

NIAGARA CATHOLIC 6TH ANNUAL DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Niagara Catholic is proud to honour three very distinct Distinguished Alumni, who were honoured at our 6th Annual Distinguished Alumni Lunch on at the Catholic Education Centre today.

One has devoted her life to serving the Lord in some of the most impoverished places in the world. One is a physiotherapist and philanthropist serving her community. And one is a peacekeeper who is now leading a new generation of Canadian military. Father Paul MacNeil, Chair of the Board, remarked on the unique ways each recipient lives their life according to Gospel teachings.

“As we conclude Catholic Education Week, it’s wonderful to be able to reflect on the very different ways these three individuals walk in the footsteps of Christ,” said Father Paul MacNeil, Chair of the Board. *“Sister Caroline Sneek, Dr. Tania Mannella and Warrant Officer Robert Morningstar are shining example of service before self, and, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am honoured to congratulate them as 2018 recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Award.”*

Director of Education John Crocco called Sr. Sneek, Dr. Mannella and Warrant Officer Morningstar individuals who represent the very best in Catholic education.

“Today, I am proud to recognize three truly impressive individuals who exemplify the very best in Catholic education,” said Director of Education John Crocco. *“Each is very accomplished in their own right, and they exemplify the Catholic Graduate Expectations and Catholic Social Teachings. They, along with the recipients from our previous years, represent the best of the best of Catholic education. On behalf of all Niagara Catholic students and staff, I congratulate Sister Caroline, Dr. Tania Mannella and Warrant Officer Rob Morningstar for their continued outstanding contribution to the communities they serve.”*

A biography of each recipient is attached.

Niagara Catholic provides excellence in Catholic education to approximately 22,000 students throughout Niagara; from Kindergarten through graduation.

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Dr. Tania Mannella, Saint Paul Catholic High School Class of 1996

Dr. Tania Mannella was born and raised in Niagara Falls, attending Notre Dame Catholic Elementary School and Saint Paul Catholic High School, before attending Queen's University and the University of Buffalo, where she obtained her Doctorate of Physiotherapy.

As a practicing physiotherapist, Tania works with a multidisciplinary team of doctors and staff to help patients improve their lives. Her colleagues respect and value her originality, respect for diversity and integrity, and she inspires excellence in those around her by encouraging them to grow and share in a professional working environment. Tania leads by example, regularly taking courses to better herself both personally and professionally, and adopts a holistic approach by learning from a diverse range of opportunities and experiences.

In an age where house calls are rare for anyone other than palliative patients, Tania recently helped an elderly patient deal with pain from a mastectomy. Rather than have the woman struggle to visit her clinic, Tania travelled to the woman's home to provide treatments, ensuring that the woman had the care she needed in the comfort of her own home. Tania continues to do pro bono work in special circumstances.

Tania is a devoted wife, mother and parishioner at St. Patrick Roman Catholic Church in Niagara Falls. As she does in her work life, Tania leads by example at home. Her children see her work hard at her job and then come home to focus on her family and enjoy life. Tania is generous with her time as a volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club of Niagara, and participates in a number of other charitable events in Niagara. She also runs a running club to inspire people to become more active, fit and healthy.

Master Warrant Officer Robert Morningstar, Denis Morris Catholic High School Class of 1988

Master Warrant Officer Robert Morningstar was born in St. Catharines, and attended St. John Catholic Elementary School and Denis Morris Catholic High School before joining the military upon graduation in 1988.

While serving at CFB Petawawa as a member of the Royal Canadian Artillery, Rob was deployed with the 2nd Regiment Royal Canadian Horse Artillery with the United Nations' Disengagement Force in Nicosia, Cyprus as part of Operation Snowgoose. He wasn't home long before he was deployed with the Royal Canadian Dragoon Battle Group as part of the Mortar troop in Visoko, Yugoslavia as part of Operation Cavalier.

Nearly a decade later, Rob found himself in another global hotspot, as a Training NCO for the Canadian peacekeeping mission during Operation DANACA in Syria, and was again deployed overseas in 2007 as the Reconnaissance Sergeant for the Artillery Battery during combat operations in the Panjwai District in Afghanistan. He returned to Afghanistan in 2010; this time as the Technical Warrant Officer for the Artillery Battery in Kandahar City with Joint Task Force 1-10, led by the 1st Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment.

Returning to Canada, Rob focused on learning French and was posted to the College Militaire Royal in Quebec as a Facilitator of the Intermediate Leadership Program. He is currently at the Royal Military College in Kingston, where he is B Division Sergeant-Major.

Rob has a wife and four children aged nine to 23. In November, he returned to his roots at St. John to address students about his love for his country and his time in service as a peacekeeper during the Remembrance Day service, assuring students that God has a plan for them. He has also spoken at St. Mark and St. Joseph Catholic Elementary Schools where his nephew, niece and children attend school.

Sister Caroline Sneek, Notre Dame College School Class of 1982

Sr. Caroline attended St. Michael and St. Elizabeth Catholic Elementary Schools, and Notre Dame College School. She then took a Health Science Course at Niagara College before entering the Sacred Heart of Jesus Convent in Welland in 1983. She took her First Religious Profession in 1986 and her Perpetual Profession in 1992.

In 1988, when her Congregation decided to go to the Philippines to open a new mission there, she volunteered to go. In the Philippines, she began working among the urban poor, and to promote vocations, in order to ensure continuity to the Congregation's work among the urban poor.

Over the past 32 years in the Philippines, about 300 young women have entered the Congregation and have received training for the Sisterhood. Of these, 66 have reached their First Religious Profession. The others, with the training they have received, have become good Christian citizens of Filipino society, lay collaborators in the order's apostolate among the poor.

In response to the increasing number of abandoned and uneducated children among the urban poor, the Congregation established an orphanage and a Catholic school, in Silang, Cavite, in 1999, and two charity Day Care Centres in Cebu, in 2005, and in Cabusao, Camarines Sur, in 2016.

With the growing number of Filipina Sisters, the Congregation desired to expand and to reach out in service to the poor in India. For this purpose, Sr. Caroline was sent to India in 2001. By 2005, the mission was opened there. At present, India has 20 Indian Sisters and the Congregation renders its service to the abandoned lepers. Sr. Caroline is there at this moment, training the Indian young women for the Sisterhood and ministering to the lepers.