Alumni Host Summer Send-Off Parties

This summer, incoming freshmen of the Class of 2016 had their first taste of the Catholic University community at new student send-off parties organized around the country. Alumni and parents in eight states, plus the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, hosted 10 send-off parties attended by 429 students and their families in preparation for the transition to college life at CUA.

“The send-off parties allow incoming students and their parents the opportunity to meet one another, alumni, and staff members who can answer questions they may have,” said Kyra Lyons, executive director of the Alumni Association. “Most students appreciate the opportunity to meet their classmates because it’s always nice to see a familiar face once you get to campus.”

Brendan O’Reilly (B.A. 1987) said that for many of the new students who attend his party, it’s “their first taste of Catholic University.”

He and his wife, Maureen (B.A. 1987), have been hosting their party for students in the Philadelphia area since about 1995. This year they hosted nearly 250 students and their families. 53 people in total, at their home in Yardley, Pa.

“We love the place and we hope that we exude that to the people going down there,” O’Reilly said of Catholic University.

The Catholic University Office of Alumni Relations welcomes the new students and their families and offers thanks to the following hosts of the send-off parties:

- John and Terry Lavie, both B.A. 1987
- Brendan and Maureen O’Reilly, both B.A. 1987
- Nicole Kipp, B.S.N. 1994
- Dennis and Joan Farley, parents of Kevin, Class of 2014
- Lynne Dardis Pesc, B.A. 2002
- Miguel A. Castellas-Sastre, B.A. 1986
- Courtesy Tipping, B.A. 2006

If you would like to host a party next summer, please contact the Office of Alumni Relations at 800-288-ALUM.

We’ve Improved Our Website

The Alumni Association website has added new features. Visit www.cuatoday.com for a calendar of upcoming alumni events at Catholic University and throughout the country. The page allows you to register for events and see a list of who’s coming. You also can make a prayer request, submit a class note, read alumni spotlights, view photos galleries and videos, and sign up for local chapters and other groups.

The Catholic Vote

A panel of scholars who study faith and politics at Catholic University addressed the role of the Catholic vote in the November 2012 election at an event hosted in late September by the Office of Alumni Relations and the Alumni Association. More than 200 students, alumni, faculty, and staff came out for the discussion that was moderated by CUA alumna Sheleah Kast (B.A. 1971), host of Maryland Morning with Sheleah Kast on WYPR.

I n all our lives there are seminal moments. The intrinsic beauty of these moments lies in the fact that we never see them coming. Only when we look in the rearview mirror and sum up all the events that occurred to arrive at that moment, do we see how truly amazing they are. One of those moments in my life came during a chance encounter in an Atlanta recording studio in 1998. I was the audio engineer on a session of an unknown artist. During a lunch break, four guys from Toledo came up to me and explained they had made the 600-mile journey down to the “Motorown of the South” to find someone to produce their first R&B album. We exchanged numbers, and six months later I found myself in a downtown Toledo recording studio producing my first album project.

I had never produced a record before. I had been the engineer on a few hits, but nobody had ever trusted me with the creative direction of an entire album. (In music, the producer is synonymous with the director of a film whereas the engineer would be the camera operator.) I will never forget thinking on the first day of the project, in a quiet yet nervous moment with myself, to “just follow your passion wherever it takes you.”

Months later, as snippets of the finished songs hit the streets, I began to hear comments like “man, you’re a genius with that music!” A woman whom I’d never met said, “I cried when I first heard that song.” This was a defining moment in my career because I always thought I could produce records, but I wasn’t sure. A song we recorded, called “One on One,” was even redone by legendary R & B superstar Keith Sweat and was the lead-off single on his album titled Rebirth. To quote Kanye West, “passion was the steam I needed to power my dreams.”

In May 2006, during another chance encounter, again came a seminal moment that I never saw coming. A teacher casually mentioned to me she couldn’t get her students to learn their math facts. I casually answered, “You can get kids to learn anything if you put it over a cool beat. They memorize, even Jay-Z and Beyonce lyric, surely they can memorize their times table!” A few days later, armed only with an instrumental track from a popular hip-hop song at that time, for the first time I stepped into a classroom full of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders to help them learn their multiplication tables.

What an odd pairing of the worlds of entertainment and education, especially for a person like me with no training as an educator. Yet 13 songs later and a national spotlight on Good Morning America, the Shorties entertainment brand was born. Once again my passion for making music, of any kind, was the fuel that ignited the next phase of my career. This small, innocent idea has now grown into a national educational platform of songs, books, videos, games, and summer camps that help students learn.

How do you know what your true passion really is? How do you do what you were “called” to do? I believe it’s when you touch someone. Plain and simple. When you touch that part of another human being known as the “soul,” when what you do makes a difference in another person’s life—that’s when you know. That’s the power of following your passion. With it comes peacefulness. With it comes an undeniable and empowering clarity of conviction.

— Alex ‘M.E. Cat’ Nemesi is the co-founder and president of SmartShorties, an education company that harnesses the power of hip-hop music to help kids learn. As a producer/engineer and song writer, he has received several music industry awards. He has worked with music stars such as Outkast, Akon, Charlotte Church, Ronald Isley, Arista, and Busta Rhymes.

Alumni Essay

Follow Your PASSION

By Alex Nemesi (B.E.E. 1990)