

Stories from the Heart

JENNIFER PUBLICOVER '92 - FINANCIAL TRAILBLAZER AND PROUD ALUMNA



In 1987, Jennifer Publicover and her mother toured Sacred Heart for the first time and knew immediately it was a special place. That instant comfort and at-home feeling was reinforced after they met then-Headmistress, Pauline Scott, who would later become Jennifer's mentor. Following the interview and test, Jennifer proudly took her place at Sacred Heart, despite the taunts from her friends about it being the "nun school" and the intimidation she initially felt.

As a young woman with three brothers, and a mother and older sister she described as feminists, Jennifer welcomed the all-female environment and quickly found her stride, feeling that it was the right place at the right time for her. In fact, Sacred Heart quickly became her sanctuary as Ms. Scott helped her through some difficult teenage years that included her parents' divorce.

For Jennifer, the all-female environment was empowering. With endless opportunities, she gained confidence and took on leadership roles, first on sports teams and then as Head Girl. She also learned more about the world thanks to a trip to the Soviet Union in Grade 10. It was during this time that she discovered more about herself, including that she had a knack for finance and economics. It became evident to Jennifer that she could do anything she set her mind to. Her aptitude for economics and positive mindset would lead her to Queen's University and a very formative honours degree in Economics that would later become the backbone of her professional career. When she graduated in 1996, Jennifer took a break to travel and eventually

made her way home to Halifax. Upon her return though, she couldn't quite find a job that piqued her interest, so like many others before her, she ventured to the bright lights of Toronto, where there was an abundance of opportunities, particularly in the financial sector.

It would turn out to be a spectacularly wise decision. Toronto is where she met her husband, Damien, and where she also began her 20-year corporate journey at Morgan Stanley, first as a Sales Assistant at the institutional fixed income desk, selling bonds to large organizations. After three busy years, she moved to New York, which immediately became her favourite city. It was in New York where Jennifer continued her work with Morgan Stanley in progressively senior roles, before setting off to London, England, ultimately becoming the Europe, Middle East, and North Africa (EMEA) Chief Operating Officer of the Investment Banking Division, while simultaneously raising her two children, Celeste and John.

In 2017, she moved back to Toronto with her family and joined RBC as Vice President, Strategic Initiatives. In 2023, Jennifer became the CEO of RBC Insurance, the first woman ever to hold this role, one that sees her lead over 3,000 employees. In 2024, Jennifer was appointed to Group Head of RBC Insurance and to RBC's Executive team, a group of 12 individuals responsible for setting the strategic direction for the entire organization.

Jennifer has always been ambitious; in fact, her original goal, according to the 1992 Yearbook, was to be "...the first non-male non-American President of the United States!" She doesn't think of herself as a trailblazer, even though that is exactly what she has become; instead, she thinks of herself as someone who makes wise choices and does the job well. The rest has taken care of itself. She is proud of her professional journey, especially her ability to add value in her roles and to continuously make an impact both on the companies she's worked for and young professionals through her active mentorship. However, she is most proud of her children and having a front-row seat to watch them grow into the incredible humans they have become.

While she doesn't get back home to Halifax as much as she would like, she still treasures both the city and Sacred Heart. If Jennifer had the opportunity to speak to the Class of 2025, she would give them some very simple advice: **"Don't give up on what you want to do; careers are long, and you have time. Even if it means moving to Toronto and sleeping on your brother's couch for a few weeks!"**



We are immensely proud of Jennifer and all she has accomplished. We are honoured to know that Sacred Heart played such an important early role in her journey and helped shape the incredible — and trailblazing — woman she has become.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST ALUMS!

On June 14th, the graduating class of 2025 ended their Sacred Heart chapters with special commencement ceremonies filled with memories, smiles, and optimism for what's ahead.



