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TWO ALUMNI RECEIVE GUERIN PREP'S HIGHEST ALUMNI HONORS DURING BACCALAUREATE MASS

Linda Kuczma '74 of Park Ridge and Tom Kowalsk '79 of Lake Zurich received Guerin College Preparatory High School's highest alumni honor at the end of this year's Baccalaureate Mass held Thursday, May 26 at the high school.

The awards recognize their outstanding contribution to their communities, parishes, families and careers and are named for the initial principals of Guerin Prep's foundation schools: Brother Walter Davenport of Holy Cross and Sister Frances Alma McManus of Mother Theodore Guerin.

The Alumni Council administers the McManus and Davenport awards and reaches out to the entire alumni community of Guerin Prep's foundation schools—Holy Cross and Mother Theodore Guerin high schools—for nominations.

This year's recipients were recognized for living the high ideals instilled by these founding principals through both their career and service accomplishments.

Linda Kuczma – the McManus Award

Linda Kuczma is an Intellectual Property lawyer, a career she has pursued since earning a law degree from Loyola University in 1981. She has received numerous accolades, including being honored as one of the Top 50 Women Attorneys in Illinois and named an Illinois Super Lawyer in Intellectual Property from 2005-2010.

She is a member of the board of directors of the Advocates Society, a bar association for Lawyers of Polish descent; a member of the Chicago Intellectual Property Alliance; and has served on the board of the Intellectual Property Law Association of Chicago and the association's Chicago Educational Foundation.

Linda has served on the board of the Copernicus Foundation, the Knights of Dabrowski Educational Foundation, the board of the Norwood Crossing Nursing Facility and currently the St. Mary's University Board, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1978.

But she was singled out by Guerin Prep for her accomplishments as a member of the Board of

Directors of Mother Theodore Guerin High School at the time that Holy Cross was struggling to keep open its doors. The Mother Guerin Board of Directors and the Holy Cross Advisory Board met constantly during this time to see if together they could find a way to continue to offer a Catholic education for both boys and girls at 80th and Belmont.

In all, Linda served on the board for nine years, from 1997-2006, and as chairperson from 1999 to 2003. She was not the chairperson when Holy Cross closed and Mother Guerin changed its mission to co-education and became Guerin Prep, but she remained on the board and her expertise in legal matters was invaluable as decisions were made and policies revised during those years of transition.

Sister Dawn Tomaszewski, vice president for advancement at Guerin Prep, who presented the award to Kuczma, said, "Like the woman for whom this award is named, Linda helped forge a new identity for Catholic education, one in which the wonderful legacy of both Mother Guerin and Holy Cross high schools could thrive. We are three alumni who gather today, but thanks to people like Linda, we share one pride."

Sister Dawn thanked Kuczma for her life of service. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Kuczma participated in rebuilding homes in New Orleans through the *Rebuilding Together* program.

From 2004-2011 she has helped in *Rebuilding Together's* Chicagoland program that repairs homes in a single day.

She is a member of the Order of Malta, a Catholic religious order, whose mission is service to the poor and sick. In 2005, she assisted with a pilgrimage to Lourdes, France.

"Linda, thank you for your continuing commitment to a life of service—service to the law, to the poor and sick, to so many people just like us who need your expertise and care," Sister Dawn concluded.

Tom Kowalski – the Davenport Award

Tom Kowalski was compared to Brother Walter Davenport for whom the award is named, for his life dedicated to education. Kowalski runs The Transit Group, his own business dedicated to motivating sports players to go back to school and have a career after their professional sports career.

This business grew out of his career at DePaul University, where Kowalski attended both undergraduate and graduate school. In 1987 he was asked to oversee Project Academus to assist former DePaul student-athletes and local professional athletes back to school. The program became quite successful and in 1992, he was asked to develop the continuing education and career development program for the National Football League.

The NFL program became the cornerstone of the NFL's player development effort and Kowalski directed the program from DePaul until 2001 when the NFL decided to in-house the program at their offices in New York with the stipulation that Kowalski stay on as a consultant.

It was at that point that he left DePaul (with the knowledge that his student-athletes had the highest GPA in the history of the program) to form his own consulting firm focused on training and development of professional athletes including continuing education and dealing with career transition issues.

His organization continues to work with the NFL (20 years running) as well as the NCAA, NASCAR, and the National Consortium for Academics and Sports. For the past three years, they

have trained the entire NASCAR staff in North Carolina, Daytona, New York and Los Angeles in the areas of Diversity and Sexual Harassment/Gender Violence Protection. The NFL's graduation rate for its players has risen from 36percent to more than 50 percent since the inception of the program.

In between time, Tom has been an advisor to the sports players at the inner city Dunbar High school where he motivated sports players to be good students and citizens. He coaches his own children's sports teams, and he and his wife Diane, are very involved in their local community.

Since 2007 he has been on somewhat of a personal crusade. Kowalski was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma, an incurable cancer of the blood cells. He went into remission in 2008 but is currently back in treatment.

Because Multiple Myeloma is such a rare disease, a patient-advocate program was formed to help those suffering from Myeloma learn about this disease from one of their own. Kowalski goes around the country giving motivational speeches for others living with and suffering with the disease.

In his own words, "I can say, that while I would never purposely choose this life, being diagnosed, has in many ways been a great blessing. Learning to appreciate things that perhaps I never took the time to discover because I was so busy just trying to make a living."

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