

bennieconnection

April 2007 | Alumnae Association Newsletter | College of Saint Benedict

Inspiring Leaders Among Us



Family ski trip to Lake Tahoe. Joan with husband Paul and David. Front row: Blake and Nick.

Joan Vogel Skluzacek '84 celebrated her first year as the Founder, President and Executive Director of the IDEA League on February 28, 2007. Joan's personal investment in the success of the IDEA League is easy to understand.



Nick Skluzacek

Joan's son Nick was diagnosed with Dravet syndrome, but not before his entire family watched him as an active and cheerful toddler start experiencing seizures that became more frequent and severe.

The doctors were at a loss as to why Nick was regressing cognitively, socially and physically. Nick has not spoken a word since he was six years old – that was eight years ago.

Dr. Beverly Wical, a Pediatric Neurologist at Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare in St. Paul properly diagnosed Nick's condition as Dravet syndrome. Dr. Wical describes Dravet syndrome as a "heart-breaking" form of epilepsy. "As the child progresses over early childhood, the family is engaged in an intense war with epilepsy and other symptoms. Part of the heartbreak is that their perfectly normal infant is now a child that they can see has significant development impairment emerging" (by Mark Daly, KARE 11 Extra).

The diagnosis of Nick was the culminating event that threw Joan back into the work force in a professional role. She currently has three

IDEA League

The International Dravet Syndrome Epilepsy Action League, a volunteer-based nonprofit organization, is an international partnership of parents and professionals united in the purpose of promoting research and education for the early diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and cure of Dravet Syndrome, also known as SMEI (Severe Myoclonic Epilepsy of Infancy), and related genetic, febrile, sodium channel epilepsies. Website link to Idea League: www.idea-league.org/

Dravet Syndrome was first described in 1978 by Dr. Charlotte Dravet, a French epileptologist mentored by Dr. Henri Gastaut at the Centre St. Paul in Marseilles.

Together we will find a cure!

children – which are her first priority, David(17) Nick(14) and Blake(10). Her husband, Paul is a pilot and is gone for about half of the month which leaves Joan as the primary parent and caretaker. The entire family supports Joan's leadership with the IDEA League, in fact both David and Blake are very excited about their mom's involvement and support her in her role as Executive Director of the IDEA League. Paul volunteers as the chair of the website and technology committee.

Joan also feels the support of a global community that is the result of her work with the IDEA League which is good for the entire family. This past summer, the entire family

See "Skluzacek" continued on inside.

Sklužacek

continued from cover



ABOVE: Ruby watching over Nick after a seizure. Repeatedly, Ruby has alerted the family when Nick begins to have a seizure, allowing Joan and Paul to spare Nick from dangerous falls.

RIGHT: Blake, Nick and David.



“There is no doubt in my mind the importance of the preparation I received from Saint Ben’s. The College of Saint Benedict played a role in my development – my educational development and my development as a person. Saint Ben’s helped prepare me to deal with adversity, reach out and seek resources in the community, seek out mentorship and BE a mentor. Saint Ben’s helped prepare me for this role – I have an appreciation for that.”

– Joan Vogel Sklužacek '84

attended the first-ever, international conference on Dravet syndrome. Joan was the key organizer of the conference titled, “*Channeling In: Hope For Intractable Genetic Febrile Epilepsies*”, which served its purpose of allowing experts and families from around the world to meet face-to-face for the first time. Families were able to connect, share experiences and learn from one another during several social events, including a picnic hosted by Joan and Paul at their home. There was also a program for the siblings of children diagnosed with Dravet syndrome which provided opportunities for the kids to form great bonds. Many still stay connected in online relationships. Joan herself just returned from a Mom’s retreat this past weekend. “I am developing a new sense of optimism because of the community that I now find myself a part of. There is also a new optimism in the actual science surrounding Dravet syndrome. Doctors

and clinicians are changing their behavior as a result of some of our efforts. We are getting better at understanding the disease with earlier diagnosis and better treatment which ultimately will lead to better long term care.”

