-binding at the same oratory, got an idea to reunite some of his former companions. They bought six cups and saucers and presented them to Don Bosco on his feast-day, as a sign of appreciation and thanks for the education received. This was repeated year after year during Don Bosco's lifetime.'

In one of these encounters, Don Bosco made the following speech, which is considered to be the **identity card** of all past pupils of Salesian institutes:

'I see that quite a number of you have lost your hair, in others it has turned grey and your foreheads have become wrinkled. You are no longer the boys I once loved so much, but I feel an even greater love for you now than I did then, because your presence here today tells me that you still have firmly rooted in your heart those principles of our holy religion that I taught you, and that they still guide you in your life. You were once only a little group but now the group

has grown and will grow greater. You will be a light shining in the midst of the world and by your example you will teach others how they must do good and detest and avoid evil. I am sure you will continue to be Don Bosco's consolation.'

My fellow Chadstone past pupils, it is imperative in this time of the coronavirus and its devastating effects upon the human family, that we need to stand strongly together with our father and founder, Don Bosco, to be 'a light shining in the midst of the world....and teach others how they must do good and detest and avoid evil.' We will do this through our personal goodness and integrity, our upright living and example, our faith in our God and in each other, our loving and attentive kindness to our fellow citizens, and our daily acts of self-sacrifice and humble service to those whom the rest of society seems to have overlooked, forgotten or even cast out into the darkness.

But most of all, we will do this through our active and resilient **HOPE** that, in the fullness of time, all things will be well because of the constant intervention of our God in human history, and through the life-changing in-breaking of the Risen Christ into our lives at Easter.



Emblem and Motto of the Salesian Past Pupils' Movement. "PRAEIT AC TVETVR" means "Guides and Defends".



FROM THE COLLEGE CAPTAIN

Robert Amendola
College Captain

Our College Captain Robert Amendola reflects on the power of a positive culture and strong foundation of values in guiding us through difficult times.

It goes without saying that our community is currently experiencing hardship. The struggles we are facing as we adapt to both a new way of learning and a lack of interaction with each other are challenges not only confronted by us as students, but by our teachers too. Despite these challenges, one thing that seems to continue to live on is the robust culture of Salesian College.

Personally, I have wondered whether the strong bonds between students would survive this tough time. I questioned whether teachers would still be able to truly connect with one another. And finally, I asked myself whether our school would be able to continue to connect with our community. I think as a school we have been able to successfully overcome all three of these obstacles, as our culture has shone through. An experience I have had of this positive culture is the support that has been offered to me by my teachers. We are always encouraged to rely on our Oratory teachers. Whether it's regarding wellbeing or workload, teachers are always willing to assist in any way that they can. This reliance and trust between teachers and students builds our strong culture that we talk so much about.

Another example of Salesian's culture lies in the geniality of our students. The honest conversations we have with each other allow us to identify what we can do better in order to achieve our goals. I have been blessed to be a part of our Student Leadership team in all of my six years at Salesian. Our Student Congress meetings provide a platform for the 'student voice' at Salesian. The level of professionalism and attentiveness that is present at these meetings upholds our College culture and values. Our 85 elected leaders represent all year levels, giving voice to the views and opinions of all students at our school. Our Student Leadership team provides important insight into the student experience, allowing Mr Brennan and the College Leadership Team to connect with our students. Our Student Leadership program promotes our College value of belonging, ensuring that each student feels he can contribute to making positive change at the College when he enters our gates each day. I think it is this sense of belonging that greatly contributes to our culture here at the College.

Integrity, respect, belonging, joy and dynamism are not only our College values; they are the roots of our identity. These values are the touchstone that we look to in times of uncertainty. Our



values reflect the goals of our school, guiding our ideas and the way in which we conduct ourselves on a day to day basis. Living out these values depends on the authenticity of our students and staff, requiring that we keep ourselves accountable. Our culture relies on this strong set of values, if we are to prosper during this tough period of time. As we face this pandemic, I believe it is important to remember that we are privileged with a sturdy touchstone, that enables us to work together to overcome this difficult time. In our Year 12 cohort, the common problems and anxieties we are now facing as we learn from home have not secluded us from each other. Rather, they have brought us closer than ever, as we continue to elevate each other with motivation and encouragement. Our school culture and shared values have proven that it doesn't matter how far apart we may be from each other. We are always united in spirit.

2019 VCE RESULTS

Taking the Lead

2019 College Captain, Bo De Silva

We congratulate our 2019 College Captain Bo De Silva on his ATAR of 93.6, and acknowledge the level of commitment Bo demonstrated in achieving this ATAR while balancing his responsibilities as College Captain. Bo achieved a study score of 40 in Visual Communication Design and 45 in English, and is currently studying a Bachelor of Design at the University of Melbourne. Bo reflects, "As individuals, we are responsible for the decisions that we make, and for setting our goals and finding our passion in our lives. Our journey to achieve our own successes is made easy when we are surrounded by people who love us."

2019 Vice-Captain, Dimitri Adamopoulos

Vice-Captain Dimitri Adamopoulos (ATAR of 89.4) executed his Student Leadership role brilliantly, achieving study scores of 42 in Visual Communication Design and 46 in English. Dimitri is currently studying a Bachelor of Communication (Advertising) at RMIT University.

2019 Vice-Captain, Nick Thomas

Right beside Bo and Dimitri, Nick Thomas (ATAR of 89.3) provided considered thoughts and positivity to his Vice-Captain role. Nick is undertaking a Bachelor of Global Studies at Monash University Clayton.



2019 College Captain Bo De Silva (centre) and Vice Captains Dimitri Adamopoulos (left) and Nick Thomas (right)

The Salesian College Chadstone community commends all students from the Class of 2019 on the completion of their VCE studies, and acknowledges the dedication, commitment and support that staff and families have provided to ensure that students reach their potential.

Name	ATAR	University Destination
Joseph Cefai	98.7	Biomedicine (University of Melbourne) & recipient of the Premier's VCE Award
Jed Li	98.2	Engineering (Honours)/Arts, Monash University
Seaton Newport	97.1	Laws (Honours) Monash University
Shenglin Yuan	96.8	Engineering (Honours)/Science, Monash University
Akhilash Dever Kanagarajah	94.85	Science, Monash University
Dylan Loh	94.55	Biomedicine, University of Melbourne
Vinay Ravi	94.45	Aviation, Swinburne University of Technology
Bomal De Silva	93.6	Design, University of Melbourne
Michael Triantafyllou	93.6	Business/International Business, Monash University
Kento Hour	92.85	Science, University of Melbourne
Johnny Phylactou	92.75	Arts, Monash University
Robin Chea	92.4	Science, University of Melbourne
Baldeep Singh	91.9	Commerce (Law Pathway), Monash University
Dean Kanaris	90.95	Arts/Law, Deakin University
Tzi Man Kong	90.2	Commerce, Monash University



Class of 2019 High Achievers (ATAR of 90 or above)

Absent on day of photo: Akhilash Dever Kanagarajah, Dylan Loh, Bo De Silva, Johnny Phylactou, Adrian Kong, Shenglin Yuan



2019 DUX Joseph Cefai

On behalf of our community, I congratulate our 2019 Dux, Joseph Cefai, who achieved an ATAR of 98.7, putting him in the top 1.3% of all Year 12 students in the state. Achieving a perfect score of 50 in Environmental Science and a study score of 45 in both Psychology and English, Joseph was awarded the Premier's VCE Award in 2020. In this interview, Joseph acknowledges his strong support network as "invaluable" to his success.

