“When our alumni leave Notre Dame, they don’t want to leave Notre Dame behind. They want Notre Dame to be a part of their lives wherever they are.”

— Dolly Duffy

Notre Dame ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AT 150
Charting a New Direction

BY JOSH STORE, ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The first meeting of the Notre Dame Alumni Association took place on June 23, 1868, in the office of Rev. William Corby, C.S.C., the then-president of the still very young University of Notre Dame. A group of Notre Dame graduates attending Commencement had gathered to form a new organization: “the Associated Alumni of the University of Notre Dame.”

Those assembled chose officers — including “senior” and “post” — and drafted a constitution. The second paragraph of that founding document proclaimed: “The object of the association is defined to be: To preserve and strengthen the common tie that binds us to each other and alma mater, by means of yearly reunions and by literary correspondence.”

As the Notre Dame Alumni Association — today a department within University Relations with a team of 38 staff members — celebrates 150 years of bringing the Notre Dame family together, the association is taking a fresh look at itself while staying true to its early mission. Through its strategic planning process, appropriately titled “Re-Envisioning,” the association is creating new programming to connect alumni and friends and meet their evolving needs and interests. (Note that being an alumnus is not a requirement.)

In 2017, the association partnered with Huron Consulting to take an objective look at its work and organization, guided by feedback from the Notre Dame family. Re-Envisioning was the association’s first strategic review in more than a decade, and included interviews, focus groups and surveys with its more than 25,000 alumni, parents and friends.

As part of Re-Envisioning, the association updated the mission statement to clearly articulate its modern purpose and audience: “For our alumni, parents, and friends, we strengthen bonds to Notre Dame and each other; help them to thrive in faith, service, learning, and work; and inspire them to act as forces for good in their communities and the world.”

The new initiatives will enable alumni and friends to more easily connect with each other and the University, allow them to volunteer in a variety of ways and provide them with new resources for professional networking and lifelong learning.

During the planning work, the association benefited from the insights of a steering committee of University leaders that included John Affleck-Graves, executive vice president; Tom Burish, provost; Lou Nuzzi, vice president for University Relations; Rev. Austin Collins, C.S.C., the religious superior of Holy Cross priests and brothers at Notre Dame; John McGreevy, dean of the College of Arts and Letters; David Bailey, vice president for the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Research; Linda Costas, director of talent and engagement for Human Resources; Bob Cronin and Dick Nusbaum, former presidents of the Alumni Board; Dolly Duffy, executive director of the Alumni Association; and Bill Gangloff, senior marketing and communications director with the Alumni Association.

“We are blessed with some of the most vibrant and engaged alumni and friends of any university in the world,” Duffy says. “We don’t have to ignite their passion for Notre Dame as they are hungry for more from the University. They want us to unveil new ways to live out our mission.”

That is especially true with the University’s young alumni.

The Re-Envisioning survey data shows that young alumni are more interested in engaging with Notre Dame than almost any other demographic group, including other generations of alumni, parents and friends. They want to mentor and be mentored. They want to help in the classroom. They want to lead Notre Dame clubs and other organizations.

“This flies in the face of what we thought we were going to find — and what is felt at many other institutions,” Duffy says. “Our challenge is to figure out how to engage them in ways that resonate and fit into their changing lives.

The research also revealed a growing interest by alumni for the association to foster more connections professionally and to provide more opportunities for lifelong learning that take advantage of the extensive knowledge and expertise of University faculty and researchers.

“When our alumni leave Notre Dame, they don’t want to leave Notre Dame behind,” Duffy says. “They want Notre Dame to be a part of their lives wherever they are.”

A sample of the association’s new initiatives are included on page NDA465.
NDW: What’s the best part of your work with the Notre Dame Alumni Association 10 years ago as associate director. In 2011, she was appointed the executive director and associate vice president for University Relations. Duffy oversees communications, marketing, finance, technology and alumni affinity groups, as well as the professional, academic, spiritual and service programs for the association. She and her husband, Dan Fangman ‘84 M.B.A., owned and operated Archison Products in Archison, Kansas, and grew it substantially over 17 years before selling it and moving to South Bend with their five children. As the Notre Dame Alumni Association celebrates its 150th year, NDWorks had some questions for the woman at the helm.

