

# Alumni rediscover roots at grade school benefit concert

Molly Misek

Her voice echoes across St. Leo Church, enveloping hundreds of St. Pius X/St. Leo parishioners in a serenade of creative lyrics accompanied by a delicate piano melody.

"I want to love you like a Tim Burton movie, baby, blushing corpses, these piles of shaking bones..."

Tara Vaughan closes her eyes, playing the notes with ease as she unveils her newest song, "Till Death," to the crowd.

"...bodies fragile, but these souls are too tough; till death do us part ain't enough."

As the song ends the audience erupts in applause for the SPSL graduate, and she stands with a grin and looks toward the first row of pews. Fellow graduate Karly Jurgensen smiles as they catch one another's eye.

Vaughan gives the stage to Jurgensen, who prepares to perform a Christmas-themed piano ballad called "The Chosen One."

At the first annual St. Pius X/St. Leo Alumni Benefit Concert, which raised nearly \$14,000 for the SPSL community on Dec. 29, memories of grade school fill the two women's thoughts as they entertain their childhood community. Vaughan and Jurgensen, who have both recorded studio albums, are also graduates of Marian.

The Marian community held a large presence at the benefit concert, featuring a total of nine current students and four graduates who performed for the audience of more than 600. This included senior Alison Kampe; juniors Erica English, Colleen Fell, Rachel Langenfeld and Taylor Novacek; sophomores Kathryn Blaser and Morgan Harms; freshmen Andi Dai and Maggie Witzenburg and 2009 graduates Katie Fell and Micheala McCarthy, along with Vaughan, '06, and Jurgensen, '04.

Leaders of the Marian musical community showed parishioners the talent that Marian bestows upon its students, a fact that was especially clear during the performances of Jurgensen and Vaughan.

However, Marian wasn't the first place the musicians got their start. Long before they entered high school, the girls performed for anyone who'd lend an ear.

"I always wanted to put on shows for my family, and they were like, 'I hope she's good at this,'" Vaughan said with a laugh.

Jurgensen recalls standing on her fireplace

with a spatula in hand, belting out Mariah Carey lyrics when she was 6 years old.

Both young women eventually attended St. Pius X/St. Leo Grade School in Omaha, where they were heavily involved in music. Jurgensen remembers playing the piano at school masses and variety shows, garnering the attention of the school music teacher, Mrs. Karen English, mother of junior Erica English.

"I was mostly known for my piano playing at that time," Jurgensen said. "I wasn't singing much back then." At age 14, Jurgensen formed a small career out of playing piano at weddings.

However, it wasn't until Jurgensen and Vaughan came to Marian that they knew music would eventually become their lives' focus. Through involvement in Select Women's Choir along with a few strategic pushes from music director, Ms. Cathy Pruitte, both girls realized that they were called to a career in music.

As Vaughan said, "Ms. Pruitte was really forceful when it came to getting us out there and being like, 'You're going to do this.' I was pushed to perform while I was there."

Vaughan, who was a National Merit Finalist, went on to major in music at Tufts University in Massachusetts in 2006. Two years prior, Jurgensen had decided to study at Berkeley School of Music in Boston.

Being so far from home was not a challenge for either woman. As Jurgensen studied at one of the country's most elite music schools, she recalled the lessons her high school education had taught her.

"I did a lot of growing at Marian and gained confidence that's carried me for a long time, especially when I went off to Berkeley," Jurgensen said.

At Berkeley, 75 percent of Jurgensen's courses were music-based, which made for a competitive yet passionate environment for her to cultivate her musical abilities. While studying topics ranging from lyrical poetry to Motown tunes and everything in between, she also performed in a Boston-area band, where she admits she had to overcome her stage fright.

Meanwhile, Vaughan was forming a career of her own. Specializing in jazz piano and voice, she toured with an a cappella group and played in gigs with her band throughout Cambridge, Massachusetts. Assuming a different name with every show just for kicks (Vaughan recalls performing as "Tara Vaughan and the Queen Latifah Five"), she and her band exposed themselves to audiences' criticism.

"I got very positive feedback from my Cambridge performances, even though some people can be mean," Vaughan said with a laugh. She stresses the importance of



**Common Bonds.** Senior Alison Kampe, freshman Maggie Witzenberg and juniors Erica English and Colleen Fell prepare for their performance at the St. Pius X/St. Leo Alumni Benefit Concert. The girls sang in a chorus composed of St. Pius graduates to raise money for the school community. Photo by Molly Misek

artists getting their music out, despite the harsh criticisms that may come with it.