I spoke to Joseph about how he remained focused in the face of challenges throughout Year 12, and the key people in his life who provided him with support and guidance. With an ATAR of 98.7 come many opportunities, with Joseph sharing his experience of beginning a Bachelor of Biomedicine at Melbourne University in 2020.

Rob Brennan
Principal

Joseph, your steady commitment to learning and your ability to focus has been outstanding. Explain how you managed this throughout your final year.

With a consistent work ethic. The cliché of Year 12 being a marathon and not a sprint really is true. It was important for me to find a level of working that I could maintain throughout the year. That way I could remain ahead of my studies whilst still finding time to live my life outside of school, in order to not burn out from the pressures of Year 12.

Take us through your experience of beginning university and your plans for the future.

Beginning university has been an enjoyable experience for me. I was lucky to experience a month of university before everything shut down, due to COVID-19. I enjoyed attending Orientation Week events and meeting people in my course. Participating in Biomedicine Camp was also a great way of making new friends, and this made the first few weeks of university a lot easier. I've enjoyed the independence of university learning. University is definitely something to look forward to after school!

With exceptional results comes a broad range of options. Explain to me how these options help you arrive at your overall goal?

Choosing the subjects I enjoyed in high school naturally guided me towards science. This helped me to determine the area I wanted to study at university, and from there it was a matter of finding the science course which I thought I would enjoy the most.

What has been your biggest learning through your final year?

That a strong social network is the most valuable form of support you can have throughout school and throughout life. Whether it was joking with friends at school or working through difficult concepts with them, the support of my friends was invaluable.

What role has courage and belief in yourself played to help push forward to achieve your goals?

Courage and belief in my ability allowed me to foster the self-motivation I needed to complete Year 12. These qualities were essentially tenets that allowed me to strive for success, since I knew that with hard work I could achieve my goals.

How important have relationships with others been in Year 12?

My relationships were the cornerstone of an overall enjoyable and positive experience of Year 12. My parents' support was immense. They understood the pressure I put on myself, and were able to moderate my stress by telling me to simply enjoy the experience of school, regardless of my academic outcome. The relationship I forged with my teachers in Year 12 was a completely new experience, where I felt as though we were striving for the same goal of

success in VCE. Strong relationships with my teachers made school feel like a much more personal, individual experience. My teachers were willing to go above and beyond to provide me with everything I needed for a successful year. Arguably, the most important relationships last year were between students in our year level. We developed a culture defined by our overall easy-going natures, with a good mix of healthy competition and banter. This positive culture allowed us all to enjoy the year and bring out the best in each other.

What have these relationships taught you?

That school is more than just a way to complete a formal education. The relationships formed and the memories shared through school are equally important, and undoubtedly will last longer in your memory than your recollection of a book you once studied in English. The relationships I developed throughout my time at Salesian have made me who I am today, and have taught me a lot about myself and the person I want to be in the future.

What are three points of advice for students that you'd like to share?

Write notes, do the work, and find time for yourself.

On behalf of Salesian College Chadstone, I congratulate Joseph on the commitment and perseverance he demonstrated over the course of his time at Salesian College Chadstone. We look forward to hearing about all he achieves in the future.



2019 College Dux Joseph Cefai with Principal, Rob Brennan

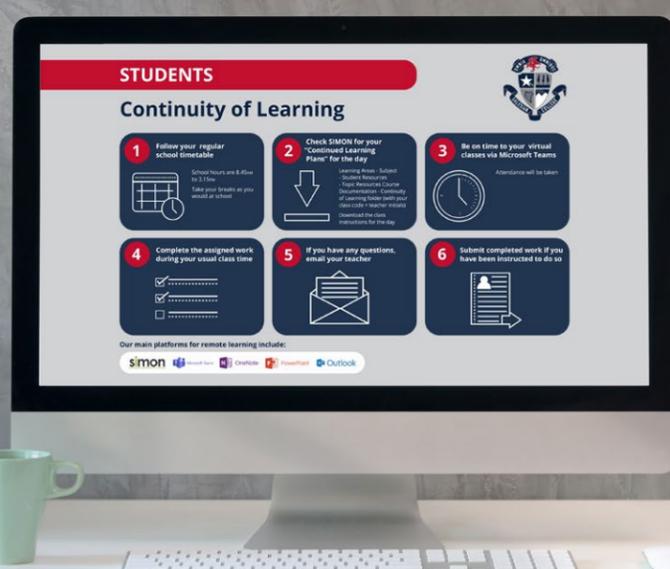
Highlights

2019 Dux: Joseph Cefai achieved an **ATAR of 98.7**

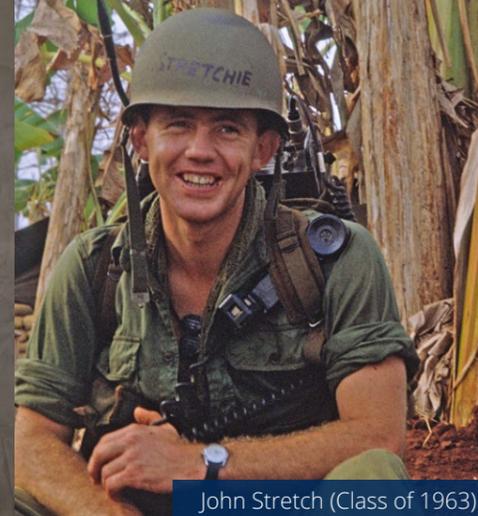
ATAR exceeding 90: **16%**
 ATAR exceeding 80: **34%**
 ATAR exceeding 70: **55%**
 Median Score: **31**
 40+ study Score: **8%**

VCE Completion rate: **98%**
 VCAL Completion: **97%**

Awarded the VCE Bacalaureate: **3**



"...We are all invested in the same goal; of ensuring that our students continue to experience quality learning, teaching and pastoral care."



John Stretch (Class of 1963)



Adam Stone



Jacob Curry

ADAPTING TO A NEW NORMAL

STRONGER TOGETHER

While the COVID-19 outbreak has presented many unforeseen challenges to College operations, it has demonstrated the power of a community driven by a common purpose. Principal Rob Brennan reflects on the College's remote learning action plan, the importance of remaining connected and of turning to those around us for a sense of hope.