Back Row (L-R): Shuyu Geng, Áine Heavey, Erika Walsh, Julie Nolan-McCarthy, Sherry Tu, Ella Kanellakos, Rachel Ryan, Eva Lumsden, Adeline Haslett **Middle Row (L-R):** Maria MacDonald, Caroline Gillis, Phoebe Bruce, Yuka Maruyama, Carina Li, Ella Murphy, Zoya Lawen, Milan Bassil, Aya Ferguson **Front Row (L-R):** Lizzie McKenna, Amélie Savoie, Siobahn Harris, Sophia Croft, Anya Fraser, Laura Apold, Jasmine Wolsey, Jillian McCrea, Catherine Kozousek



Back Row (L-R): Thomas Emberly, Alex Stone, Caleb Hounsell, Naequan Beals, Simon Bortolussi, Sam Walton **Middle Row (L-R):** Charlie Barbara, Kris Ko, Oliver Bourne, Adrian Jiang, Andy Wang **Front Row (L-R):** Chao Silvester, Huber Reyes, Reggie Held, Daniel Ogunro, Henry Simms

At the Fountain Academy ceremony, Dr. Robert Bortolussi gave thoughtful remarks that spoke about the power of perseverance, while alumna and former Olympic paddler, Jillian D'Alessio '03, delivered a message of empowerment to the Barat Academy graduates and encouraged them to take space to lift their voices "...their fresh, informed, principled voices". She also spoke to them about being fearless, especially as women. Jillian's remarks were excellent and eloquent, and she has given us permission to share them in full with you. If you're looking for a little inspiration, we encourage you to sit for a moment and be inspired.



ALUM DAY

At one of our most beloved events, our alums returned to the HEART for our annual Alum Day in May, and they connected and reconnected in lots of fantastic ways. First up was our traditional Tea, which this year was preceded by the Mass to celebrate the Feast of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, which incidentally marked the 100th anniversary of her canonization. In the afternoon, our Old Boys and Old Girls basketball games got underway with a slight twist this year as the alums and current students were mixed together for the first time. There was some great action on the court! And, finally, alums, PALs, and faculty past and present gathered with refreshments to swap stories, meet new friends, and share memories of special days gone by. Thanks to everyone who joined us; it was so great to have everyone on campus. Mark your calendars for next year — May 29, 2026.



Halifax well represented in Network tribute to St. Madeleine

It's safe to say that faculty and alumna Charlotte Riley '81 and former Headmistress and current Associate of the Sacred Heart, Patricia Donnelly, were honoured to take part in a special Network project — "Celebrating Sophie: 100 Years of Sainthood" — honouring the 100th anniversary of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat's canonization. The 25-day video project included Network personnel and alumni from around the world who offered their very personal insights and perspectives on Sophie's enduring legacy and how it continues to shape Sacred Heart schools around the world. You can view the entire video series [here](#). Look for Patricia's story on Day 22 and Charlotte's on Day 25.



Mattea Roach '15 is turning heads and pages!



If you're a book lover and you're not listening to Mattea Roach's newish show, Bookends, on CBC Radio, you are most definitely missing out! The Sunday afternoon show is an entertaining and engaging deep dive into books and literature. Mattea's passion for this world clearly shines through in this show, and they are an excellent broadcaster well worth listening to. We continue to be so proud of Mattea, who, as you likely know, was the most successful Canadian ever to play Jeopardy! They held a 23-game winning streak on the game show in 2022 and holds down sixth place for all-time regular season wins!

Sacred Heart Très Bien Passports are a sacred tradition



When the Class of 2025 graduated, they received their high school diploma, but they also received another very important document — the Sacred Heart Très Bien passport. This passport is given to all graduating Sacred Heart students around the world and welcomes them into any global Sacred Heart-affiliated institution. Many in our community have used their passport to visit the Istituto Sacro Cuore della Trinità dei Monti in Rome, where the original fresco of Mater Admirabilis is housed.

The fresco, of special significance to so many in our community, cannot be seen without the passport. It's a physical reminder of our oft-repeated adage, "Once a child of the Sacred Heart, always a child of the Sacred Heart." If you are planning a trip in the near future and want to visit the fresco or other Sacred Heart landmarks, don't forget your Très Bien passport.

Boosting our spirits and our fortunes!