Jurgensen and Vaughan are both independent artists, taking advantage of the recording industry's declining state to instead create their own platforms for their music.

Both produce jazz-influenced pop music, although Vaughan admits that her new album, "Better Versions", will be "like the Black Keys, except with a female singer." Vaughan's album is due out next month, while Jurgensen is still weighing possibilities for a new album in the coming year. She recorded an EP last summer, which features four songs including "Grace," a ballad in honor of Cady Reynolds. Music by both singers is available on iTunes.

Jurgensen's career has taken her to places like Nashville, Philadelphia, Atlanta and St. Louis, where she toured with two of her best friends, Kyle Patrick, lead singer of The Clique Five, and Jesse Reuven.

"We were a traveling trio, touring across the eastern coast by car. It went on for two weeks," Jurgensen said.

Making a living being a musician proves to be difficult for both women. Jurgensen continually claims to work 15 jobs to pay the expenses (while flashing a not-exactly-joking smile) while Vaughan, fresh out of college, is looking to work in the field of music therapy.

Even with their busy lives, the two musicians enjoy being back in Omaha. Though Vaughan has traveled to London, Los Angeles, San Francisco and the east coast for performances, she has remained in Omaha for the past few months, playing shows at small venues around the metro.

Jurgensen, who usually inhabits an apartment in New York City, willingly traded

her view of landmarks like Times Square, the Hudson River and the Empire State Building over the holidays in favor of returning to Omaha turf.

"It's such a warm, welcoming community," Jurgensen said. "When you come back, it feels like you never left, like coming back to see a dear friend."

Though their performances at the Benefit



**Back Where It All Began.** Marian graduate Karly Jurgensen performs at her former grade school, St. Pius X/St. Leo. After graduating from Marian in 2004, Jurgensen attended Berkeley College of Music and has established a career as a professional musician. Photo by Molly Misek

Concert stirred feelings of pride in SPSL and Marian alumni, Jurgensen's and Vaughan's true creative testimony comes from their musical careers. As members of the Marian community, they are examples of the dedicated musicians Marian produces, carving a path for current

students who have musical aspirations.

"The sense of support

and love at Marian has been a big factor in my career," Vaughan said. And to girls who dream of a future in music, "Join a band, and sing your little heart out. People are always going to criticize, but you just have to keep doing what you love."

Jurgensen agrees. "Spend as little time as you can being afraid. Take advantage of every opportunity that's in front of you."

She also advocates a sweet disposition, advising, "Be nice to people. You never know who can help you later in life."

After performing a few piano ballads, Karly Jurgensen resumes her spot near Tara Vaughan in the pews, flashing a sisterly grin at her former Marian classmate.

What's the reason for this bond between them?

It could be St. Pius X/St. Leo; it could be the Benefit Concert; it could be the music.

Or it could just be Marian.



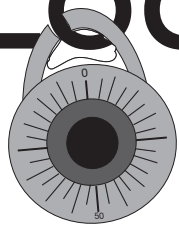
**All the Right Notes.** Marian and St. Pius graduate Tara Vaughan plays her newest song, "Till Death," at the St. Pius X/St. Leo Alumni Benefit Concert. Vaughan, whose career has taken her as far as London, has an album set to release next month. Photo by Molly Misek



# Putting a Lock on Crime

Recent theft shows there are still safety risks

Kaylee **Asche**  
Shelby **Stefanski**



**F**ive-finger discount, shoplift, poach, ransack. Call it what you want, but it all means the same: stealing. Stealing has become a major problem, not only in the Omaha community but also in schools.

Students often go to classes without their textbooks, explaining to teachers that their books have been stolen out of their lockers. However, teachers can't skip out on the day's lesson plan because a student doesn't have her book. This puts the student at a major disadvantage and causes stress.

However, later in the day, the student goes to her locker and finds that the book has been returned. She has just become a victim of theft.

There is a difference between stealing and borrowing. Stealing is to take without permission. To borrow is to take with permission and promise to return in the same or better condition.

The main difference in these two definitions is the word permission. Taking someone's book without asking and then returning it with the spine bent up and a page missing is disrespectful.

Not only is the book in a bad condition, meaning the owner will get less money when they return it, but the thief also didn't ask the owner for permission.

The most infamous item stolen is books. Some girls think that if they borrow the book for one class, no one will know. Then one class turns into two, two classes becomes four, and before he or she knows it, the student has had the book for the whole day.

When the student whose book has been stolen needs it for class and can't find it, teachers can get upset.