What have been some of the challenges this crisis presented?

The rapidly evolving nature of this crisis has required a great amount of flexibility in our approach. With new information being released by the Government and Catholic Education Melbourne on an almost daily basis, our Leadership Team has needed to remain light on our feet in adapting. The College was challenged to maintain a sense of 'normal' for our students, while also readying ourselves for a transition to remote learning in Term Two. Our staff have worked diligently to prepare to provide quality teaching and pastoral care through online platforms. While this has been an incredibly challenging time for our school community, I have been heartened by the way staff, students and parents have remained connected, working towards a common goal.

What were the College's primary goals when developing a 'Continuity of Learning' action plan?

In this time of great uncertainty, open and honest communication with parents has remained a high priority. This crisis has presented us with many challenges,

but it has also demonstrated that we are all invested in the same goal; of ensuring that our students continue to experience quality learning, teaching and pastoral care. This common purpose was at the forefront of our minds when developing our 'Continuity of Learning' Plan.

What guidance is being provided on productively learning at home?

Our plan requires a collective effort in ensuring that our students' learning remains uninterrupted. We've called for parents to support us in providing a designated learning space in their homes, and for students to work independently on tasks. We are confident that parents will continue to check in with students about their online learning tasks, activities and assessments.

We've always believed in the importance of empowering students to take ownership of their studies, and they are now being entrusted with this responsibility. While this crisis calls us to re-imagine the way we learn, teach and work, it is our hope that this unique challenge will inspire a generation of self-motivated students.

We're also guiding our students on the importance of adopting a holistic view of their wellbeing, encouraging them to get a good night's sleep, to maintain a balanced diet, to regularly exercise and to stay in contact with their support network.

How can we find a sense of hope in these difficult times?

While COVID-19 has created a lot of uncertainty in our community, a great spirit of connectedness has also emerged. The true solidarity that I have experienced as staff and parents work together to support our students has provided me with a great deal of hope. We're seeing staff working diligently on supporting students in virtual learning, and parents going out of their way to express their support of the College. These uncharted waters that we are navigating together have demonstrated how interconnected we really are, and that when it comes to our wellbeing, we are stronger when united in our mission.

What do we know about how this crisis will affect Year 12 students?

We continue to be guided by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and the Department of Education and Training in planning for the remainder of 2020. The Victorian Government has advised that VCE students will still receive an ATAR score, but with a number of changes to the academic timetable. VCE study scores will continue to be a combination of school-based assessment and external exams. VCAL students will have more time to complete their courses, and this will be consistent with the revised VCE dates. We are committed to continuing to support all our students, and we will do everything within our power to support them in achieving their personal best.

As we collectively work to support our students as they adapt to a new reality, turning to those who have relevant life experience and advice to share can provide us with the greatest sense of hope and purpose.

In a virtual interview with our Vice Captains Adam Stone and Jacob Curry, past pupil and Vietnam War veteran John Stretch (Class of 1963) shares his advice on maintaining a positive mindset against all odds.

The Importance of Goals

"As infantry soldiers in Vietnam, we were well trained and knew what we must do every day to give us the best chance of success, most importantly ensuring the survival of ourselves and our mates. For example, all Australian Infantry soldiers when on operation were required to dig a hole (a 'shell scrape') to sleep in. After patrolling on a Search and Destroy mission all day, in swamps and thick jungle and in very hot conditions, we would take up a defensive position and "dig in". You may have had little or no sleep the night before, you might have had enemy contact during the day. Fatigue and sore limbs made no difference. You still needed to dig in. At Fire Support Base Anderson at the height of the Tet Offensive in 1968, we came under mortar and rocket attack on three occasions at night. Had I not done a good job of preparing my shell scrape, I would not have survived. It was one of a number of small things necessary to do each day to achieve my goal."

"Whether you are doing everything possible to survive in a war, whether you are

dealing with COVID-19, or whether you are striving to attain a particular ATAR score, the formula for success is the same. Know what you have to do each day to progress towards your goal, and do it. If you find this difficult to identify, seek assistance from someone you respect and trust. Never be afraid to implement healthy routine in your life, to do those things daily that lead you on your journey to achieve what is important to you."

Learn to Live with the Uncomfortable

"Learn to live with uncomfortable emotions, although this may be extremely tough. This is something I learnt early and painfully in the jungles of Vietnam. After a particular busy time on operations in the Army, I had to cope with the realisation that 'life was cheap'. We had mates killed or wounded, and they were gone. We were a superior force who dealt with the enemy and just moved on. It's an issue that haunts soldiers fifty years later. We will take it to the grave with us."

"This lesson is also applicable to my life today, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic

surrounds my family and friends. If you can achieve this, you emerge much the better for it. This may well be the greatest challenge of all, but enduring tough times is a great achievement and gives us confidence in other areas of our lives."

Take Time Out and Turn to Your Support Network

"I have very fond memories of my years at Salesian College. I was fortunate to have an amazing teacher, Fr Bill Edwards, who became a great mentor and friend for many years after schooling. Fr Bill wrote to me every week while I was in Vietnam. On my return from the war zone, I stayed with him at Lysterfield for a couple of days. The most precious gift he shared with me was that in the more complex and difficult times in life, do not hesitate to take time out."

"Don't be afraid to seek professional help when the going gets too hard. It's imperative that we are wise enough to seek help when necessary. In my most challenging times, I find time to pray - a very informal prayer seeking personal peace and the strength to do what is required of me. Today we live with COVID-19 lurking in the background. I can't solve that, but I can do each day what is recommended for survival."

"I am now in my senior years. My goals today address health, fitness and family. Friends and holidays are very important to me and I ensure that both receive serious attention. My wife, children and grandchildren are precious, and they are a priority. With a little thought and planning, each of these enhances the quality of my life, and provides lots of fun."

FAITH IN ACTION

Nikita Rodrigues
Publications and Communications Officer



As Priest of Sacred Heart and St Columba's Parish in St Kilda, Fr John Petrusis (Class of 1975) leads a network of parishioners who work to welcome those suffering homelessness into the fabric of church life. In the last year Fr John and his community of volunteers contributed over 96,000 hours to supporting the work of Sacred Heart Mission, a pillar of the community of St Kilda. Reflecting on his personal journey, Fr John acknowledges the impact of his community in translating the Gospel into action.

Having been involved in the parish of Sacred Heart and St Columba for 13 years, how did your journey as a priest lead to this particular parish?

The desire to be there for those most in need is what initially called me to become a priest. My first parish in Sunbury served a large community of individuals living with mental disabilities, who didn't have the support of their own families. I was also involved with an organisation called Citizen Advocacy, through whom I befriended people who were isolated and suffering. My path has also been formed by my own family. My father was a displaced person as a result of the WWII. After being taken to a labour camp, he couldn't go back to his own country

of Lithuania. He endured homelessness for many years, and eventually boarded the first boat of post war immigrants who sailed to Australia. I've always had empathy for people in similar situations. Helping marginalised people strongly resonates with me.