Even though Joan initiated the IDEA League – she strongly believes its strength lies in the broad collaborative – which happened very quickly. There are lots of families involved and professionals willing to get more involved. From the perspective of networking with others, Joan believes that the strong women (Dr. Beverly Wical, Dr. Charlotte Dravet and all of the activist moms) she has worked with over the past several years have really added to her new sense of perspective and optimism.

When asked how Nick’s diagnosis has changed her, Joan responded, “Not to underestimate what I can do – especially if I reach out to other people.” ■

Joan Vogel Sklužacek '84

Joan and her family live in Afton, Minnesota. Joan’s education and work experience are in special education. Since 1998 she has been caring for her family full-time at home. She has a minor in music and plays both the violin and the viola. Joan loves to read and has dreamed of becoming a writer some day. She enjoys soccer and is currently a volunteer youth soccer coach. Downhill skiing is a favorite past-time and both she and Paul are volunteer adaptive ski instructors for *Courage Alpine Skiing*. She also enjoys horseback riding and helps out in Nicholas’ adaptive riding program, *Courage Riders*. In the summer, Joan’s family enjoys boating and water sports.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Kristi, Marlys and Katie Schmitt.

You Can Easily Be a Recruiter for CSB

CSB alumnae can easily influence and contribute to the recruitment of high school prospects searching through the maze of colleges to consider during their senior year. Let me share my recent experience with you. My step-daughter, Katie Schmitt, a bright, active Junior at Hastings High School, wondered which colleges to visit her senior year and had doubts about her abilities to be accepted into the College of Saint Benedict. One day after school, I mentioned to her that she would be the perfect candidate for CSB and I thought her personality and academic abilities would fit perfectly at Saint Ben's. Knowing that Katie was interested in nursing, a profession her Mother had loved and successfully worked her entire life, I told her to consider learning more about Saint Ben's nursing program and to visit the campus. I assured her that having done well in her AP classes, it would help her succeed in the nursing program. Katie was reassured and felt more confident after our discussion.

As fate has it, the next day in the mail, an Alumnae Council member sent me two bright purple "Bennies" T-shirts. One was for my daughter, Kristi, who is a sophomore at Hastings High School, and had recently attended a Badger's Volleyball camp at Saint Ben's, and the other I gave to Katie. Katie loves wearing the T-shirt around school and home, and she recently told me that she already knows she wants to visit and apply to Saint Ben's and one other Wisconsin school. I feel fortunate to have positively impacted Katie and to have helped her make this decision. My daughter and I are having similar discussions.

High school students often do not know where to begin the process of selecting colleges and universities to consider after graduating, and as alumnae we can have a positive impression on youth. I challenge you to try having an impact on a high school student you know. You'll be surprised how you can be a recruiter too.

Regards,

Marlys R. Schmitt '85 – CSB Alumnae Council, Student Recruitment Committee
 Director of Risk Management, Benefits and Safety
 YMCA of Metropolitan Minneapolis and Greater Saint Paul

E-Mentoring Volunteer Opportunity – 300 Alumnae Needed!

We are excited to announce a great opportunity for Alumnae to volunteer with current students. The E-Mentor Program will launch in the fall of 2007 with the goal of 300 alums connecting with 300 sophomore students, simply through e-mail contact. Imagine being able to communicate with a Saint Ben's sophomore as she journeys through many decisions in her second year . . . deciding on a major, choosing classes and professors, getting along with friends as roommates, relationships, summer internships, and ultimately looking for another trusted Bennie who has walked through it all.

Now is your chance to give back to Saint Ben's in an easy, no-cost, rewarding relationship with a current student! Share your wisdom and help shape the future leaders of tomorrow.

What do you get to do as a part of this E-Mentor Program? This program asks for a nine-month commitment - September through May. You will commit to e-mail contact with your mentee at least once a month after filling out a short profile about yourself.

