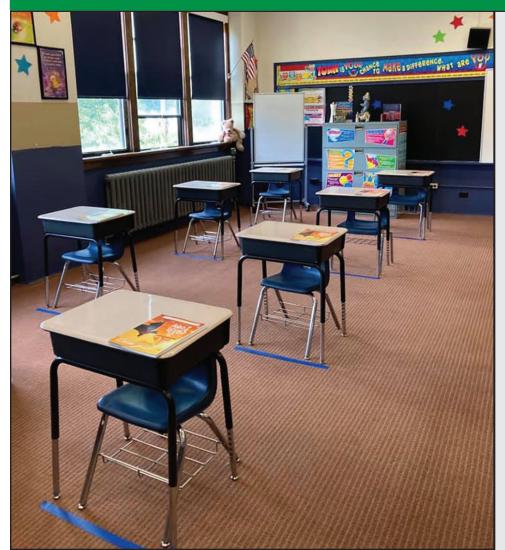
The Catholic Light **DIOCESE OF SCRANTON**

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2020



A fourth grade classroom at Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton is set-up to show physical distancing measures put in place to protect the health of students and faculty.

Diocesan schools preparing for safe return to in-person instruction

SCRANTON – In just a matter of weeks, students will return to Catholic schools for in-person instruction across the Diocese of Scranton

As students resume classes five days a week, the experience will be different at both the elementary and high school level with numerous safety and health protocols being put into place.

"We have put together a comprehensive plan that, above all else, prioritizes the best interest, safety and health of all students, faculty, staff and school families," Jason Morrison, Chief Executive Officer and Diocesan Secretary of Education, said. "We are excited to welcome our students back to the classroom to provide the academically excellent and faith-filled experience that our families have come to expect."

The last time students were in class was March 13. As cases of COVID-19 began to spike in Pennsylvania, Governor Tom Wolf ordered all schools closed as a precaution. Catholic schools in the diocese quickly transitioned to distance learning the following school day.

The back-to-school plan is being spearheaded by a Diocesan Health and Safety committee, which is comprised of diocesan and local school administration and clergy along with medical professionals

with expertise in pediatrics, healthcare administration and quality assurance. Each school has also created its own committee to help implement and guide the reopening process in its respective building.

"Catholic schools are inherently a partnership between the parent and the school. This is never more important than at this time and an even greater partnership is now needed," Catholic Schools Superintendent Kristen Donohue said. "Each day will actually begin with parents monitoring their child's health. With parental cooperation, we will be able to keep the schools open and safe."

Some of the key components of the Diocese of Scranton's reopening plan include the use of cohorts, physical distancing, masks and enhanced cleaning procedures.

Cohorts, or small groups of students in the same grade, have been recommended by many health organizations as an environmental measure to prevent the spread of disease. Students will remain together for the entire day, including attending lunch, recess and classes as a cohort.

Continued on Page 3

Religious education programs taking shape for the fall

Diocesan Office for Parish Life offering Faith Alive! platform to parishes

HAWLEY - For the last decade, Mary Kennedy has been heavily involved in coordinating the faith formation program at Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Peace parish in Hawley. Due to COVID-19, planning this year's religious education classes has been unlike anything she has ever experienced.

"It was definitely a daunting task," Kennedy said.

With approximately 150 kids in her parish program, Kennedy is just beginning the registration process at this time and hopes to begin classes in October. While the process is beginning a little later than normal, the big question she has faced all along has been how do you do it safely?

"We are looking to do a hybrid model," she explained, saying elementary students will most likely participate in synchronous lessons virtually while middle school students will hopefully be able to attend faith formation classes safely in person.

"I love the idea of bringing faith formation into the home, especially in those formation years of elementary school. It is so important," she added.

To assist religious education directors across the Diocese of Scranton, the Diocesan Office for Parish Life is partnering with Faith Alive! powered by Edmodo, a web-based learning management system, and encouraging parishes to consider using it in any way they choose.

"Parishes have so many different variables in them: their location, the number of students, the room they have to hold classes and their ability to sanitize and disinfect after classes have ended, so we knew we had to have options for them to explore," Jacki Douglas, Diocesan Director of Word and Lifelong Faith Formation, said.

