



## *Family Fun Day: Fishers of Men*

**St. Mary's Parish held another successful Family Fun Day fundraiser on Sunday, November 6. This year's theme was Fishers of Men. Above is a 3-D model of Fr. Weeder and Fr. Matt, which was created in the GACC Steam Lab by Tina Gentrup.**

# GACC welcomes new principal

**By Ashley Gaughan**

John McAndrews is the new principal of Guardian Angels Central Catholic Junior High and High Schools this year. He is originally from Tekamah, Neb.

McAndrews and his wife Marjorie have been married for 18 years and they have three children. Teagan is in eighth grade, Tessa is in sixth grade, and Owen is entering third grade.

After graduating from high school at Tekamah-Herman, McAndrews attended the University of Oregon where he earned a political science degree in 2003.

After college, McAndrews originally started his career in banking. However, he said the credit union he worked for had a community outreach program and he began volunteering in schools and he was also coaching basketball at the time.

“I really enjoyed working with the kids, which then led me into pursuing a masters in teaching,” McAndrews said.

He earned his Master of Arts in Teaching from Willamette University, also in Oregon.

That led to eight years of teaching middle and elementary school subjects and 10 years as an administrator after earning an additional degree in PK-12 Education Administration from the University of South Dakota and a Superintendent Licensure from George Fox University.

He most recently came to West Point after being principal for Newberg Public Schools in Oregon.

McAndrews said he and his family have spent the last 22 years in Oregon, but after visiting Nebraska last summer, decided they’d like to move closer to family they have in the area.

When the principal position came open at GACC, he said he felt it would be an ideal fit for him and his family.

“My wife and I visited West Point



**John McAndrews is the new junior high and high school principal at Guardian Angels Central Catholic this year.**

**‘There is nothing more rewarding than watching a student find the things they are passionate about.’**

during the interview process and immediately felt welcome by the staff and community,” McAndrews said.

As the new principal at GACC, McAndrews noted he is most look-

ing forward to helping the students reach their future goals and grow in their faith.

“There is nothing more rewarding than watching a student find the things they are passionate about and then helping them pursue these areas of interest,” he said.

Along with getting to know the West Point community better, he noted he and his family have “always been very active in our local parish” and they look forward to doing the same in West Point.



New faculty members at GACC School are, from left, front: Joshua Batenhorst, Bryan Mendlik, Rochelle Kai; back: Morgyn Christiansen, Marjorie McAndrews, Karen Kreikemeier and Alison Meiergerd. Not pictured is Mary Lou Ritter.

## New faculty at GACC School

- Joshua Batenhorst is the new Athletic & Activities Director at GACC. He will also teach 7th, 8th and 9th Grade Agriculture. He is the new head wrestling coach as well.

He has five years of teaching experience. He was previously at Allen Consolidated Schools. He attended UNL and UNK. Beemer is his hometown.

“I couldn’t be more excited to be here at Guardian Angels Central Catholic and to offer agriculture in the classroom,” Batenhorst said.

- Bryan Mendlik is a new teacher at GACC. He will teach strength and conditioning, PE and High School Art. He will also coach the Bluejay boys basketball team. He has three years of teaching experience. He spent time at Omaha Skutt, Stanton, and Wisner. Most recently, he was working at Cushing Construction. He attended UNO, and Wisner is his hometown. “I’m looking forward to getting back into the Bluejay community, sharing my knowledge and experiences with students and athletes, and I’m excited for the chili and



**Kelly Dinslage**



**Teresa Hasenkamp**

lettuce sandwiches during lunch time in the winter,” Mendlik said.

- Morgyn Christiansen is a new teacher at GACC for Junior High Literature, Sophomore English and Speech. She will also serve as the speech coach and House Dean. This is her first year of teaching. She previously was a student teacher at Randolph. She attended Wayne State College. Her hometown is Plainview.

“I am looking forward to getting to know the students and staff at GACC, and becoming part of an excellent speech program,” Christiansen said.

- Marjorie McAndrews is the new

6th Grade teacher at GACC. She has eight years of teaching experience. She previously taught 5th grade in Oregon. She attended the University of Oregon, in the same state as her hometown, Eugene. “I’m looking forward to getting to know my students, and helping them to learn and grow as individuals,” McAndrews said.

- Mary Lou Ritter is the new business manager and bookkeeper for GACC High School. She was the City Clerk & Treasurer for the City of Lyons for almost 15 years. She attended Lincoln School of Commerce and Doane College. West Point is her hometown, and a 1975 graduate of WPCC.

- Teresa Hasenkamp is the new high school secretary at GACC. Previously, was a reporter for the Wisner News-Chronicle for two years, and prior to that, was the marketing coordinator for St. Joseph’s Retirement Community for 23 years. Gothenburg is her hometown, and she graduated college from UNK.