We think the greatest aspect of this volunteer opportunity is the chance to reach across our global Saint Ben's community to connect Bennies from the past, present and future. If you are interested in this opportunity, please e-mail Sarah Miller '02, Associate Dir. of Alumnae Relations at sarahmilller@csbsju.edu.

Alumna finds use for Saint Ben's t-shirts

Tiffany Taylor '05 sent this photo and message to some of her Bennie friends:



Tiffany Taylor '05

"There are only a select number of people that could and would understand why the pictures I have attached would make me cry . . . we have done so much in our time at CSB and to be reminded of that warms a special spot in our hearts. Attached you will find a quilt that I paid a pretty penny for but it was worth every thread. It is beautiful and I couldn't ask for one thing to be changed."



Tiffany's Saint Ben's T-shirt Quilt

SaintStock

SaintStock – Alums Party on the CSB Plaza

Friday, June 22, 2007 6:00 p.m. - Midnight

Featuring Boogie Wonderland!
Get your tickets today!



It's Time to Get Excited.

Welcome back to the College of Saint Benedict! For the first time ever, CSB AND SJU alums from every class are coming back to CSB to celebrate SaintStock – the CSB/SJU alum party on the plaza.

Don't miss this exciting opportunity to connect with ALL of your CSB/SJU friends. The night starts out with great entertainment by the following Alum bands; The Snozberries, Fred Savage and the Unbeatables and Panoramic Blue.

Food, beverages and an after-party bonfire! And of course you will have the opportunity to purchase a SaintStock t-shirt!

Tickets: Now through May 22 – early bird tickets are \$20
May 23 – June 21 – regular tickets are \$30
June 22 – tickets are \$40 if still available
All ticket purchases are NON-refundable

Housing: All housing is **FIRST COME FIRST SERVED**. Once the campus housing is booked please contact Alumnae Relations for alternative arrangements.

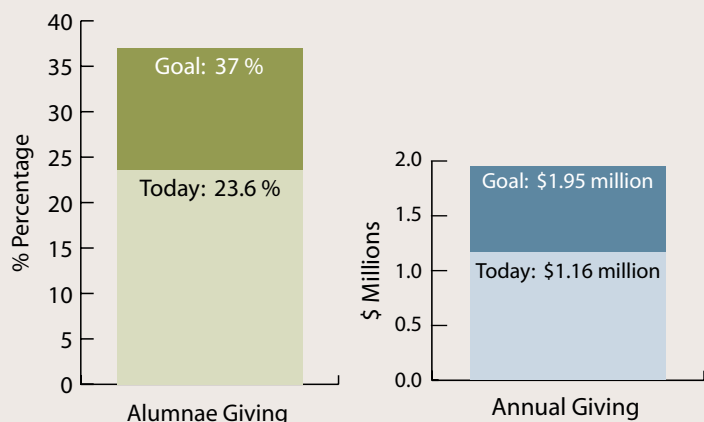
Campsites \$25 – a regular campsite accommodates a standard sized tent – up to 6 campers. If you have a larger party, please reserve 2 sites. Check in is Friday after 2:00 and check out is Saturday by 12:00 p.m.

Apartments/Dorms – \$40 per person.

All ticket sales will be processed online at:
www.csbsju.edu/alum/events/SaintStock.htm

If you have any questions, please contact the CSB Alumnae Relations office at 800-648-3468 ext. 2. Every effort to accommodate all housing requests will be made.

Annual Fund Update



Class of 1962 weekend in Perry, IA at Hotel Pattee

Front Row: Geri Backes Pettit, Jane Rohlik Koenig, Christine Hall McGeary, Sharon McNamara Nilan

Back Row: Jean Kloss Haworth, Mary Muchlinski Kelly, Elizabeth Hornstein Sauer, Kathy Wermerskirchen Tembrock, Irene Young Perrill

Not pictured: Judy McCarty Wallenta – photographer



Young Alum Network

Attention young alums! The group you've been waiting for is here! The Young Alum Network is for CSB/SJU graduates who have been out of school for five years or less who are looking to reconnect. Events are held once per month including sporting events, volunteer opportunities, social activities and more!

