

Stories from the Heart



ALUM PROFILE Kailie Benson '86



Left: Kailie with her husband David, daughter Ryleigh, and son Samuel.

Right: Kailie at Sacred Heart, circa 1984.

Hometown

Technically I was born in Alberta, but we only lived there for a few months so I called Halifax home for the first 21 years of my life.

What grades did you take at Sacred Heart?

We moved around a bit, so I went to Sacred Heart for Grades Primary to Grade 2, then I came back for Grades 7-11. So while I didn't graduate from Sacred Heart, I took the bulk of my schooling there.

Which teacher had the most impact on you?

A number of teachers did and for a variety of reasons. I had Mme. Ascoli, who was from Nice, France, and she made a great impression on me because of her character and because of her passion for the French language and culture. I always thought Mrs. Sherlock, our PhysEd teacher was the coolest, especially for the way she dressed. My most vivid memories are of Sr. McNamara, RSCJ. Although I didn't generally misbehave, one day in particular I recall that I was bored and so was being disruptive in class. Our classroom was on the ground floor,

right next to the music room, and she put me in the hall for a timeout. I would knock on her door and run away. It only took two times for her to figure out it was me, but that incident led to the discovery that I had both hearing and vision loss which meant I couldn't see the board or hear the teachers well. That was contributing to my boredom, and it was a revelation. From something negative came something positive.

What is the most important thing you learned at Sacred Heart?

The foundation that was set for me at Sacred Heart was all about family, with small, intimate groups of close-knit people who were invested in each other. It was a garden in which we were growing. That has really paid dividends for me and how I approach my life and my teams — I cultivate and care for them like a family. The other thing that was super powerful, and that has been important in both my personal and professional life, is the multi-cultural environment I went to school in. That experience and how we learned to treat one another was priceless.

One of the most ironic things about my time at Sacred Heart is that I despised wearing a uniform and looking like all of the other girls. But fast forward to when I joined the Canadian military after I started at Saint Mary's University — I wore a uniform. Fast forward again to the US Coast Guard, and you guessed it — a uniform! Twenty-eight years later I'm still wearing a uniform! I guess I didn't mind it so much after all!

What did you do immediately after graduating?

I went to SMU where I took a Bachelor of Arts with a major in French and a minor in Classical History. It was a purely utilitarian move as I was in the Reserves at the time and contemplating a full-time role in the military. I knew that if I didn't speak both languages fluently, my chances of getting a good placement were limited. After I graduated, I moved to Florida where my family had just emigrated, and after a variety of jobs in Florida I reached out to the Coast Guard which was actively seeking female recruits. I enlisted and went off to boot camp. My very first station was in Hawaii; I served on a 378-foot Coast Guard cutter that toured predominantly off the coast of Alaska. I also got to travel to some other really cool places like Japan, which I loved.

What are you doing now?

I didn't plan on my whole career being in the Coast Guard. The sea was an adventure originally, but I wanted to have a family and didn't want to be away for extended periods of time. I eventually moved to more shore-based operations, including port operations, commercial shipping, and waterways management, which was a lot more conducive to my lifestyle. Earlier this year, I took on the role of Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Sector Boston, also known as the Captain of the Port for Boston. I'm in charge of 1,500 people and a host of units, and together we cover the border from New Hampshire to Plymouth Massachusetts. As part of that role, I wear five different "hats" among them security, environmental protection, ship inspection, and search and rescue. Ninety percent of the role I know well, but the other 10%, the search and rescue side of the job, I don't know as well. And while I'm not intimidated by it, let's just say I keep the manual next to my bed! It keeps me fresh and constantly learning.

What's next for you?

This is a three-year tour. I'm already 28 years into my time with the military and can only work five more years before I have to retire. I would love to do something fresh and unrelated to federal service, something where there's more room for creativity and problem-solving - like tackling world hunger! One avenue that I am interested in pursuing is with one of the UN groups working on global problems like world hunger so I could take my skill set and apply it to those issues.

What's the achievement you're most proud of?

Personally, it's raising two kids who appear to be well-adjusted, bright, and excited about their futures. Professionally, it was in my last job where I was in charge of the Emergency Management Program for the entire Coast Guard. Our team reimagined, revamped, and reenergized that program in under two years despite the pandemic and a lengthy government shutdown, which is quite remarkable given how government organizations are laden with slow processes and expeditious change is not always feasible.