**BIRTHS**

David '04 & Bethany Fast, son, Alden Meier, DOB 10/3/21

Danny '08 & Erin Fast, son, Theodore James, DOB 4/11/22

Gabrielle (Knobbe) '14 and Kyle Lindhorst, son, Luke Joseph, DOB 6/4/22

Stefanie (Stratmann) '06 & Ben Gustafson, daughter, Evelyn Jane, DOB 6/7/22

Heath '06 & Michaela Graybeal, son Liam Dale, DOB 6/14/22

Christy (Fast) '02 & Tim Lens, son, Harrison Timothy, DOB 6/21/22

Luke '05 & Ashley Strehle, daughter, Lainey Christine, DOB 7/8/22

Tim '99 & Elsa Otte, sons, Gerard Felix & Joseph Timothy, DOB 7/12/22

Todd '03 & Amber (Schlecht) '04 Hugo, son, Dylan Ryan, DOB 7/12/22

Jaci (Mowinkel) '08 & Brad Pesicka, son, Ezekiel George, DOB 7/12/22

Joe '10 & Sierra Knobbe, son, Kane Henry, DOB 7/13/22

Rebecca (Oligmueller) '09 & Chad Miller, daughter Marina Blanche, DOB 7/22/22

Jamie (Oligmueller) '12 & Alex Norton, daughter, Caroline Christine, DOB 7/28/22

Tyler '06 & Jennifer Slagle, daughter, Kinley Rose, DOB 8/4/22

Bethany (Stratmann) '11 & Seth Bose, daughter, Baylor Jane, DOB 8/29/22

Jeff '10 & Samantha O'Brien, son, Lukas Milo, DOB 8/30/22

Anthony '14 & Jenae Wooldrik, daughter, Blake Cecilia, DOB 10/13/22

Eric '16 & Hannah Klitz, daughter, Mildred Jean, DOB 11/3/22

**DEATHS**

ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO THEM O LORD

Keith Batenhorst '68 DOD 6/9/22

Keith Kucera '64

Gregg Schlecht '74 DOD 6/19/22  
Kathleen (Wiese) Lorenz '69 DOD 8/11/22

Cletus Rolf '52 DOD 9/3/22

Ambrose Hugo '49 DOD 9/12/22

Jolletta (Knobbe) Mejstrik '52 DOD 9/21/22

Gary Dinslage '68 DOD 10/2/22

Tom McMahan '73 DOD

10/18/22

Angela (Toelle) Mandel '58 DOD 10/26/22

Carl Aschoff '78 DOD 11/6/22

**WEDDINGS**

Sheldon Disher '17 married Mackenna Walla on 6/11/22

Jacob Bracht '14 married Kerbie Large on 6/18/22

Megan McAuliffe '15 married Jacob Cassell on 6/25/22

Lexis Haase '18 married Chase Utemark on 7/16/22

Andrew Bracht '04 married Lisa Woodrow on 7/30/22

Devin Disher '14 married Katlyn Arens on 7/30/22

Katie Steuter '16 married Luke Burbach on 10/22/2022

Jamie Plagge '17 married Tyler Polacek on 10/29/22

**NEW FACULTY: GACC School****FROM PAGE 3**

"I am looking forward to getting to know the students, parents and staff at GACC, and supporting them in whatever ways I can," Hasenkamp said.

- Rochelle Kai is the new 1st grade teacher's aide at GACC. She has five years experience in early childhood. Her hometown is Buena Park, Calif. She attended Doane and SECC, and was previously a stay at home mom.

"I'm looking forward to seeing how much the kids learn throughout the year," Kai said.

- Alison Meiergerd is the new 3rd grade teacher's aide at GACC. This is her first year as an aide.

She will also help with the after-school program. She attended Central Community College, and previously worked at Hy-Vee and YMCA childcare. West Point is her hometown.

"I am looking forward to working with teachers who taught me," Meiergerd said.

- Karen Kreikemeier is the new Kindergarten teacher's aide at GACC. She previously worked at Central Valley Ag. Her hometown is Snyder.

"I look forward to working with the kids," Kreikemeier said.

- Kelly Dinslage is the new Para at GACC for the ECEC room. She is an assistant coach for the Bluejay girls basketball team. West Point is her hometown.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**Attention: Alumni Banquet will be held June 10, 2023**

**Honor classes: 1923, 1928, 1933, 1938, 1943, 1948, 1953, 1958, 1963, 1968, 1973, 1983, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2013, 2023**

**Note: JayFest will be held June 9, 2023**



# 'Never Forgotten'

*Ridder hopes brother's legacy lives on through his book*

James Ridder had his life tragically cut short 45 years ago. While James was gone, he wasn't forgotten. To ensure James was 'never forgotten,' Don Ridder did what he could to make sure the legacy of his older brother lived on.