NDW: What’s the best part of your job as executive director?  

DD: Without a doubt, it’s the people. They say that Notre Dame attracts a certain type of person, and our staff at the Alumni Association is a reflection of that. They are dedicated, honest, warm and without ego. It’s a pleasure to work alongside them every day.

And then there are the thousands of volunteer leaders I get to interact with on a daily basis. These alumni, parents and friends give up hundreds of hours of their own time each year to lead our Notre Dame clubs, classes and groups. Their dedication to and love for the University is unparalleled. They are a constant source of inspiration and motivation for all of us at the Alumni Association.

NDW: What’s the most special moment you’ve been a part of at the Alumni Association?

DD: I’ve been lucky enough to be there for so many great Notre Dame moments, including a very recent one. I was with our women’s basketball team in Spokane and Columbus as they won the national title. But if I had to pick one, it would have to be the days following the passing of Father Ted. The experience of being at the funeral and especially that long, cold walk to the cemetery with our students lining the path is something I’ll never forget. But the other thing that sticks with me is the stories. To a person, everyone I talked to — staff members, alumni, subway alumni — in the days and weeks after his death had their own Father Ted story of a small act of kindness or a chance meeting. I came away with an entirely new appreciation for how deeply and broadly he touched the lives of so many in our Notre Dame family.

NDW: What’s the biggest misconception about the Alumni Association?

DD: That’s an easy one: That you need to be a graduate to engage with us. With a few exceptions, our programs and initiatives are open to anyone who loves Notre Dame and wants to connect with other members of the Notre Dame family. Some of our most successful Notre Dame clubs are led by and in some cases made up almost entirely of folks who never went to school here. That’s why, unlike most colleges, we don’t refer to them as “alumni clubs.” Our mandate is to celebrate and strengthen our shared love of Notre Dame, and we invite all parents, friends and staff to join us in doing so.

NDW: What sets Notre Dame’s Alumni Association apart in higher education?

DD: When I talk to executive directors of alumni associations around the country, they say the same thing: They don’t raise money. Our colleagues in the Development Office handle fundraising and do an incredible job. They don’t need us getting in the way. That allows us to focus purely on engaging our alumni and friends, and I give the University so much credit for investing in an organization with that sole focus.

Interview courtesy of Kevin Brennan, Alumni Association.

A conversation with...

DOLLY DUFFY, executive director

It’s very typical to see Dolly Duffy, executive director of the Alumni Association, surrounded by alumni at a big University event. In this case, she poses with her classmates from the Class of 1984 at a recent Reunion.

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NDAA BY THE NUMBERS

* in 2017

270 NOTRE DAME CLUBS worldwide

3,640 ALUMNI & FRIENDS attended REUNION*

580 INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS through Travelin’ Irish program*

8,900 FANS ATTENDED FOOTBALL FRIDAYS at the Eck Visitors Center, home of NDAA*

8,000 ALUMNI/FRIENDS attended UND CELEBRATIONS with faculty/staff speakers*

70,000 SUBSCRIBERS TO FAITHND (daily Gospel, reflection by ND family, prayer by Holy Cross priest)
NDAA identifies 5 AREAS for expansion

As the 150th anniversary of the Notre Dame Alumni Association approached, the organization launched the Re-Envisioning strategic planning initiative. As part of Re-Envisioning, it had Huron Consulting survey alumni, parents and friends and University community partners. The research led its leadership to identify five strategic areas of focus to implement over the next five years. The association has introduced some programming in each of the five areas, and there’s more coming.

Student and Young Alumni Programming
Young Alumni Board: A 16-person board will launch in July with a focus on strengthening bonds between young alumni and Notre Dame. The board, representing alumni under 32, will build relationships with students and assist them with the transition to life as young alumni. The board will also create and promote a broad array of initiatives to engage young alumni, including leadership opportunities within Notre Dame clubs.