What word of advice would you give to the class of 2022?

I would say that success in life is not necessarily correlated to your grades — it's much more than that. It's about tenacity, heart, attitude, and perseverance. And even if you don't have a vision for your future, keep your options open, and more importantly, keep your eyes open to the horizon and imagine the possibilities.

Alums Giving Back to their Alma Mater

Sacred Heart is fortunate to be so well represented by alums on our current Board of Governors. They include Sr. Donna Dolan, RSCJ '60, Sr. Sheila Hammond, RSCJ '61 (Sheridan Road Chicago), Lois Dyer Mann '68 (Sacred Heart Montreal and Halifax), Sr. Anne Wachter, RSCJ '80 (Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart), Charlotte Riley '81, Alexandra Whalen '06, Richard Drake '12, and Gwyneth Fountain '19 — that's an impressive 40% of the Board. It is with deep gratitude that the Board recognizes their dedication to the Sacred Heart mission.





FACULTY PROFILE

Michael McCallum

Senior School faculty member Michael McCallum has been teaching in some form or another since he was 14. So it was no surprise that after he graduated from Acadia with his undergraduate degree in 2013, he decided the right path for him was as a teacher.

Coming from a small city — Riverview, New Brunswick — and attending university in a small town — Wolfville, Nova Scotia — he wanted to experience a bigger city; he wanted a Costco nearby for goodness sake! So, in 2013, he moved to Halifax and went to Mount Saint Vincent University for his Bachelor of Education Degree.

During his two-year program, he had two practicum placements, the first of which was in a local public school. It was a challenging placement for him; he grew frustrated with the education system, experiencing compassion burnout — wanting to help every student but not having the time or resources to do so. It made him reconsider teaching as a career.

Then his mother stepped in and suggested he try a private school environment. That was the TSN turning point as they say.

For his second placement, Michael was thrilled to land at Sacred Heart. Though he had considered combining an interest in psychology with his passion for teaching to become a guidance counsellor, it was here he realized that he loved being in the classroom, making connections with each and every one of his students. Shortly after arriving here, he felt like he was home.

At the end of his practicum in 2015, as luck would have it, a position became available in the French department and he jumped at the opportunity. He's been here ever since and has now taught in both Barat and Fountain Academies and in almost every department.

Over his tenure at Sacred Heart, Michael has gone the extra mile to learn new skills, take on new projects, and demonstrate leadership. He also just finished his Master's Degree in Leadership. So, when he was offered the opportunity to develop the new Innovation Lab, he jumped at that opportunity too. It was the perfect fit for this hard-core STEAM nerd.

The Innovation Lab, new this year, is still a work-in-progress, or as Michael says, it's "... messy, chaotic, and wonderful!" What Michael gets most passionate about is that the Lab transcends subjects, departments, and ages. He loves that the math department can use the 3D printer to make models to teach students about surface area and volume, that language classes can record and create short films, that an art class can use the Cricut machine to print out vinyl graffiti they can hang in the school, that technology students can design and print their own creations; including jewelry, and that the PhysEd department can use equipment to analyze a runner's stride to maximize efficiency. He also loves that this space changes how students are learning — they are becoming more innovative thinkers and problem-solvers and he is "blown away" by their creativity and enthusiasm. The opportunities here are endless and Michael is excited by what the future holds for our students.

Since Michael spends so much of his time on computers and screens, he chooses to decompress by spending as much of his free time as possible in the great outdoors. A water fanatic, Michael will take any and every opportunity to get in the ocean be it in a kayak, on a paddleboard, or for an old-fashioned swim. More often than not, he can be found there with his partner Kyle, and his dog Watson who loves the water as much as he does.



Michael's plans for the future include a short-term goal to travel to every Scandinavian country and a long-term goal of taking on a greater leadership role here at Sacred Heart where he plans to stay for many years. He loves how interconnected everything is here and that he knows the students and their families so well. "I've never been anywhere where the community is this close."

In the meantime, Michael will continue to build out the Innovation Lab and cultivate relationships with his students and colleagues. He and Kyle also plan to lay down more permanent roots by building a house outside of the city in the not too distant future.

This consummate teacher and enthusiastic innovator is making a meaningful difference for our students and our School, and we would like to thank his mother for her wisdom!