"One day, it just hit me out of the blue. God was telling me I could write a book on James," Don said. "James was pretty amazing in a lot of different ways."

James died as a result of an August 11, 1977 car accident. Don was driving a car that collided with another at an unmarked intersection three miles west and one mile south of West Point at approximately 9 p.m.

James, who was a passenger in that vehicle, passed away at 2 a.m. the next morning.

"The accident changed everything for everybody," Don said.

On the 38th anniversary of James' death (August 12, 2015), Don heard his calling to write the book, which he titled "James: Never Forgotten."

"Writing this book helped me work through the guilt for being the driver in the accident that ultimately took his life," Don said.

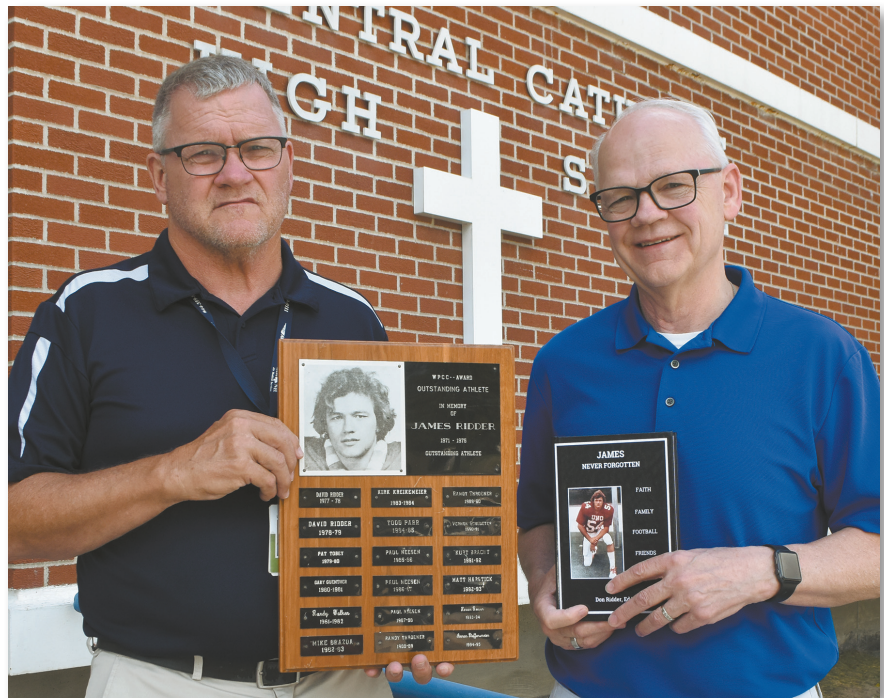
"Secondly, was to give something back to my family. I felt like I really needed to give back to my siblings and his closest friends."

Don met with family and friends to collect all the information he could. He wrote down every word they said.

"I didn't want to miss anything. I valued everything they said," Don noted.

The conversations brought up a lot of emotions. Great memories were shared. Funny stories were told. People loved to talk about James, and the way he lived life. And the influence that James had on everyone.

"James would light up a room anywhere he went. He would light



**Brothers Dave Ridder and Don Ridder. Don wrote the book "James: Never Forgotten."**

up a football field. He always made people feel like they were number one," Don said. "If you could keep that concept of treating people like they're number one, we'd have a much better world to live in."

A lot of the stories had the same premise. Even with it being 37 years ago at that time, everyone Don talked to remembered it like it was yesterday.

Once Don started writing, it became a challenge at times.

"Putting it all together brought up a lot of emotions. It became very hard," Don said. "I'd be writing and tears would be running down my face."

Because of its emotionally draining effect, Don paused the project. But in the summer of 2021, he got the push to finish.

"It was like God hit me alongside the head and said, 'are you going to do this or not,' Don said. "I felt

like it was something I had to do."

## Faith, family & fun

Due to a serious concussion, Don Ridder can't recall what happened the night of the accident. But he does know the James Ridder story can't be told without talking faith, family and fun. Football and friends were also key elements.

James attended West Point Central Catholic and played football at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Because James was taken too soon, Don said all his family members deserved to know what his life was really about.

"James left his mark in this world. He left a legacy of making life better for everybody around him," Don said. "His influence on me, and all of our family, was re-

## Are you in college?

Do you have a son, daughter or grandchild in college that graduated from a Cuming County High School? Alumni Scholarships Available Again for Spring of 2023.

The Louis and Abby Faye Dinklage Foundation continues their Commitment to Cuming County and Education.

The Louis and Abby Faye Dinklage Foundation of Wisner will make available a number of \$1000 scholarships for alumni of Cuming County who are full-time college students.

An application form is required for this scholarship even if you have received it in previous years. These scholarships may be applied to vocational training programs or a bachelor degree program where you are enrolled full time.