"I have these bookshelves for my students because the books are heavy, so they don't have to carry them around all the time," literature teacher Ms. Connie Cavel said.

"I had two instances last year. Someone used a book all last year and returned it to the rightful owner the day before finals. If you

are going to borrow it, leave a note. Let them know. I know books have been stolen from teachers. I'm not naive, I lock my purse up. Students are a little more open to borrowing these days."

Literature teacher Ms. Megan Piernicky also has a strong opinion on stealing.

"Every year I hear students complain about disappearing books. In the past I have hosted book checks during class- a student can earn bonus points for possessing her own labeled book in class," Piernicky said.

However, Piernicky does have a few pieces of wisdom to share.

"Respect the belongings of others- if it's not yours, don't take it. If it's not yours and you took it, don't pretend it's yours. Lying doesn't help the situation. I wish that students would rise above this petty mischief."

Some teachers are lucky, though.

"I'm glad I don't really have this problem," physics and chemistry teacher Mrs. Sharon Genoways said. "I have my kids keep their books in their lockers or at home because we only use them on certain days, plus they are very expensive."

Book "borrowing" can be a heated topic for some, but for others, it's just the opposite. Junior Megan Boler doesn't see it as a big issue.

"I have borrowed a book from a random locker. As long as people put the book back, I don't see the problem," Boler said.

Several Marian students sitting in the Quad, who choose to remain anonymous, agreed. They said that we are all guilty of it at some point in our lives.

"I think it's ok as long as it gets returned before the person needs it back," sophomore Ellie Hupp said.

Other students, such as freshman Emma Tuttle, are in between. "It depends on what you are borrowing, because they might know that you are 'borrowing' it," Tuttle said.

Although rows of lockers line the halls of Marian, there are very few locks to accompany

them. Only a handful of girls choose to lock their lockers.

"I don't think stealing is that big of an issue. I don't have a lock on my locker because there is nothing valuable in there, and I trust Marian girls," sophomore Maddie Socha said.

On the other hand, for students like freshman Lauren Olson, it is always better to be safe than sorry.

"I have had a novel stolen out of my locker before, and I decided to lock it to make sure something like that doesn't happen again," she said. "To a certain extent I trust Marian girls, but you never know what could happen when you least expect it."

Public schools are no different from Marian, except for one detail.

"We have locks on the lockers at our school," James Cross of Elkhorn High School said. "So unless you give someone your combination, chances are your locker is a safe place to keep your things."

Yet, having locks on lockers does not prevent the stealing all together. Cases of missing articles of clothing, including sweatpants and gym shorts, have also been reported at both Marian and Elkhorn High School.

Marian might have a friendly and trustworthy environment, but books are still taken from lockers and not returned. Most are not returned because the rightful owner doesn't put her name in the book, which gives anyone the chance to claim it as her own.

Bad habits are hard to break, and the price paid might not be just a slap on the wrist. Girls need to learn to put her name in their books so Marian no longer has this issue.