At this year's Big Hearts Bursary Benefit, we hosted our first-ever Bursary Booster, an in-the-moment fundraiser led by our extraordinary parent and auctioneer, Mark Mayhew. It was a smashing success thanks to the outstanding generosity of some alums in the room, including Debbie Coles '76, who made an astounding \$40,000 donation to kickstart the Booster. Maria Smith '80 donated \$10,000, and Steve and Grant Haysom '19 together also donated \$10,000. And many more in the room donated, allowing us to raise \$93,000 in less than 10 minutes! The Benefit itself raised over \$280,000, our highest-ever amount! Big thanks also go to Tabitha Rogers '91, who contributed \$10,000 as a co-presenting donor of the evening. The funds help us provide tuition assistance to over 80 students each year. This year, that represented 17% of our student body, and the support averaged \$7,250 per student. This remarkable generosity was received with heartfelt appreciation.



Third time's an even bigger charm for the Young and The Rest Of Us



Submitted by Hannah Baillie '18

For the third year running, Sacred Heart's The Young and The Rest of Us successfully completed the gruelling 276.33 km, 17-stage relay around Nova Scotia's iconic Cabot Trail. In record time, I might add!

This year's team was comprised entirely of Sacred Heart alum, a PAL (Parent of an Alum), and faculty who donned the iconic fluorescent pink singlets that have defined our team's presence on the hills (or should I say mountains?) of Cape Breton. As in past years, Fountain Academy teacher Shoneth Leadbetter took on the role of team captain, handling logistics for both The Young (recent alum) and The Rest of Us (faculty, staff, and PAL).

The Cabot Trail Relay Race gets more competitive every year. This year, teams came from all over North America and included the likes of Julie-Anne Staehli, a Canadian 2021 Olympian. To keep up with the ever-quickenning pace, The Young and The Rest of Us needed to pull off a record-setting race. And that we did.

From the time VP Laura Elworthy left the Gaelic College in St. Anns to the time Jon Earle '23 crossed the finish line in Baddeck, 21 hours 54 minutes and 33 seconds had elapsed. This was a significant improvement over previous performances, earning The Young and The Rest of Us a 28th-place finish among 70 ultra-competitive teams.

A lot happened in that time. Following Laura Elworthy's run, Alex Pheeney '15 and teacher Jared Griffiths laid the groundwork for Tallulah MacNeil's '22 battle up Smokey Mountain. Then followed Sophie McIntyre '16, Grace Earle '21, Sarah MacAskill '21, and PAL Mark Beland, who cruised through Cape Breton Highlands National Park to the base of the legendary North Mountain.

Just as dusk was setting in, Sean Beland '22 began his trek up and down North Mountain. Next was Ryan Smith '22, who was assigned one of the race's toughest legs a mere 24 hours prior. As in past years, David Sapp '18 leveraged his quick turnover and impressive downhill running skills to take the team from the top of Mackenzie Mountain towards the outskirts of Cheticamp along some of the most breathtaking parts of the Cabot Trail. Don't ask him what it looked like, though. It was pitch-black and close to midnight when he ran.

In the early hours of Sunday morning, our night runners headed out with reflective vests and headlamps. Captain Shoneth Leadbetter was up first, followed by yours truly and Julian Cooper '24. Just as the sun was rising, Kyle Smith '17 hit the ground running towards the final stages of the relay. From there, the sibling duo Grace '21 (running a second leg) and Jon Earle '23 stormed towards the finish line, culminating in a record-setting performance for our intrepid team.



With all that running, it would be easy to think that the Cabot Trail Relay is purely about athletics. But that would be wrong. Anyone who has participated in this event knows that running is just the icing on the cake of the Cabot Trail Relay. The true spirit of the event lies in community, especially for us.

Next year's race may be over 300 days away and our entry is far from guaranteed (teams must apply and be randomly selected), however, a strong performance this year and a stellar Mario-themed water stop give us hope that The Young and The Rest of Us will be back to experience the blisters and breathtaking views of the Cabot Trail Relay Race once again.