Since March, Douglas has been exploring different platforms for religious education and meeting with various publishers. While recognizing that some parishes might be looking to return to in-person faith formation classes while following all guidelines from the Diocese, Centers for Disease Control and

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A sampling of various religious education materials used by parishes in the Diocese of Scranton.

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DIOCESE OF SCRANTON MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Catholic community of the Diocese of Scranton, are called through Baptism to imitate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. In union with Our Holy Father, the Pope, we proclaim the Gospel faithfully, celebrate the sacraments joyfully, and boldly promote life, justice and peace in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.

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Publisher:

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L. Bishop of Scranton

Secretary for Communications/Editor-in-Chief: Eric M. Deabill

Managing Editor:

Kevin G. McDonnell

Advertising Coordinator: Eileen Manley

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With opening day approaching, teachers energized to return to the classroom

KINGSTON – For the last 34 years, Janet Lyons has been shaping the hearts and minds of Catholic elementary school students at Good Shepherd Academy. With diocesan schools preparing to reopen soon for in-person instruction five days a week, she is excited to return to the classroom.

"I really, truly miss the children. It'll be nice to get back to some kind of normalcy," the veteran educator said.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Lyons feels the safety procedures put into place by the diocese will help mitigate any potential risks of the virus.

"I do believe they're in the safest place they could be. They're like my own children. As a teacher, you do treat them like that, you look at them like that. You protect them and they will be protected in this school," she added.

Lyons teaches second grade at the Luzerne County school with her colleague, Jennifer Jones, who is also excited to get back to in-person instruction.

"The kids thrive on routine. I'm excited to make eye contact and there is nothing like that conversation one-onone with somebody, face-to-face and just making the kids feel back to normal and comfortable," Jones said. "It's an opportunity to get back to teaching our faith and living our faith with these kids side-by-side. We always made that connection through distance learning but now I feel it's a better opportunity to really embrace our Catholic identity and our Catholic faith and do what we love."

The last time teachers were in the classroom was Friday, March 13. On that day, Governor Tom Wolf ordered all schools to close as the coronavirus began to spread in Pennsylvania. On the following Monday, March 16, the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System launched its distance learning initiative.

Five months later, Jones, a parent of two children herself, will be sending both kids back to Catholic Schools in the diocese in addition to being back in the classroom herself. Both teachers and students will need to wear masks and desks will be physically distanced from one another.

"I think everything is a teachable moment. This is an opportunity to teach selflessness and showing the kids that these small sacrifices that we're making are going to pay off for everyone and it really goes back to our Catholic identity and the golden rule – Love God and love others – and you do what you can to show your love for others in small, selfless ways," Jones added.

At La Salle Academy in Jessup, the teachers came together in person last week for a professional development day in the school's gymnasium. With each teacher seated at their own table, the educators were learning how to use technology most

effectively.



Shaina Dougherty, math teacher and technology coordinator at La Salle Academy in Jessup, helps lead a professional development program for her fellow teachers on Aug. 5, 2020. The session, which is one of three planned before school reopens, focused on ways to use technology more effectively. (Photos/Eric Deabill)

Furniture has been moved around inside the library at Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre to add additional desks for larger classroom space if needed. Teachers and administrators from all school buildings have been measuring their spaces to ensure physical distancing can be achieved.



"I really feel that we have been afforded a lot of opportunities with the Diocese of Scranton in the years that I've worked here at least, for having those professional development sessions that are enhancing our abilities to teach the most effective practices," teacher Shaina Dougherty said.

Since March, Dougherty said she has missed the 'noise' of her classroom.

"A lot of people that aren't teachers may see that 'noise' as noise, a lot of loud kids in a class. For me, it's all about creating a community and allowing every voice to be heard and sometimes out of that noise comes incredible things," she added.

Cody Opalka, a social studies teacher at Holy Redeemer High School, agrees that there is a special energy behind teaching and welcomes the engagement that goes along with in-person instruction.

"I'm excited and I'm positive about making it work," Opalka stressed.

When reflecting on what the first day of school will be like this year, a smile came over his face.