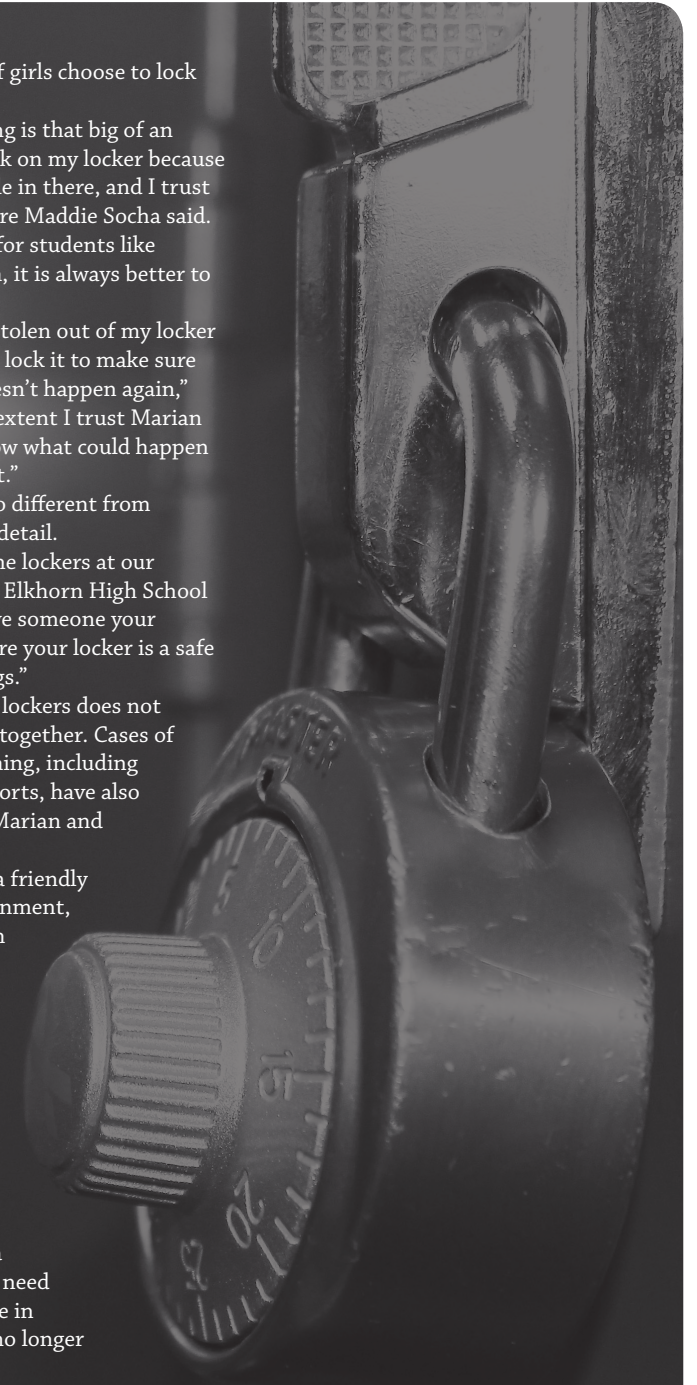


Photo by Annie McClure

## Free Dress For Philanthropy

Donate **\$2** or more to your homeroom teacher

**Must** wear a Marian spirit shirt

**No** pjs or flannel pants

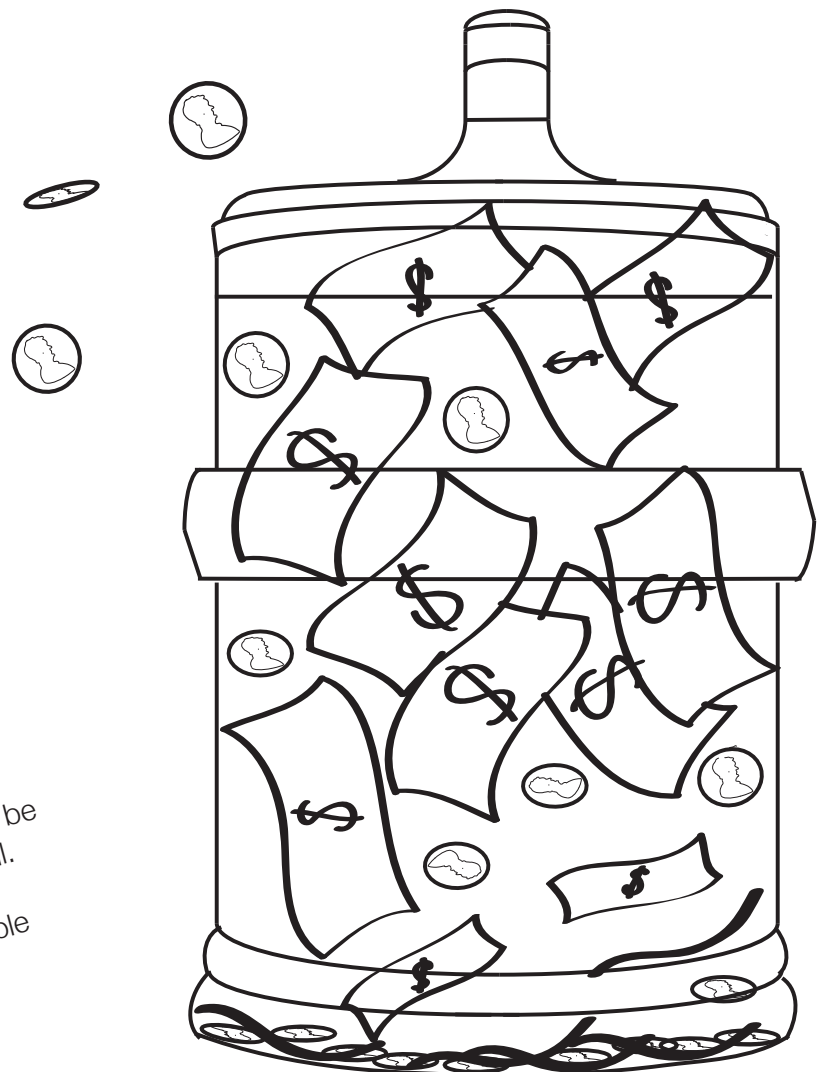
You must wear the **sticker** supplied to you by your homeroom teacher to prove that you have paid.