Your parish community volunteers at the Sacred Heart Mission, supporting the homeless. You have mentioned that you believe this connection between parish and mission is essential. Why is this important?

We can see the Gospel very clearly in the hearts of the people who come to us and in the relationships we form with them. The vision the Mission is built upon is "For

I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." (Matthew 25: 35-36). I think it's important to remember that acting in the name of justice is at the heart of being a follower of Christ. If you're not lending a helping hand to your neighbour who may be struggling, you're missing out on the core of our faith.

It's clear that your parish community is incredibly connected and involved. How has this connection enriched your parish's purpose?

Having a strong network of actively involved parishioners makes a world of difference in integrating homeless

individuals into church life. Most of the people we serve don't have a lot of family connections. Residents of the Mission and participants of our meal program often attend our 11am mass. Some of these people might sing in our choir, or join us for a cup of tea after mass. It's a very eclectic mass. We have many different characters who come along to participate, but each person's dignity is respected. Our parish is adamant that although our masses may not run perfectly, our focus is on each person who attends. A lot of people experiencing homelessness can get involved in a homeless subculture that is not always helpful. Being able to participate in an inclusive wider community is so important for healing their lives. Our parish is a sign of welcome.

Looking back on the impact your parish community has had over the years, what creates the greatest sense of joy for you?

The welcome that parishioners extend to those who arrive at the Mission brings joy to my heart. I see our parish as a village.

"Having a strong network of actively involved parishioners makes a world of difference in integrating homeless individuals into church life."

We have connections with the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project. These communities complement the work of our Mission, as people who are seeking asylum can also be homeless. I'm also proud of our primary school, which is also strongly integrated with our Mission. The Prep classes run drives for toiletry donations for our Women's House, and our Grade 5 and 6 students often visit the hostel. These everyday connections provide me with immense joy.

With direct experience supporting the community of St Kilda, you have a real understanding of the needs of the homeless. How do you see our community evolving to continue to support these needs?

In this Coronavirus crisis, we are all feeling uncertain about where our lives are going. This feeling is what a person experiencing homelessness lives with each day. Hopefully we can all come out of this crisis with more of a community mindset. I also think we need to advocate for social housing. Unless our society can provide those who are struggling with shelter, it's very hard to help them in other ways. If people don't have a base to be visited at, somewhere to receive their mail and connect with the community, it's difficult to address their other needs. Our Mission works with the Government, the community and

philanthropists to secure resources for our Journey to Social Inclusion Program, a three year coordinated approach to supporting people addressing multiple needs of mental illness, domestic abuse or substance abuse. People need guided, intensive support.

How have Salesian values impacted your life?

I've always had great memories of Salesian's pastoral care. I remember that the staff, priests and brothers always had a real sense of being present with their students, of spending time with them on the yard and looking out for their wellbeing. They were invested in our development as whole people, not just in our academic progress. In my life at the Mission, we channel that same sense of active engagement with the homeless. I come from a family who experienced struggle as a result of the Second World War, but I always felt welcomed at Salesian. There was never a sense that you had to be of a certain social standing to be included. The Salesians made sure that everyone felt welcomed.

LEADING THROUGH CRISIS

Suzie McErvale

Head of Development and Marketing

At fifteen years of age, Class of 2007 past student Sasha Lawrence embarked on a student leadership opportunity run by The Reach Foundation. With a robust level of global experience and further education, thirteen years later at age 28, Sasha was appointed as CEO of the iconic Jim Stynes founded Australian charity.

Barely two years into his term, Sasha's leadership has been catapulted into drastic change with the outbreak of COVID-19. With the global economy in lockdown and pivoting becoming the new norm, Sasha shares how he is navigating a philanthropic ship in the midst of chaos. Clear in purpose, Sasha links his moral compass to his time on school grounds 13 years ago. "When I make any type of choice or decision, I ask myself if it is reflective of my values and my morals, and if it's not, am I willing to compromise? To this day, that has been the greatest thing I've learnt from Salesian."

Committed to his cause, Sasha remains focussed on thinking ahead of the game, and highlights the value of trusting his team, the power of humility and the role compassion plays with self and others, for right now "no one is the expert, we're all learners and we all need to be curious and humble enough to say so."

Suzie: *It's an extraordinary time right now. I want to start by asking, how are you?*

Sasha: Isn't it crazy how quickly everything was turned inside out, upside down?

It really is such an intense time. One thing that I am trying to do is stay present and have perspective on how I am affected compared to others. I keep reminding myself that I am so privileged to work from home. I have a home, working technology to stay connected to people to do my work, I'm still able to exercise and I still have access to food.

Reminding myself to be grateful and that this current state is not permanent has been useful.

This moment has highlighted to me that I have been running at 200% since I finished high school. I regularly have so many things on the go, so in a way this slowdown has been really positive for me to not have a diary that is impossible

to work through every day.

I'm taking the opportunity to catch up on life admin and other things that I wouldn't ordinarily make time to do. At the moment I feel good because I'm in a positive place, but it's currently one month in and who knows how much longer we have to go.

From a work perspective, in a really bizarre way, I feel as if our team has solidified and become even closer and more connected as a result of working from home.

On a personal level, I am appreciating every phone call and working on being more present. I was notorious for being that friend who is physically there, but not necessarily present. This has been an interesting exercise for me to slow down and to make sure that I put the effort into connecting with the people who are really important to me.

Suzie: *Your story is extraordinary. A year and a half ago, at the age of 28,*

you made the decision to take leave of absence from your managerial role at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to take on the CEO role at Reach. You've described this appointment as a 'homecoming' and a 'dream come true'. Why did it feel that way?

Sasha: I first became involved with Reach when I was 15 years old, after Salesian sent me to a leadership workshop. I am turning 30 this year, so Reach has been part of my life for literally half of it. I spent a lot of time at Reach as a young person during a very formative time in my development.

When I stepped away from Reach to go to PwC it was because it was time for me to chase my next dream. Ironically, this is what the organisation is all about; helping young people to achieve their potential. I've never wavered from my belief in Reach's mission.

At the time when I was leaving Reach, I said that when I returned, it would be in the capacity of CEO, but I thought that

would have been at a much later stage of life. I definitely didn't expect it to be at age 28.

I was exposed to some incredible mentors in my early years. It's a unique organisation in that respect. I knew that I wanted to be part of leading it at some point in my future, so that's where the 'homecoming' came in. I had grown up at Reach, and what I had been asked to come back to do was very much what I had learnt during my time at PwC. I was able to return to this organisation that I really love with a whole lot of experiences, and take it forward into its next stage of development.