"I've had a lot of first days. This one is going to be different so the butterflies are going to be there like always but it's going to be a good different. It's going to be about making it safe for the students, making sure they have what they need on that first day, that reassurance, so it's going to be more of a comforting kind of entry," he said.

In addition to in-person instruction, families in the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System also expressed a desire for a virtual option for instruction.

The Diocesan Virtual Academy will provide those families with the opportunity to begin their instruction completely online, or to transition into the Diocesan Virtual Academy, if desired, during the year.

Both options have the mission of providing an academically excellent and faith-filled experience for students.

Ben Tolerico, principal of Holy Cross High School, says if parents choose a virtual education, their students will remain an important part of the Catholic school community.

"If a Holy Cross student chooses to take part in the Diocesan Virtual Academy, they're still a part of Holy Cross. If we have any kind of activities, for example a virtual Mass, they would still be a part of that," he said.

Tolerico has spent countless hours over the summer preparing to welcome students back.

"Since May really we have been going non-stop in planning, the changing of plans, trying to figure out the right formula and it has been a lot of work. It has certainly been worthwhile work and it has just been an amazing effort and a team effort all the way throughout the top of the Diocese down to the schools in making sure we are committed to having a quality education in the safest environment possible," Tolerico added.

A life-long educator, Tolerico said since March his teachers have been willing to go above-and-beyond.

"I will never, ever be able to thank them enough for their efforts," he said.

Frequently Asked Questions about the 2020-2021 School Year

Q. What safety measures will schools take to protect students, teachers, administrators and staff?

A. Each school has developed procedures based on the "Five Fundamentals of Sharing Good Health" listed below. To the extent possible, students will remain with a set cohort, usually their homeroom class, stay in one desk, and responsibly manage their own personal items to minimize the sharing of items.

- Daily Temperature Checks: Temperature readings will be required daily for every person entering a school building.
- 2) Promoting Proper Handwashing & Good Hygiene: Proper handwashing and using hand sanitizer will be stressed upon entering and leaving a building or classroom, before and after lunch and at the end of the day. The uniform policy will be altered so that clothes can be laundered daily.
- 3) Physical Distancing Measures: Classroom spacing is being developed to ensure physical distancing. Emphasis will also be placed on distancing in hallways, cafeterias and at recess (if applicable). Access by visitors and volunteers will be limited and only considered when absolutely necessary.
- 4) Masks will be Required: By Order of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, students will be required to wear a mask except when eating or drinking.
- 5) Cleaning and Disinfection: Every school will increase the cleaning of classrooms, common areas and frequently touched items including door handles, light switches, counter tops, etc. There will also be increased disinfection during nightly cleanings.

Q: Will my child's classroom look different?

A. Schools will spread out desks and tables in classrooms as much as possible to achieve safe physical distancing. Some furniture that is not essential to teaching may be removed to enhance usable space. Desks and tables will also be arranged so that they face the same direction. Additionally, some nontraditional classroom space may be utilized.

Q. Will students share school supplies?

A. No. Students will not be able to share school supplies (e.g., books, crayons, technology, etc.), including for such subjects as art and music. For any supplies that still may be shared, like computers, these will be cleaned after every use.

Q. Will the academic program be different this year?

A. All schools will continue to offer the rigorous academic program our students deserve and that parents expect. This year, teachers will take additional time at the beginning of the school year to assess student skills to determine what students are ready for academically as they begin a new school year. This will include the NWEA assessment tool that was used last year. If the assessment data indicate it is necessary, the elementary curriculum may be adjusted in specific grades and schools, as determined by the principal, to prioritize English/Language Arts, Math, and Religion. In addition, instructional time for each class may be adjusted to accommodate the additional time that some health and safety measures may require. In elementary schools, all major subjects will continue to be taught. There may be some adjustments to minor subjects as determined by the principal and planning teams at each school.

Q. Will there be a set schedule for the students who are attending the Diocesan Virtual Academy (DVA)?

A. Yes. Students will be engaged in a set schedule that will consist of a combination of live and recorded instruction from teachers. Live class time will include direct instruction, as well as time for activities and student engagement. Recorded sessions will be 40 minutes and will include the recorded instruction and activities. Assignments, "at-the-bell," and "exit tickets" will be submitted by the end of the recorded class period.