This month's proceeds from Jan. 26 are going to the **ILAC** center for water filters in the Dominican Republic.

Next month on Feb. 23, the junior class officers have chosen **Educate Uganda** as the new philanthropy project! This non-profit organization focuses on providing school fees for impoverished children in Uganda, helping to better both their education and learning environment.

Sophomores will be choosing the organization the money will be donated to for the month of March and the freshmen for April.

If any sophomores or freshmen have suggestions for possible organizations they can let her grade's class officers know!



Graphic by Abbey Furlow  
Annie Dovali



# When Bats Attack

## Unwanted visitors cause a stir

Erin Reed

It's not uncommon for a school to have some issues with rodents and insects. Rats, mice and ants are all common visitors at Marian. However, some uncommon visitors are bats. Though their appearances are few and far between, bats have made themselves known in the community with their most recent appearance at the end of first semester.

How did these creatures make their way into the school in the first place? Custodian Shane Beck supplied the answer. "They sneak in under the coping of the building," he said. A coping is a brick or series of bricks that are laid sideways at the top of a wall.

Beck also said that the bats have been found dead and alive in the past. However, they've never been found in classrooms.

"Nope, never a classroom," Beck said, "but we have found them in the gym, chapel and quad. One time I found one of the little suckers sitting on a bookcase in the principal's office while Miss Kish was still here, but I thought it was a statue at first."

In fact, a bat welcomed our very own Mrs. Toohey during her first month here in July.

"I had already heard that Marian did get bats occasionally. My assistant at the time,

Mrs. Singleton, showed me the claw that was used to pick them up," Toohey said.

The very next day, Toohey saw one on the bottom shelf of a bookcase that she used to have in her office.

"I thought it was fake at first, so I called Mrs. Singleton in, and I said, 'Are you playing a joke on me?' She said, 'Susan, that's not a joke.' I then proceeded to scream like a little girl," Toohey laughed. "Then Kevin came in, picked it up with his glove and set it free," she said referring to

another member of the custodial staff, Kevin Adcock.

"He never kills them, just sets them back into the wild, which means they'll come back," she said jokingly.

Where's the weirdest location out of the places that Beck and other members of the custodial staff have found bats? "We found a dead one in the toilet of one of the men's bathrooms

once," Beck said with a chuckle.

The bats that come into the school are seemingly harmless, seeing as they're either

already dead or they remain motionless. Although these bats seem harmless on the outside, they can harbor different types of diseases. Biology teacher Kris Sandall knows a few.

"I know that rabies is a big one," she said. "Another one is a fungus called histoplasmosis. It can grow on bat feces and is an infection that enters the body through the lungs and affects a person's respiratory system. A person with this infection can show no visible symptoms or some very mild, flu-like symptoms."

Although this may seem frightening, Ms. Sandall put those fears to rest.

"I doubt that the bats that come into the school carry that stuff with them." But to be completely safe, if there is a bat nearby, do not try to pick it up or provoke it. Inform the nearest teacher of the problem and it will be taken care of.

Fortunately, even with all the exposure they're getting, bats haven't been as big of a problem this year. Beck can attest to this.

"Surprisingly [the bats aren't much of a problem], at least not as much as they have been in previous years," Beck said.

"[W]e have found [bats] in the gym, chapel and quad. One time I found one of the little suckers sitting on a bookcase in the principal's office while Miss Kish was still here, but I thought it was a statue at first."

-Custodian Mr. Shane Beck

## Teachers with **BOOTS**

Multiple teachers display new accessory in the wake of injury

**Mrs. Susan Juza**  
social studies teacher



The real story is...

"I was hiking on our land and stopped, took a step and fell in a hole. I sprained my foot and had to limp back to my house."

I wish that...

"I only wish that my husband would have been there to help me walk back home."

**Mr. Mark Koesters**  
religion teacher



"I accompanied some seniors to a Christmas party for physically and mentally challenged kids. I saw them pull up in their cars, and I waved. While I was waving, I stepped off a curb, and I actually broke a bone in my foot."

"I wish that I had been protecting a Marian girl from someone who wanted to steal her purse."

Graphic and photos by Molly Rakoczy