Suzie: *Given the mindset you had around taking on this role later on in life, you must be satisfied with your efforts.*

Sasha: I am now, but when I first stepped into the role I was so out of my depth and my comfort zone that many of my mentors were telling me to remember to slow down, take stock and take pride

in what I was achieving.

For the first 8-12 months I was so inundated that it was really difficult to feel satisfied, because the work that was ahead of me felt so enormous.

We've achieved a lot in the last 18 months, so now I am at a point where I am very proud of what I've been able to achieve with my team, but it definitely took me a while to get to that point.

Taking time to stop and celebrate the wins is something I am working on. I'm hardwired to look at how I can do things better and get to the next thing. But part of that is due to the stage of where I am at in my career and learning.

One of my greatest reflections is in me not celebrating the wins, as it means that my team don't. That has been a crucial learning as leader, because my team needs me to do that. Otherwise it's Groundhog Day without any real reward at the end of it.

Suzie: *That's a great observation, given that people look to you to set that tone. And particularly relevant right now with the stress of COVID-19.*

In what seems like overnight, the world has been catapulted into enormous change, uncertainty and the need to rapidly adapt to the immediate environment. As a socially conscious leader focused on results, how have you navigated this?

Sasha: Great question. Look, I think in 12-18 months' time, someone is going to reflect on whether I made the right or wrong decisions.

Suzie: *Or you will. [laughs]*

Sasha: [Laughs] Or I will, right?

The first thing for me and my team was strategy.

We started conversations quite early. Our strategy was to take a conservative approach and prepare for the worst, so



that we can come out of it at the other end.

At the Board and the Executive Team level we weren't waiting for a state of emergency to be declared. The moment that we could start to see a pattern, trend and the impact it would have on systems and institutions, we very quickly identified the need for putting plans in place. We went with the angle of 'Let's be extra precautionous'. We're a not for profit organisation, so we need to be really mindful about where our income is coming from.

Reach is heavily funded by the corporate sector. We receive only four to five per cent of Government funding, so in the context of the market and the economy about to be hit, all of that revenue was potentially at risk for us.

From an impact perspective, 80 per cent of our work is delivered in primary and secondary schools. If schools aren't operating in their usual way, then that's a significant disruption to our business, because we do face-to-face workshops. We don't do digital programming, yet.

It was our intention to be transparent with all of our team from the beginning, including all losses. We chose to do this because in a crisis, we believe in galvanising your people to equip and arm them with as much information and data as they need. Fundamentally, this comes down to trust.

The need to band together was and is real to survive this crisis. There are something like 60,000 not for profits in Australia, and the social sector is going to be significantly impacted. It might not be in the next 6 months, but it will be in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.

We communicated to our team that this

was a call to arms. We needed everyone on board because, ultimately, our mission is to support young people, and we want to do that well into the future. We would be unable to do that if we didn't take drastic action early.

We communicated that both internally and externally to our key stakeholders.

We are mindful that we have a platform to amplify the voices of young people and to also disseminate information to them. What's been at the forefront for us is that right now, young Australians are in a whole world of anxiety.

If we think about the Year 12 and the Prep students who are partly missing out on their significant developmental years, we don't know what the ramifications of this will be on their social development.

It has been really important for us to think about how we support young people through this.

We started 2020 with the bushfires that triggered a lot of anxiety in young people, especially those active around climate change who were frustrated with our leaders not acting fast enough. We barely came out of that before we were faced with this situation, so that's been at the front of our minds. How do we make sure we disseminate factual information to young people, but also give them the spaces to be heard and to make sense of what's going on in the world right now?

"We have to be thinking ahead of the game. And it has to be aligned to vision, mission and values."

Suzie: *It's encouraging to hear about*

Reach looking ahead of the curve. You raise a valuable point about being mindful of the core objective behind what you are trying to achieve.

Sasha: I have a general belief that business, government and the community should work together to solve the important problems of the present, and those of tomorrow. We have to be thinking ahead of the game. And it has to be aligned to vision, mission and values.

Whether a profit or not for profit, if you don't have that foresight and it's not linked to vision, mission and values, I wonder whether they will come out on the other side of this. I think the global landscape has changed in respect to this, and purpose is critical. It's no longer fluffy human resources (HR) talk, it's a business-critical issue. We only need to look at Corporate Australia to see this. This is something I really learnt at PwC.

Suzie: *What has this current COVID-19 moment in our history taught you about leadership?*

Sasha: I might say from the outset that I am learning every day. I've never learnt more than I have at this point in time. In a bizarre way, I feel grateful to be able to lead an organisation through a global pandemic. You don't learn this at university.

I'm definitely learning as I go, but I think that a few things that are not necessarily new learnings have been solidified for me;

1. The importance of trusting your team. If you don't have the right people around you and you don't trust them to work together to solve the problem at hand, it makes your life a lot more difficult

and, ultimately, you're not going to achieve the outcomes for anyone.

For a lot of organisations right now they are faced with the option of galvanising their workforce and activating or withholding information and micromanaging.

There's never been a time when we've more needed human beings to step up. I choose trust.

2. Have humility and acknowledge that you don't have all the answers. We hear about Imposter Syndrome in business-critical roles, where people feel like they need to immediately have the right answer.

It's important to acknowledge that no one is the expert right now. We're all learners and we all need to be curious and humble enough to say so.

I have directly observed that with my team. People have respected that I'm not making something up. I want to give them information that is as right as it can be.

3. Compassion with self and others. It can be very lonely being in a leadership position where you withhold information and you bear burdens and responsibilities that your role requires you to. It can be difficult to share that with others, and so it's really important that you are looking after and are compassionate towards yourself. I try to remind myself of that when things aren't going to plan, not only in the context of COVID-19, but in general.

"We have no idea what people's circumstances are

and people are going to be showing up differently from who they usually are because life is so out of the ordinary right now."

We need to be more compassionate to others than ever before. It's a phrase that is overused at the moment, but we have no idea what people's circumstances are, and people are going to be showing up differently from who they usually are because life is so out of the ordinary right now. It's important to view others with a sense of compassion that people are going through this and have their own personal circumstances that they are navigating through.

Suzie: *Sound advice.*

You raise an interesting point that we often talk about in education; the concept of a growth mindset. The synergy between today's classroom experience and the approach progressive leaders are defaulting to is encouraging to see.

Sasha: Absolutely. The work we do with Reach in schools works for the majority. Human beings learn in different ways, and depending on the school that you go to, some schools have the structure to adapt to those learning styles.

I remember the pressure I put on myself to get the ATAR I wanted. I don't remember any of my teachers saying, "Sasha, you have to get a 90 ATAR". I put that pressure on myself. But I do remember the teachers teaching in different ways. I was very appreciative of that.

When I went to university, the way Law was taught at the University I went to did not resonate with my learning style, and I really struggled through that. I think we need to be mindful that everyone learns at a different pace and in different ways.