Christmas Fair
Nov. 22nd

**save
the date**

Wine & Cheese
Dec 19th

**save
the date**

Tidbits



Congratulations to 2021 classmates, **Stefano DiQuinzio** and **Jaden Lawen**, who both graduated from Dalhousie University with Engineering Degrees in April. And shout out to Stefano, who made a strategic tie selection for his graduation — the classic Sacred Heart stripes!

Well done to **Ailin Chant '17**, who completed the Juris Doctor (JD) Program at the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University this year and has just started a new position as an Articled Clerk at Cox & Palmer here in Halifax.



Congratulations to **Nataya MacDonald '22** and her husband, Timothy King, who welcomed baby Wesley in May.



Applause, please, for **Captain Grace (Atkinson) McRae '08**, MSW, RSW, a social work officer in the Canadian Armed Forces. Earlier this year, she was awarded the King Charles III coronation commemorative medal for "remarkable initiative and empathic leadership" in her role as the Mental Health team lead supporting much of Nova Scotia and all of Newfoundland. Grace and her husband Bretton, are currently posted to Greenwood, Nova Scotia, and are expecting a baby girl this summer!

Also from the Class of 2021, hats off to **Lauren Ryan** who graduated from Mount Allison University with a Bachelor of Commerce Degree and a Minor in French Studies, and to **Sophia Giammario** who just graduated with a Bachelor of Medical Sciences from Dalhousie University and is about to embark on a new journey by entering the Doctor of Pharmacy program at Dal this fall.

Speaking of engineers, kudos to **Kyle Smith '17**, who recently graduated from Dalhousie University and has started a new role as a Fleet R&D Engineer at Clearwater Seafoods.

Kudos to **Caroline Mahoney '19**, who received her Master's in Public Administration Degree from Dalhousie University. At the graduation ceremony, Caroline received the Institute of Public Administration of Canada Award for Academic Excellence, which is given to a full-time student with the highest overall average.

Well done, **Emma McLean '16**, who has a Master's degree in Computer Science from Stanford University and is working at Apple in their Wallets, Payments and Commerce division in sunny Cupertino, CA.

Tidbits

Hats off to **Meredith Bullock '18**, who just completed her first year at the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University, and **Megan Campbell '20** and **Maria Maliougina '18**, who have just completed their first years at the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University.



We were delighted to see that while on a recent family visit to Rome, alumna **Lynne Donahoe '64**, was able to visit with Sr. Mary Finlayson who is living and working in Rome.



Big congratulations to **Steven Mata '23**, one of 18 undergraduate students who has been named to the prestigious High-Performance Leadership cohort at Dalhousie University for the upcoming academic year. The honour includes a \$15,000 Dalhousie-McCall MacBain Leadership Academy scholarship. Steven was chosen for his leadership, academic excellence, and community impact. As Steven works towards his Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology & Immunology, he has become an impressive student leader as President of the Science Scholars & Leaders Society, Co-President of the Pre-Dental Society, and Faculty of Science Representative at Dalhousie Student Union. Way to go, Steven!



Well done to **Nancy (Kehoe) Freedman '78**, who has just published her first book, *Happiness: The Art of Micro-Actions*, which has become an international bestseller. Nancy, a nurse and now happiness coach and educator, brought decades of personal and professional insights and inspiration to her book and also to her new YouTube Channel, *Happiness Beyond Balance*.

Congratulations on the recent nuptials of **Henry Machum '13**, and his wife, Tiana. And, not to be outdone, sister **Amelia Machum '17**, is now officially engaged!

Kudos to **Emma Valardo '18**, who recently graduated from UNB Law and is now an articulated clerk at BoyneClarke in Halifax.

A round of applause for **Omar Quraishi '22** on his acceptance into Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine, where he will start his journey to become a doctor in September.

We Want to Hear from You!

Share your stories, news, photos, and announcements, or pass along regards to a favourite teacher or former classmate.

Drop Miriam an email!

Support your School! **Donate here.**

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Our Admissions Department is open all summer! We would love to add to our legacy admissions and bring another generation to Sacred Heart. Contact our fantastic Admissions team at 902-422-4459 or admissions@shsh.ca, and they will be happy to provide you with a tour and answer any questions you may have.