Life Beyond The ND Bubble: When surveyed, students, rectors and the Office of Student Affairs identified life skills education — budgeting, cooking, networking, financial planning, etc. — as a need for students. That was the impetus for February’s “Life Beyond The ND Bubble” event for seniors and graduating graduate students. More than 400 students gathered to hear a lineup of speakers that included former Notre Dame football coach Lou Holtz, finance professor Carl Ackermann, South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg and others.

Celebrating Traditions: The survey also revealed a small, yet noticeable decline in the appreciation of Notre Dame traditions by alumni 25 years and younger. This led the association to develop a traditions-themed book to welcome new Notre Dame students and parents to the University each fall. The first book will mail in late summer. During Welcome Weekend last fall, students received a “bucket list” poster of traditions to experience before they graduate.

Alumni Education
Online Learning Community: In the survey, retired and mid-career alumni identified a high desire for lifelong learning. Younger alumni, meanwhile, indicated an interest in brief video content, primarily focused on career and professional development.

The association is taking these interests into consideration as it, with the assistance of the Office of the Provost, develops a new online learning community where visitors will find existing faculty lectures, original learning programming, research news and career and professional development content.

Local Community Networking
Clubs Governance: Notre Dame has one of the most prestigious models for alumni and friends engagement of any university. There are 270 Notre Dame clubs around the world and all are guided by consistent systems that include officers, similar programs and initiatives (using the “6Cs” — camaraderie, Catholicism, Christian spirituality, communications, community service, continuing education and current students) and a points reward system that recognizes club success annually.

In the coming year, the association will review the governance model and reward system to ensure the collective goals of the association and the clubs are being met.

Career and Professional Development
IrishCompass: Last August, the association and the Center for Career Development launched IrishCompass, a robust, online professional community for alumni and students. The more than 9,700 current registrants use it to tap into the Notre Dame network in a wide variety of ways — from networking and mentorship to a private job board (for alumni and graduate students) to industry group discussions.

Digital Expansion
We Are ND: The Alumni Association launched a storytelling platform (weare.nd.edu) to celebrate all the ways our ND family members are living up to Father Edward Sonn’s call to be “one of the most powerful means of doing good.” We Are ND, publishing online each Monday, tells stories of Domes doing good in the world.

Spirituality Engagement:

“Notre Dame was the 13th school I visited on the athletic recruiting tour,” says Bob Mundry, ‘76, Director of Athletics. “When I graduated from Notre Dame in 1976, I was keenly aware of the wonderful experience I had been afforded. I was a first-generation college student, and in my time here had been taught to think differently, write carefully, and — just as significantly — I was encouraged to share my gifts with others. My decision to return to Notre Dame after seven years of teaching was an effort to ‘pay it forward.’ It’s incredibly exciting to welcome classes of such great talent and heart to this special place and I’m grateful to have that opportunity in my work.”

LE SHANE SADDLER, ’94
Associate Director of Athletics

After his academic and football career at Notre Dame, LeShane Saddler taught high school in Iowa for ten years. After completing a master’s degree in education and applying for principal jobs, Saddler had a last-minute opportunity for a position in the admissions office. “I’d had a wonderful experience as a student athlete and coming back has been everything I expected it to be — the excitement of being on campus, the opportunity to work with young people, to grow in my faith life, faith and family brought me back, and admissions is the perfect spot.”

JOEL FLINT, ’11
Advisor to the Vice President for University Relations

“I returned to Notre Dame as an intern in Fighting Irish Media in 2011, never imagining I’d still be here seven years later. I’ve worked in Athletics and University Relations and collaborated with many departments across campus. I continue to be moved by the quality of people this University attracts. It’s inspiring to be surrounded each day by colleagues who believe so strongly in the University’s values and mission. I’m grateful for the opportunity to serve my alma mater and continue to grow personally, professionally and in faith.”