Suzie: *Your connection to Reach and the Mali Initiative stems right back to your College leadership days at Bosco Campus. How did these volunteering experiences develop?*

Sasha: We were sent to a Leadership workshop by our Year 10 Co-ordinator, Ms Cirillo. I wouldn't be where I am today if she hadn't done that. (As a side note, I reached out to her after I took on the

role at Reach to share the news. She was thrilled).

The Mali Initiative was born out of Reach after Paul Currie (one of the co-founders) who happens to also be a film director, travelled to West Africa to film a documentary. During this trip he learned that students didn't have access to school in this village. When Paul returned, a group of Reach crew came together to fundraise and build a school in Bamako, Mali. Fundraising grew rapidly, which allowed for Mali to be formed as its own NGO.

A few weeks after Year 12 I flew out to Mali on my own to see the progress. As a 17 year old, that was a really profound and emotional experience for me. At that stage, Year 12 had just finished, and Salesian had been a huge part of my life. I was a Vice-Captain and heavily involved in the school. This trip solidified for me how fortunate I was to experience the education that I did in Australia.

"At 17 that was etched into my mind. Not only do I have to make the most of the opportunities I have, but I also have the responsibility to support others and play my part in paying it forward."

While this experience left me with perspective, I felt a real sense of injustice about why it was that I was given this experience and education, which was

Jim Stynes and Paul Currie (Founders of the Reach Foundation)



inevitably setting me up for the rest of my life, and these kids, through no fault of their own, through the life that they were born into, wouldn't have these same opportunities. At 17 that was etched into my mind. Not only do I have to make the most of the opportunities I have, but I also have the responsibility to support others and play my part in paying it forward.

Suzie: *By age 25 you had graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in International Relations and Criminology, and a Juris Doctor degree in Law, involving studying abroad at the University of California, Berkeley.*

How has your attitude towards learning opened doors for you?

Sasha: I remember vividly the moment when University results were released. I was in Mali at the time (in one of the world's poorest countries). We were literally in the desert, using a satellite phone to find out what University I had been accepted into. That experience reiterated how privileged I was.

"To me, learning is a mindset."

I've always viewed education as an opportunity, and one that I don't take for granted.

As I've become older, I've learnt that I don't learn well in a standard classroom.

I remember that in school I would study really hard and not get great grades. I've learnt now as an adult that's just about my learning style. To me, learning is a mindset. I will always say "yes" to something, even when I don't know how to do it, because I know I'm going to learn by doing it. Part of my career at PwC was working in the Learning

and Development team, when, to be honest, I had no HR or learning and development background whatsoever, but there was an opportunity there for me to try something new and to learn. That was a stage in my career that really solidified how important for my future and career it was to have a mindset of continuous learning.

Throw me into the deep end on a task that I haven't done before and I'll find a way to learn. Now it's almost built into my DNA, and I get excited about the thought of learning something new.

Suzie: *How has family and culture shaped your personal values?*

Sasha: So much. My parents were separated when I was about six years old, but both of them worked really hard so that the breakdown in their marriage didn't impact on my day to day life. I was really fortunate that was my situation. My Mum especially ensured that I grew up with love around me in a really supportive environment. I'm an only child, but I have a large extended family. Even though I'm an only child, I've always been surrounded by lots of cousins, aunties and uncles.

Community service and thinking about others was very much part of both the school curriculum and my own personal upbringing.

Suzie: *You classified your most significant learnings from your time at Salesian into two categories:*

1. **Being part of a team / community and**
2. **To challenge the status quo – to make the world a more inclusive place.**

How have these learnings as a teenager impacted your life decisions?

Sasha: Without a doubt they have shaped me.

I was a pretty sensitive kid. I wasn't a macho, brash teenager. I think the benefit of going to a boys' school is that it helped to build my confidence. Also, being an only child and my Dad not being around, all of a sudden I was surrounded by males. I had a really great group of friends throughout high school. I often reflect that when people ask, "Would you do high school all over again?" I'd say, "Yes". I had a great experience at school. I felt part of a community, felt part of something that was bigger than I was. I reflect on school with a lot of gratitude.

On the topic of challenging the status quo, I remember that in Year 12 we did an ethics class, and there were different topics we had to explore. It was about activating us as young men as to how to think critically and how to make values-led decisions. To this day, that has been the greatest thing I've learnt from Salesian.

"When I make any type of choice or decision, I ask myself if it is reflective of my values and my morals, and if it's not, am I willing to compromise? To this day, that has been the greatest thing I've learnt from Salesian."

When I make any type of choice or decision, I ask myself

- a) Is it reflective of my values and my morals?
- b) If it's not, am I willing to compromise? It's as though these questions are etched in my mind with any decision I have to make.

I stand up for issues that I believe are important. I believe that stems from learning how to think critically, standing up for what you believe is right, and your own values.

I often back myself with whatever I do – I'm very vocal. I stand up for issues that I believe are important. I believe that stems from learning how to think critically, standing up for what you believe is right, and your own values.

Suzie: *What grounded learnings.*

When you chose Salesian, was it always your intention to go to a boys' school?

Sasha: Great question. From what I remember, I don't think I necessarily wanted to go to a boys' school, but that was what my Mum wanted. I originally wanted to go to Mazenod, but I didn't get in. The reason was that a lot of my friends from my Primary School wanted to go there. I don't ever have any memory of regretting the outcome of going to Salesian.

I actually remember my first day of Year 7 really vividly, in particular my Year 7 teacher. I had such a positive experience from the start that I never thought about Mazenod after that.

I had really great friends and teachers. In school, I loved my teachers. They took a lot of interest in me, and I felt really cared for. I very quickly felt part of the community.

Suzie: *Self-awareness, passion and confidence are at the core of what Reach set out to achieve with young people. How do you see these three factors impacting our world?*

Sasha: I fundamentally believe that with every generation dawns new opportunity for the world.

It can be easy to criticise the generation before you or those younger, but the benefit for any new generation is that they can learn from the previous one and their shortcomings.

I believe that for young people going into the future, those beliefs are important, because we need activated young people who will change our world.

My belief (not the formal Reach line) is that our institutions and systems are

archaic, and the world needs radical change in some ways. Fundamentally, we are too slow on climate policy and adapting to a new world. We have a generation of young people who are going to change the world, and you can already see that. They are far more activated than my generation ever was. Ultimately, those traits will mean young people stepping up as leaders, fighting for what they believe in, what is right for the whole community. I can't wait until we see more young people in Parliament, represented in Government and sitting in Leadership teams of large organisations, because the reality is that young people do have wisdom, ideas and things to share. It's an untapped resource that we have sitting at our fingertips.