Q. Will my student be able to participate in after school activities or sports with the school in which he/she is enrolled if I select Diocesan Virtual Academy as the method of instruction?

A. Yes. When possible, DVA students may participate in school events and activities at their respective schools outside of the school day. If a student participates in a school related activity, the parent will need to complete the health screening tool prior to attending the activity in-person. DVA students will be eligible for all special recognition, awards, honor, and ceremonies at the school where he/she is enrolled.



For additional Questions and Answers, as well as the guidelines and procedures for reopening schools, visit: www.dioceseofscranton.org/Catholic-Schools

Diocesan schools reopening plan includes masks, cohorts and physical distancing

Continued from Page 1

"If we can keep that smaller group of students together, our individual students are not exposed to as many other children on a given day. If someone gets sick we know what students were near that student or teacher or individual," Dr. April L. Troy, Board Certified Pediatrician and Pediatric Regional Education Coordinator for Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, said. Dr. Troy is a member of the Diocesan Health and Safety Committee and is also a parent with children in the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System.

By order of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, all students, faculty and staff will be required to wear face masks when in school. Masks will be able to be removed for eating and drinking and additional mask breaks will occur at specified times outside, when appropriate physical distancing can occur.

Physical distancing will also be a fundamental practice as students return to school. It will apply not only to the classroom, but also other spaces within the school building, including but not limited to hallways, cafeterias and gyms.

"Every school in the Diocese is already working on moving desks apart and having children face the same way, because we know the risk of transmission is less in those set-ups. Each principal and their administrative support team have been wonderful in coming up with new and innovative ways to use the space inside the schools," Dr. Katherine Lincoln, Wound Care Specialist and Chair of the Clinical Quality Care Committee at Guthrie Hospital, said. Dr. Lincoln is also a parent and member of the Diocesan Health and

Safety Committee.

Even though all schools are expected

to reopen for in-person instruction, some families have expressed a desire for a virtual option for instruction. As a result, the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System is also offering a Diocesan Virtual Academy for the 2020-2021 school year. It will provide families the opportunity to begin their instruction completely online or transition into the DVA, if desired, during the year.

The Diocesan Virtual Academy will include both live and recorded instruction that will follow a set schedule similar to an in-person school day. Parents interested in the DVA were asked to express their interest in that option by last week.

Just like in-person instruction, the Diocesan Virtual Academy will be intentional about the inclusion of a Catholic identity across all grade levels and subject matters. Virtual academy teachers will provide instruction for Virtual Academy students.

"Whether parents have chosen the inperson or virtual option, we will be able to partner with them to ensure their child achieves his or her God-given potential because we know each family and child so well," Morrison said.

"Our smaller environment and assessment tools allow us to deliver a differentiated approach to each child's education," Donohue added. "Our dedicated faculty and administrators know each child personally and will be able to help him or her navigate the challenging nature of this time."

More information on the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System's safety plan for resuming in-person instruction as well as the Diocesan Virtual Academy can be found at www.dioceseofscranton.org.

The diocese's Catholic schools serve students in four high schools and 15 elementary schools.

PECKVILLE – As she welcomed her Holy Cross classmates to their graduation ceremony at Valley View's John Henzes/Veterans Memorial Stadium on July 20, 2020, salutatorian Leslie O'Connor also gave them a mission moving forward.

"Let us all work harder at healing the world than we ever have at anything else in our lives," the Archbald native challenged her peers.

During her speech, O'Connor tackled a difficult topic – the fact that many people refuse to listen to one another and refuse to understand people who have different ideas.

"We surround ourselves solely with those who agree with us and seek to isolate ourselves from those with different points of view. We stigmatize, marginalize, generalize and stereotype those whose beliefs challenge our own without taking the time to learn the realities of these individuals, their situations or the basis for their opinions," O'Connor said.

True to her Catholic faith and what she learned at Holy Cross High School, O'Connor reflected on the life and message of Jesus to inspire her fellow graduates. She said Jesus' message of "uncompromising, indiscriminate love" should be a guiding principle.