Alumnae & Alumni Association



Attendees of the 2020-21 AGM in October.

As you may have read in some recent communication, the Alumnae & Alumni Association has decided to take a break, at least temporarily. At their October 20th AGM, alums met in person and joined online to present its last report and to take care of some final details, including where to direct their almost \$10,000 in remaining funds which came from dues and fundraising events. The School gratefully accepted their gift to the Alum Bursary Fund where it will be invested and used to provide tuition assistance to students in need.

Heartfelt thanks to Ashley Lowe '06, outgoing Association President, the Alum Executive, and the many alums who volunteered their time and devotion to the Association over so many years. We look forward to the rejuvenation of the Association in time.

The School will continue to host popular alum events like the Annual Christmas Wine & Cheese, Alum Day activities, reunions, and events. The School will also continue to publish the tri-annual Stories from the Heart newsletter, maintain an active alum database, keep up-to-date on our website and Facebook Alum Group Page, and engage alums in the life of the School.

We are confident that our alums will continue to connect and carry forth our Sacred Heart mission (Goals and Criteria) as adults. And we invite all alums to support the School by providing updates and news we can share on Facebook and here in our newsletter, and with your time, talents, and financial support.

Like Debbie Coles '76 for instance! Debbie has been involved in just about every event associated with Sacred Heart School of Halifax either as a volunteer, participant, or major donor. Without asking and with no fanfare, Debbie recently made a **\$10,000 donation** which will be split between the Bursary and Annual Giving Funds. The School is beyond grateful for all the ways Debbie has and continues to give back to Sacred Heart — she is a leader in every possible way.



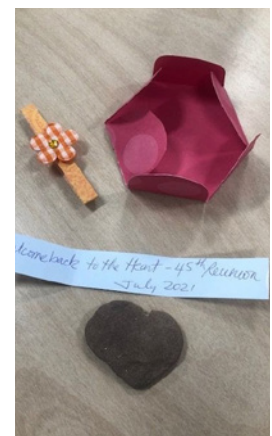
CASHA Looking for a New President

Current CASHA President, Sarah Cassidy '76, will complete her term of service at the end of December 2022. Sarah has made a tremendous contribution to our Canadian organization and represented both Canadian Sacred Heart schools well over her term. As CASHA prepares for the next World Congress (AMASC) in April 2022, she welcomes expressions of interest from fellow alums who may be interested in taking on the role. Feel free to send [Sarah](#) an email with your questions or to discuss this fantastic opportunity.

FYI, Sacred Heart School of Halifax will continue to pay dues to ensure alum participation in CASHA and the World Alum Congress.

Class of '76 Reunites

What a fun-filled, COVID-safe time the Class of '76 had at their 45th reunion this past July. First up was a walk down memory lane during a two-hour reception at the School where they shared memories, stories, and photos from their time at Sacred Heart. It was also where, thanks to reunion organizer and ringleader Sarah Cassidy, they received special welcome back gifts. Then it was off to a group dinner in downtown Halifax, where the festivities continued. Thanks ladies for coming back to the Heart, where you always have a home.



If you're interested in organizing your class reunion, please reach out to Director of Institutional Advancement & Alumni Relations Miriam Regan to get the ball rolling.



Save the Date! Alum Wine and Cheese

It's back! We will host our Annual Wine & Cheese one way or another on December 17th. Save the date and stay tuned for confirmation. We'll make a final decision about hosting the event in person or online based on the pandemic conditions and guidelines at the time. If in-person, all participants will be required to show proof of vaccination.



The Gift of Legacy

Have you considered designating Sacred Heart School of Halifax in your will? Many who know the transformative power of a Sacred Heart education want to make this possible for others and be sure it remains strong long after they have passed. Legacy gifts provide peace of mind and are very meaningful to our School. They also have beneficial tax implications for your survivors. Designating Sacred Heart, a charitable organization, as a beneficiary through your RRSP, TFSA, or RRIF means the gift does not go through probate and is therefore counted against the taxes owed by your estate. The School receives a beautiful gift while your estate carries less of a burden. If you're interested and would like to learn more, please consider speaking to your financial advisor, lawyer, or our Director of Institutional Advancement & Alumni Relations, [Miriam Regan](#).