In January, the Network kicked off with a bowling event at Memory Lanes. There were about 25 alums in attendance. Alums enjoyed reconnecting with college friends while showing off their bowling skills. Coming events include: MN Twins game, Summit Brewery Tour, Summer service event and a Scavenger Hunt prior to SaintStock!

Check out www.csbsju.edu/alum/association/youngalum.htm for more information.

CSB/SJU Online Community



Register today and connect with your friends – check out class notes – share your recent news with fellow Bennie and Johnnie alums.

New networking tools – The Career Center allows CSB/SJU alumnae/i to post and search for jobs and resumes. The Yellow Pages tool allows you to create your own CSB/SJU online ad, or search the ads that other alums have posted.

For more information about the new networking tools, please visit: www.csbsju.edu/alum/news/2006/11/NewModules.htm.



Share Your Recent News! Register Today!

Go to: www.csbsju.edu/alum
and click on "Online Community"

To get your 9 digit ID# call: 800-648-3468 ext. 2

Alums in the News

CSB ALUMNA HONORED BY MINNESOTA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

Kelly Grinsteiner '99, assistant editor of the *Hibbing Daily Tribune*, was among other newspaper professionals who were honored for their editorial efforts during the Minnesota Newspaper Association's 2005-2006 Better Newspaper Contest.

NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION AWARDS CSB ALUMNA

Connie Fourré '72 was recently awarded the National Catholic Educational Association's Secondary Educator's Award. The award honors teachers who have made significant contributions to secondary education.



Connie Fourré '72

CSB ALUMNA NAMED 2006 INDUSTRY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER

Ann Scallen Block, CCM '73 finished her Certified Commercial Investment Member designation in 1997 and joined Washington Mutual Bank where she is a Senior Loan Consultant in Multifamily Lending. "San Diego's apartment industry has benefited from the leadership that Ann has provided to a variety of organizations. She has been generous with the time she has contributed to SDCAA, the San Diego CCIM Chapter and other organizations." — Robert Vallera, Jr. CCIM, Senior Vice President/Principal

Kathryn Kucienski Ciesla '93 was recently appointed as Northwestern Business College's first Chief Operations Officer. Ciesla, who has served as the school's General Counsel and Director of Human Resources, assumed her new position in December 2006.

CSB ALUMNA RELEASES NEW NOVEL

Please join Yuko Taniguchi '98 in celebration of her new novel, *The Ocean in the Closet*, at the Rochester Art Center on Thursday, April 26, 2007, 7 p.m. The Rochester Art Center is located at 40 Civic Center Drive SE, Rochester, MN 55904. (507) 282-8629 www.rochesterartcenter.org coffeepress.org



Yuko Taniguchi '98

Blazers CSB/Bernick's Pepsi Women's Walk

Join us for a walk that celebrates and honors women

Sunday, April 29, 2007 *2:00 p.m.

Location: The College of Saint Benedict

CSB athletics and recreation work in partnership to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop her mind, body and spirit. Bring your friends and participate in this 30 minute walk/run at College of Saint Benedict. This is your opportunity to get involved and help enrich the ambiance of our athletic programs.

Money raised will go to enhance our Athletic and Recreation programs and services. If you are interested, contact Marcia Hilbert at 320-363-5992 or mhilbert@csbsju.edu.



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**Networks are
springing up across
the country!**

Check out the
Alum Networks link
on the website to learn
about the upcoming
social and service events
happening in these cities:

Chicago • Denver
Duluth • Omaha
Phoenix • Rochester
Seattle • Twin Cities
Washington D.C.

CSB Reunion - June 22-24, 2007

You won't believe what we have planned.



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Inspired Learning. Inspiring Lives.

Register today! www.csbsju.edu/alum/events/CSBReunion2007Schedule.htm