"What will produce healthy change, however, is truly putting



Jesus' message into action; loving those who don't love us. Loving everyone. Treating our neighbors as we would want them to treat us. Being willing to spread our message to all and being even more willing to allow all other messages to be spread to us," the Holy Cross salutatorian said. "If we are willing to consider, listen to, and love the beliefs of all people, especially those opposing ourselves, our hearts and our communities will have no room for hate or division, as they shouldn't."

A total of 71 graduates received diplomas at the Commencement ceremony,



Left: Leslie O'Connor delivers the Salutatorian address during the Holy Cross High School graduation ceremony on July 20, 2020.

Above: Graduating seniors sit physically distanced from one another on the football field at Valley View's John Henzes/Veterans Memorial Stadium in Peckville.

Right: Tori Kovalchick delivers the Valedictorian address during the Holy Cross High School graduation ceremony. (Photos/Karin Dorman Images)

which featured students wearing masks and sitting socially distant from each other in chairs on the football field due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Family and friends were able to watch from the stadium seats and dozens of others watched a livestream provided by the school.

During her valedictorian address, Tori Kovalchick said it would be impossible to summarize the experiences of the Holy Cross Class of 2020 with a single story, but emphasized the well-rounded education all of the graduates received.

"What makes our story at

Holy Cross especially unique is our ability to celebrate and explore our Catholic faith each day. We have been afforded the privilege to discern our character while deepening our relationship with God," the Factoryville native said. "We've shared the sacraments as a school community and learned the power of prayer."

Kovalchick added that the Holy Cross educational experience motivated the Class of 2020 to serve God by serving those around them and taught them that genuine discipleship goes far beyond attending Mass on Sundays.



THE CATHOLIC LIGHT •

"It involves treating God's creation and children with respect every day," Kovalchick explained.

Of the 71 Holy Cross graduates, 60 of them will be attending four-year colleges or universities, more than half of which are Catholic colleges or universities. Five other graduates will attend two-year colleges, two will immediately enter the workforce and one plans on entering military service.

The Holy Cross Class of 2020 was awarded 406 scholarships, equating to an amount of \$16,183,079.

Church leaders seek aid for Catholic students in coronavirus relief bill

WASHINGTON (CNS)

- Some of the country's most prominent church leaders appealed to Congressional negotiators to include financial support for families to continue to send their children to Catholic and non-public schools in a coronavirus relief bill currently being negotiated.

Explaining how the deep economic recession caused by the pandemic since March has "made it impossible for many struggling families to continue paying tuition," five cardinals, an archbishop and a bishop called for the aid in an Aug. 5 letter to Republican and Democratic leadership in the House of Representatives and Senate.

The letter, released Aug. 6, implored for "robust" assistance "to ensure that the education needs

of all children are met, including children in Catholic and other nonpublic schools."

Singing the letter were Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York; Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago; Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston; Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston; Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey; and Bishop Michael C. Barber of Oakland, California, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Catholic Education.

The correspondence was the third plea for support in recent weeks by church leaders as Republican and Democratic

congressional leadership and the administration were locked in days of negotiations over specific measures in the relief bill.

House Democrats ushered through a bill in May that contained a broad array of relief measures. Called the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act, or the HEROES Act, the House bill offers a \$3 trillion package, including \$58 billion for grades K-12.

The Republican-led Senate July 27 introduced its stimulus package, Health, Economic Assistance, Liability and Schools, or the HEALS Act, totaling about \$1 trillion. It includes \$70 billion to K-12 schools that open for inperson classes. It would redirect

some coronavirus-relief funding

to school-choice programs, so families can continue to send, or choose to send, their children to nonpublic schools they feel offer the best education for them.

The latest letter is the most recent attempt by church leaders to convince Congress to support families choosing to send their children to non-public schools.

On July 29, Cardinal Dolan, Cardinal O'Malley and Archbishop Gomez made a similar appeal to President Donald Trump and Congress. Their request came in a commentary for the National Catholic Register.

The Aug. 5 letter said the recession had forced 140 Catholic schools to permanently close "and hundreds more are in danger of being unable to open in the fall."

They also noted how each student educated in a Catholic or non-public school saves local school districts "thousands of dollars."