Suzie: *Perhaps it's possible that COVID-19 is an opportunity for humans to step up, globally?*

Sasha: I absolutely believe that. I'm hyperaware that I am making this statement from a place of privilege, but I believe this crisis provides a forced slowdown for our world to reset. There's less pollution right now because there are fewer cars on the road. We're forced to think about our consumer behaviour. We see more parents connecting with their kids and going for walks. I just think that if that's what it's taken for us to get to that then, dare I say it, isn't that a good thing? And here's hoping that we sustain that into the future. There's a lot we are going to reset now, and it's going to be incumbent on us as adults in the community to carry forward what has actually been really positive in this very unfortunate situation.

Suzie: *What advice do you have for our community right now, navigating this unfamiliar territory?*

Sasha: Firstly, people need to be informed. There are so many media outlets that simply share rubbish - shocking information that is trying to create a stir. As a result, it's really divisive.

I think it's crucial that adults get truthful and factual information, because their young people need help to make sense of this. From a practical perspective, my advice would be to balance your news and social media feeds.

We need to be mindful of our prejudices and our bias from this time. What



Sasha Lawrence (College Vice Captain) with Christopher Ziaei (College Captain) and Jason D'Souza (College Vice Captain)

we are seeing with the vilification of Chinese people right now is absolutely unacceptable. It's not right, and we are better than that. In moments of crisis and weakness we need to unify and work together and be compassionate towards each other. I think it's really important that we think about how we as a community make sure that we are supporting those people. Unfortunately, it is a really tough time right now for people from Asian backgrounds because of the vilification they are experiencing. We need to stand up against that behaviour. Essentially, it's about all of us supporting the notion that everyone is in this together, and if you are in a slightly different position of privilege, you have a responsibility to support those people around you.

We don't know the ramifications this is going to have on people's mental health and wellbeing. I know it can be uncomfortable for parents to have conversations with teenagers, and vice versa, but it's crucial that family units are having honest conversations, checking in with each other. For teenagers who are observing how their parents are affected by their jobs, here is an opportunity for them to be checking in with their parents and working through this.

It doesn't matter what generation you are in. It's about us caring for each other.

Suzie: *It's been a pleasure chatting, Sasha. Stay well.*



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



CONGRATULATIONS TO JAYLEN GORDON

Congratulations to Jaylen Gordon (Class of 2019) on being signed to St Edward's University's Men's Basketball Team in Austin, Texas! As a 6ft Forward player, Jaylen is enthusiastic about the opportunity to develop his basketball skills at a prestigious university.

"I am looking forward to immersing myself in the culture of St Edward's University. I'm thankful for the opportunity to continue to develop my basketball skills and achieve my goals."

"In the lead up to moving over to Austin, I am working out three times a week, focusing on strength and conditioning, weights and specific routines aimed to prepare myself for playing in the US."

"I found Austin to be an exciting, vibrant city and enjoyed visiting the St Edward's University campus. I'm looking forward to completing my degree there!"



Phil (inductee) and Jane Bretherton at our 2016 Hall of Fame Dinner

PHILIP AND JANE BRETHERTON (Class of 1975)

The three years when Salesian opened its doors to female students were pivotal in the lives of Philip and Jane Bretherton (Class of 1975).

"I was grateful to be offered the opportunity to study my Science subjects at Salesian as a Form 5 (Year 11) student. In 1975, I transferred to Salesian with all the Sacred Heart Girls' College Form 6 students," reflects Jane.

"I remember clearly the day that another student, Barry O'Conner, introduced me to his best mate Phil after class. Phil had asked Barry to help him line-mark the oval for Athletics, although Barry was committed to keeping the girls company instead. Phil returned to mark the oval on his own, having made a strong impression on me that is continuing to strengthen to this day! Our first date was at the school social on 23 August 1974 at St Patrick's Church Hall in Murrumbidgee. We've now been married for 38 years!"

"We had an outstanding teacher, Fr Dan O'Sullivan, who taught our homeroom class both English and Religious Education. We both have fond memories of the wonderful liturgies held in the College Chapel."

Phil returned to Salesian College Chadstone to teach in 1979, before continuing his teaching career as a Principal and Education Consultant for the next 40 years. Phil introduced our College Instrumental Program, which still stands today as an important part of our school curriculum.

Phil and Jane moved to Bendigo, where they welcomed two daughters, Ellen and Hannah. Jane held various roles as a qualified nutritionist and dietitian, including at the Bendigo Psychiatric Centre, where she developed a program that supported women suffering from eating disorders. Phil became Deputy to the Director of Catholic Education in the Sandhurst Diocese. Both Phil and Jane were involved with Family Life Education in schools and Marriage Education across the Diocese of Sandhurst for 20 years, and also worked to support refugees from Kosovo. Phil now works at St John of God Hospital in Bendigo as the Director of Mission Integration, with Jane enjoying roles in a number of local organisations.

Phil reflects on his time as a Chaddy student, and the impact of Salesian values on his and Jane's lives.

"I have long lasting memories of the great teachers who spent a lot of time with students in the yard. I remember Fr Julian and other staff playing soccer with us every morning before school, just trying to be present with the students."

"The Salesians of Don Bosco have been an inspiration to us, as parents and educators. Don Bosco's philosophy of reason, religion and loving kindness has stood us both in good stead across our lives."

"We were both involved in the Salesian Past Pupils' Association, with Phil taking up the role of National President for several rewarding years. We are proud to be past pupils of Salesian College Chadstone, and are indebted to the many fine Salesian priests, brothers, sisters and lay people, some of whom became life-long friends," acknowledges Jane.



NATHAN D'SOUZA (Class of 2014)

Analyst (Analytics and Cognitive, Consulting) at Deloitte Australia
Class of 2014 Dux

You achieved an incredible ATAR during your time at Salesian, and went on to achieve great results at university. What were the factors that led to your success?

Faith and gratitude have been constant sources of strength throughout my life, and both of which have brought many blessings. I am fortunate to have grown up in a family devoted to faith, creating a foundation on which I know that I can rise to any challenge. I have found that having strong beliefs provides me with clarity and purpose each day.

I also have an amazing support network who are always there to guide and inspire me. My parents, especially, are incredible, and continue to be the best source of encouragement. I really couldn't have achieved what I did without them, so thank you Mum and Dad!

I am grateful to have shared many memorable experiences with my friends, which certainly helped greatly throughout university and school. It is so important to have a life outside of study and work. Looking back, I am glad that I took up the opportunities to live life, rather than being behind a book.

One of the most helpful mindsets to have is the ability to stay strong through adversity. We all face challenges in our lives, and it is so important to be able to overcome them. Though there were certainly times when it was hard to

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

maintain this attitude, persistence and consistency is key. I tried my best to remain consistent and optimistic, which I am sure contributed to my academic success.

Having secured a position at Deloitte Australia, what advice would you give students looking to find employment after graduating?

It is important to be prepared, and to be consistent. My advice is that you actively keep your resume and LinkedIn profiles up to date. As soon as you begin volunteering in a new role, gain an extra responsibility at work, or develop a new skill, add these to your resume and your LinkedIn profile.