SHSH swag



Did you know that you can order SHSH swag and wear your alma mater colours proudly? Sweatshirts, hoodies, golf shirts, ball caps, and t-shirts are just some of the items available online. Head on over to our [online shop](#) and simply click on "SHSH Spirit Gear." Sacred Heart gear makes a great Christmas gift — for yourself or someone special!



Tidbits

A big hats off to **Abigail Sinclair '18** who is finishing her Music Degree at the University of Toronto. Abigail recently qualified for the very prestigious Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition which is designed to discover promising young opera singers and to assist in the development of their careers. The Competition is sponsored by the Metropolitan Opera Company and attracts young singers studying in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.



Belated Happy Birthday to **Grace Mader '42**, our oldest living alumna, who turned 100 this past Spring.

And early birthday wishes to **Ruth Graham '43**, who will turn 100 in December!

Good luck to **Emefa Tagboto '16** who just started her master's degree at the London School of Economics in the department of management. She will be studying human resources and organizations.

Congratulations to **Emily Chedrawe '11** who married Connor Booker at a lovely Thanksgiving weekend wedding in Wolfville.



Congratulations to **Ameeta Vohra '93** who won Silver at the Atlantic Journalism Awards in the Atlantic Magazine - Best Profile Article category for her profile "Thunderstruck".

Tidbits



Thanks to **Maria (Bana) Samman '17** who provided Sacred Heart with a guest blog post this month on the value of the AP Program. We invite you to read her post: [From High School to University: How AP Launched My Academic Career.](#)



Well done to former SHSH student **Laura McManus** who is now working as the Camp Operations Coordinator at NASA! Laura recently graduated from the American Military University with her Bachelor of Science in Space Studies. She's running space camps — how cool is that!



Meghan MacAskill '16 and **Caroline Surrette '16** recently attended the Janet E. Stuart Alumnae Chapter meeting in Ottawa where they were able to connect with other alums from the area.



And still with alums in Ottawa, thanks to new alumna **Mallory Kaye '21** for taking time out of her schedule to meet and share insights with current Grade 12 students Isabel Casey, Tallulah MacNeil, and Sally Bourne who were in Ottawa recently checking out universities there.

Tidbits



It's been a busy time for alumna **Lauren Langlois Bell '09** who recently had her second child and is running a successful bakery, [Teaspoon Cake Shop](#). If you need a fabulous birthday or wedding cake, she's your gal. Lauren recently created some adorable pink cupcakes for the School to celebrate the Feast of Mater Admirabilis.



It was great to see **Ailin Chant '17** back at Sacred Heart as she recently spoke to our Grade 12 students in her new role as the Recruitment and Admissions Advisor for Huron University College.



SHSH alumna, farmer, and vice president of the National Farmers Union, **Jessie MacInnis '09** hit the CBC airwaves recently to share her take on Canada's approach to agriculture during this year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (Cop26). You can listen to Jessie's great interview and insights [here](#).

Thanks to **Kathleen Underhill '15**, one of three coaches for this year's Sr. Barat Volleyball team which is having an excellent season, **Sam Wile '15** and **Colin Smith** who are coaching the Jr. Fountain Basketball team, **Jaden Lawen '21** and **Connor Johnston '21** who are assisting with the Sr. Fountain Basketball team, and **Claire Reardon '15** who is back as an assistant coach for the Sr. Barat Basketball team. We love having alums back to support our current student-athletes as they have so much wisdom and experience to pass along. We are also so appreciative of two of our long-serving PAL (parents of alums) coaches — **Bonnie LeFrank**, one of our cross-country coaches, and **Bryan Fader**, the head coach of our golf team and our Jr. Barat basketball team.

Deep condolences to the families and friends of **Anne Carew Hallisey '53** and **Nan Robertson '21** who passed away this month.



Magic on the Course

The fabulous foursome of Sacred Heart alumnae **Debbie Coles '76, Jane Filbee '76, Karen Oldfield '79, and Sr. Anne Wachter '80** (Duchesne Academy, Omaha) were the winners of this year's Ruth Goldbloom Ladies Golf Classic, an annual fundraising tournament in support of Kids Help Phone, an important lifeline for many young people. This foursome has the magic touch, it's the second year in a row they've won the tournament! Congratulations ladies.

Share your stories, news, photos, and announcements, or pass along regards to a favourite teacher or former classmate. **Drop Miriam an email!**

Proud of your School? Show it! **Donate here.**

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