"Nationwide, Catholic schools save state and local government more than \$20 billion annually," the letter said.

Noting that Catholic and nonpublic schools educate about 10% of students nationwide, the prelates requested funding for such schools at the same percentage of the total financial support for public schools in the aid package.

"The aid is essential for ensuring that Catholic and nonpublic schools that want to open for instruction have the means to do so, because families have the ability to send their children to those schools," the letter said.

4

Congratulations Catholic High School Graduates!

Class of 2020

HOLY CROSS

Maille Rose Allardyce Svetlana Anne Baron Katrina Josette Beaver Clara Miriam Bergman Logan Nathaniel Bocker

* Valedictorians

John Peter Hartridge Madison Rose Havirlak Andrew Christopher Healey Camus E. Howie



Jenna Leeanne Bradley Maeve Elizabeth Brostoski Kieran James Burrier Caroline Rose Cadden James Peter Calciano Caleb Timothy Callejas Ashley Rose Capone Kelly Clark Elizabeth JL Cooper Anya Jolie Covaleski Shelby Gabriella Davis Gabriella Rose DiGiulio Eric Michael Dixon Nadiya Stephanie Dobushak Meghan Rose Doherty Camryn L. Domiano Felicia Jean Domiano Kenneth David Francis III Alivia Grace Gallagher Evan Richard Gedrich Timothy B. Gilhooley

Adam Johnson
Fiona Elizabeth Jordan
Matthew R. Kelly
Madelyn Ann Klassner
Michael John Kobierecki
Tori Rose Kovalchick *
Michael Mellen Lee
Joseph P. Lennon
Jordan Christopher Levan
Thomas Jeffrey Liuzzo
James William Marsh



Gabriella Williams

† Salutatorians

Jordan Thomas McAndrew Sarah Catherine Mies Christian Drake Mitchell Kathryn Elizabeth Nealon Angelo Timothy Norella Leahy Patrick O'Connor Leslie Lane O'Connor 🕈 Joseph Patrick Osborne Gabriella Elizabeth Parise Allison Nicole Pavlowski Samantha M. Pykus Molly Elizabeth Repecki Katherine Ann Rogers Joseph J. Rossi Jr. Keelin Ann Schimelfenig **Emily Marie Schultz** Sydney Elizabeth Skrutski Olivia Noelle Smith Mary Margaret Stec Andrew Michael Straka Michaela Georganna Strasburger Ryan Joseph Strony Elizabeth Ann Talbot **Emily Tansley** Alexandra Christen Tomaine Jori Emanuel Vega Kathryn Veronica Walsh Rory Pio Walsh

HOLY REDEEMER

Kimberly Ann Aldrich
Destiny Joy Andes
Joshua John Andrejko
Amanda Armstrong
Anna Elizabeth Brigid Bagnall
Meredythe Chessa Baird
Vanessa Elizabeth Barrett
Cassandra Teresa Benderavich
Caitlin Elizabeth Blaum
Sean Thomas Boland
Alexander Scott Bonk
Jacob Anthony Brennan

Matthew Dinh
Molly Elizabeth Dugan
James Daniel Dunleavy
Emily Ann Duris
Maria Elizabeth Egidio
Caton Fahey
Aidan Joseph Fitz
Jillian Marie Foley
Anthony John Gallis
Ryan Gardjulis
Sonal Garg
Brandon Nicholas Gebenus *
Jacob Rodney Gibbon

Joseph Anthony Delaney



Margaret L. Breznay Aoife Marie Burke John Fredrick Callaghan Rene Elizabeth Caruso Carly Nicole Cavanaugh Ethan John Cegelka Abigail Sarah Charneski Tristan Patrick Chronowski Dana Marie Cichy Joseph Andrew Colavitti Colin Carl Conway Martin James Cryan Casey D'Elia Kasey Lynn Danko Jack Daoud Anarose Keren Davidson

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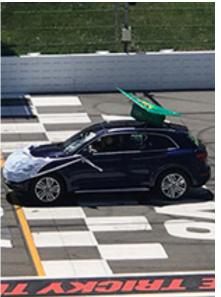
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