Create goals for yourself about where you want to be, and put yourself out there. Be courageous to step out of your comfort zone and apply for roles you may not think you are ready for. You will be surprised what can happen, and what you may learn. Utilise your resources, and the networks you have. Every family member, friend, teacher and colleague is part of your network, so don't be afraid to reach out for support. Many people are truly happy to help. You may feel awkward during your first video interview, but learn from that experience, and you will feel much more comfortable when you do your next one.

Finally, stay positive. Be as optimistic as you can during this process. Though it is difficult, never take a rejection personally. Learn from the experience. Use this lesson to your advantage, and you can achieve anything. Do your best and God will do the rest.

Looking back on your time at Salesian, what experiences do you most value?

During my early years at Salesian, I was advised to make the most of my time at high school. Looking back now, I am delighted that I took this on board, because there are so many meaningful experiences that are wonderful to reminisce about now.

I truly value the friendships that I formed at Salesian. We had the opportunity to see each other every day, and create great

memories. As the years went on, our cohort grew stronger, and experiencing the challenges of VCE together built relationships that have stood the test of time. We still hang out today, continuing to build these friendships that are so valuable. The positive and jubilant atmosphere at our Five Year Reunion spoke to the fact that our experiences at Salesian are highly valued by all.

I also value the opportunity to have been able to learn from such inspiring teachers and staff. It was a privilege to have their support and wisdom every day.

What have been the most important lessons you've learnt since graduating?

Always keep learning. There are always ways that we can keep improving ourselves, in all aspects of life. Learning is so important to give us the ability to handle life's challenges, especially today, when things are evolving so quickly. We should make the best effort to learn how to be better at our job, to better understand our personal finances, to pursue that hobby we have always meant to make time for.

Setting goals for yourself is also vital. Create goals that span short, medium, and long-term periods. A great concept is to make your goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound). Having this structure helps guide you to where you want to be, and aids with motivation.

Always value the relationships that you have, maintain your morals and principles, and be true to yourself. Life becomes easier when you have others who believe in you, and when you can believe in yourself.

Finally, I'd like to reiterate a quote that I once presented at Salesian, that I continue to believe in. "Mistakes are painful, but as time goes by, they become a collection of experiences called lessons. Live life, and embrace life lessons."



BUILDING FOR A CAUSE

Nikita Rodrigues
Publications and Communications Officer

The bushfires that ravaged Australia in early 2020 were some of the most devastating on record, setting millions of acres ablaze. More than one billion animals perished, causing immeasurable damage to Australia's unique ecosystem.

One of the worst hit townships in Victoria was the coastal town of Mallacoota, in the Gippsland region. The town of Mallacoota is now finding its feet again, with citizens hard at work rebuilding their livelihoods. However, with countless trees burnt to a cinder, a challenge now lies in providing safe spaces for native wildlife to nest and breed.

Inspired to help, Mr Craig Abernethy set our Design and Technology and PreCal students to the task of building bird nesting boxes for Mallacoota. Students compiled a proposal document detailing the benefits of these boxes and the materials needed to construct boxes that would withstand all weather conditions to safely house local birds. Students sourced non-toxic materials and built two full scale prototypes before beginning construction, incorporating sloped lids to shelter wildlife, drainage systems and carefully measured entrances to accommodate all species of birds.

By mid-April our students had constructed 90 bird boxes, ready to be delivered to Mallacoota. Year 9 student Oliver Arnott greatly valued the experience of building these bird boxes.

"I enjoyed working on a project that was for a good cause; to help birds who are now homeless due to the devastating summer bushfires. I also really enjoyed building the boxes from scratch. It was great to watch this project come together. These nesting boxes are very important as they provide birds with places to breed. For example, the native bird species of Red-Rumped Parrots are now struggling to find trees to nest and lay their eggs in. Lending this species a helping hand with our bird boxes allows this species to keep breeding, ensuring that they do not become extinct."

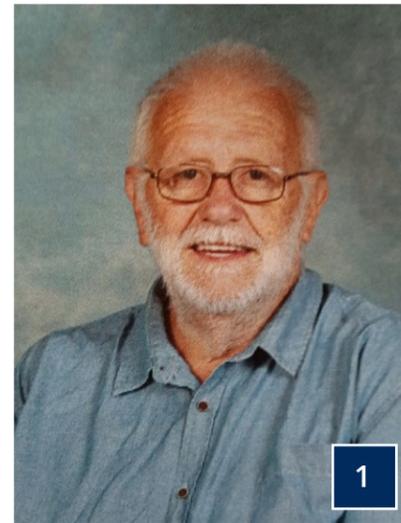
Head of Design and Technology, Mr Craig Abernethy, was heartened by



our students' enthusiastic approach to this project.

"I was pleased to see different forms of learning happening throughout the construction of the bird boxes. This project was completed by more than 30 schools throughout Victoria, and it was great to hear that Salesian College produced the largest number of bird boxes. The boys demonstrated critical thinking throughout the project, asking several insightful questions such as, 'How will the birds be able to reach the exit hole of the boxes when they are nesting?' and 'What will stop other predators entering the boxes and eating the hatching eggs?' This was an excellent learning experience for us, and we enjoyed the challenge. I would like to thank teachers Mr Kim Beurs, Mr Robert Marley, Mr Raffaele Battista, Mr Nicholas Place, Mr Daniel Place and Mr Bob Synadinos for their enthusiastic involvement in this project."

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS



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- Barry Parnell** Salesian College Chadstone was saddened to learn of the passing of Barry Parnell (Class of 1964) on 17 March 2020. Barry was co-founder of the Salesian Old Boys' Cricket Club and Inaugural President of Salesian Old Boys' Association at Chadstone. Barry maintained a strong connection with his Salesian classmates, with whom he reunited each November for over 50 years. Class of 1962 past student Mike Henry reflects; "Barry was a unique gentleman, intelligent, adventurous and above all else, genuine. A man with a big heart and a big legacy to fill." Our thoughts and prayers are with Barry's wife Trish, his four daughters, family and friends at this difficult time. Rest in peace, Barry.
- Simon Menz (Class of 2003) married Chloe Hapke** on 7 March 2020 in South Yarra, followed by a Reception at Boatrocker Brewery.
- We congratulate Teacher Angela Liyanage and her partner Sam Jones** on their engagement. Sam proposed to Angela on 6 January 2020, atop a Ferris wheel in Canada.
- Head of Information Services, Bonnie Hu and her husband Yihai Xie** welcomed the birth of their second child, Claire Wanyi Xie on 30 December 2019.
- Learning Support Officer Kat Barnett and Sean Kelson** celebrated their wedding on 29 November 2019 at Linley Estate in Kilsyth.
- Teachers Daniel and Ashley Campisano** welcomed their first child, Sebastian on 16 April 2020.
- College Counsellor Timothy Swayn and his wife Amanda** welcomed Maximilian David Swayn on 23 March 2020.



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