MISSY CONBOY, ’82
Deputy St. Athletic Director

“Notre Dame was the 13th school I attended. Raised as an army brat, comfortable with a nomadic existence, I never anticipated making a career or a home in the South Bend community. Following two years of a first job in Kansas City, I accepted a job offer in Athletics, anticipating a two-year stint. I was off by 29 years! While I tell recruits that ND is ‘a great place to be, and a great place to be from,’ I hope they will become ambassadors, and my ND degree opens many doors, but the people, the place, and the clear sense of purpose cannot be replicated.”

BOB MUNDY, ’76
Director of Athletics

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SANDRA GARCIA, ’09
Human Resources Consultant

Sandra Garcia’s fiancé, George West ’00, started working at the University before she did, initially in Campus Safety/Game Day Operations, today in athletics advancement for development—he played football under Charlie Weiss, Garcia notes. “I saw the values, and the family friendly atmosphere,” she says, which encouraged her to apply for jobs herself. She joined the University as a human resources consultant in 2013. As an employee, she adds, “You learn to appreciate all the work that goes into the great experience we had as students. It makes us more appreciative. It feels like home, no matter which side you’re on.”

DRAWN BACK HOME: A FEW OF THE 888 UNDERGRADUATE AND 470 GRADUATE ALUMNI WHO WORK ON CAMPUS

BARBARA JOHNSTON
PHOTO PROVIDED
Family Volunteer Camp

BY JOSH STOWE, ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Imagine using your vacation to make a difference by performing service work. That’s the idea behind the Alumni Association’s 19th annual Family Volunteer Camp, which starts later this month. Alumni and their families will come back to campus to lend a hand in the greater South Bend community.

Each year, the camp provides an opportunity for alumni to teach their children about the University’s mission of serving others with a variety of hands-on service projects. Families live on campus for a week and work with some 27 community partners. The work can vary from preparing lunch for guests at Hope Ministries to sorting donations at the Food Bank of Northern Indiana to helping South Bend Venues Parks & Arts to remove invasive species along trails at Rum Village Park.

The camp will cover three weeks this year. The first week runs June 24-29; the second, July 8-13; and the third, July 15-20.

Because the camps have become so popular, participants are chosen by a lottery. More than 800 people applied in January for this year’s camp, which will include 375 participants from more than 100 families. Registration for this year’s camp is closed.

When participants aren’t working, they can enjoy staying in residence halls and participating in a variety of social activities such as bowling, a family trivia night and swimming at St. Joseph’s Lake.

People of Notre Dame

Meet Christa LeeVan, Travel Program Director, NDAA

BY BIANCA ALMADA ’16

Christa LeeVan has one of the most enviable jobs on campus. As travel director for the Notre Dame Alumni Association, she manages more than 40 Travelin’ Irish trips each year. The travel program offers alumni and friends the chance to visit amazing locations around the world with other members of the Fighting Irish family. A sampling of this year’s trips includes a train journey of the Irish family. A sampling of this year’s trips includes a train journey of the

Europe.

Iceland and along the Rhine River in 

Turkey, Italy, Ireland, Alaska, Rome, 

Georgia, and the scenery was breathtaking, almost otherworldly,” LeeVan says. “The group of travelers really bonded on the trip and this made the adventure even more special. If you plan to visit Australia in the future, don’t leave out New Zealand — the travel distance is worth taking some extra time to see them both.”

There’s a lot that goes into planning the excursions.

“I work with eight travel operators who craft different types of trips for alumni associations,” LeeVan says. “I try to cover every continent, a variety of price points, and to have a range of activity levels available. Some trips are more leisurely, while others offer more adventurous activities. I also take weather and scheduling into account and seek input from current travelers. We have a few couples who have been on more than 20 trips with us, so I try to stay a step ahead of them!”

LeeVan says she loves the camaraderie that develops within the Travelin’ Irish groups.

“Other groups tend to notice us because we are always having fun and the connection of the Notre Dame family is so evident,” she says. “I learn a lot from the travelers and love being in their company for these adventures.”

Sound like a lot of fun? Travelin’ Irish trips are open to alumni and friends, which includes faculty, staff and families. Visit my.nd.edu/travel for an up-to-date listing of trips for 2018 and beyond.

University Catering prepares 22,253 meals for Reunion Weekend.

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