They are not applicable for second bachelor degree or master degree programs. Also, if you have received four previous awards, you are no longer eligible.

Additionally, if you are a non-traditional student and working on your first degree, you may be eligible for an alumni scholarship. To get an application, go to [gacbluejays.org](http://gacbluejays.org) - high school - school counselor - alumni scholarships. Applications are due Friday, December 9. There are a limited number of scholarships, and preference is given to early applicants.

## First Fridays at GACC School

**By John McAndrews**

As Catholics, we are blessed with many opportunities and graces through the sacraments. Our students are fortunate to have a theology department at GACC which includes several priests and a Franciscan Sister of Charity.

At the beginning of the 2nd quarter, we began encouraging students to consider making a First Friday Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There are some incredible promises Jesus shared with St. Margaret Mary for those who make such a devotion. Our wonderful priests have also made confession more readily available to students on the First Friday of each month.

If you are interested in learning more about First Friday Devotion, please pick up a handout that has been placed just outside the high school office. Our school is always looking for ways to encourage students to grow in their faith and relationship with Christ.

## NEVER FOGOTTEN: Ridder remembers brother in book

FROM PAGE 5

ally impactful. His ability to influence people was remarkable.”

Don noted that it was also his parents that influenced how the 12 Ridder siblings were raised.

“Mom and Dad raised us all with the concept that the best things in life are not things. It’s your faith, your family, it’s your hard work and your education,” Don said.

Don said his wife, Brenda Hunke Ridder, was a key component to getting this book to the finish line.

“She’s a big part of everything I do in my life,” Don said. “She’s always supported me.”

### ‘What would James want’

West Point Central Catholic really brought the Ridder family together in faith and family.

“This school has always had a

big spot in all of our hearts, and it always will,” Don Ridder said.

Because of that, after James Ridder’s death, giving back to the school seemed to be the best option.

“Mom and Dad decided what to do with his memorial. Dad thought, ‘what would James want to do?’ He knew James would want this school to succeed. So Mom and Dad donated weights to the school,” Don said.

“Those weights were there because of James. With Dave [Ridder] being involved in the football program, he got to see those weights from James being put to use.”

Dave was the youngest of the Ridder family. Dave has coached the Bluejay football program since 1986, and has been head coach since 2002.

Each year since 1978, the school

honors the top male athlete with the James Ridder Memorial award. Dave was the recipient of the first two awards.

Dave said one of the most important aspects of society is living life to its fullest, and that’s what James did. He had a profound effect on people.

“The accident changed everyone’s life quite a bit. It also put everything into perspective as far as family goes,” Dave said.

“This book just brought up memories. I can remember when I drove up to the accident clear as day. We didn’t have much growing up, but we had each other. And that’s all we needed.”

Don echoed that sentiment.

“Faith is always number one. Family is always number two,” Don said. “When you do those things right, everything else falls into place.”

# Coaching finale

*Bluejays give it their all in Ridder's final game as head coach*

It was all smiles on the Bluejay sideline all night long, and for good reason.

Following a season of frustrating Fridays, Guardian Angels Central Catholic football had a Friday night to remember in a 50-13 win over Bancroft-Rosalie.

The Bluejays went into the game with nothing to gain. They went into the game with just one win on the season, and there was no hope of playoffs. And yet, GACC played like a team trying to win a state title.

There was a big reason for that. Players wanted to send long-time head coach Dave Ridder out with a win. And that's what they did.

Ridder announced at the beginning of the 2022 season that this was going to be his last. And what a run it has been for him.

Ridder joined the coaching staff as an assistant in 1986. He became head coach in 2002. During that span, Ridder compiled a total record of 147-63.

After missing the playoffs in his first year as head coach, Ridder made state football playoffs 18 years in a row. He also won the Class D1 state championship in 2010, and was the runner-up twice in 2011 and 2016.

Coach Ridder always wanted to help athletes be the best they could be. But even more than that, he wanted to help them become a better person.

During his coaching career, he suffered a few tough season-ending losses. After those, Ridder had a line he'd say: "If this is the worst thing that happens in their life, they're going to have a pretty good life."

Football was life for Ridder. But so was family. His passion for both allowed him to have such a successful career.

Knowing what Ridder has meant to the Bluejay football program



**In his final game as head coach, GACC football sent out Dave Ridder with a win.**

was why sending him out on top was so important.

GACC played lights out in all phases of the game. And it wasn't just a few players. It was an entire team effort.

One play that was proof of how bad the players wanted this win was when Gavin Kreikemeier pulled off a Tommie Frazier Fiesta Bowl type of run. He was wrapped

up by the entire Panther defense, and still found a way to break free for a touchdown.

Following the game, when Ridder was asked how happy he was to end his career like this, he simply said, 'I'm just happy for the kids.'

Ridder was incredibly impactful with his players, and will be remembered as a true legend for Bluejay football.

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