

## **Beth Pace: St. Jo student, staff member and parent**

Beth Conner was a 1982 graduate of St. Joseph Academy in Brownsville. A member of one of the early classes that included female students, she attended St. Joseph from the 7th through the 12th

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grades. After completing her college education, she returned to St. Joseph in 1987 as a member of the staff, remaining for 10 years. She was now married to Pat Pace Jr. and known as Beth Pace. She remained on the staff for 10 years as development director and alumni director. She worked extensively with St. Joseph Academy alumni, helping the school connect with former students, collecting memorabilia and initiating opportunities for alumni gatherings.

Two St. Joe alumni who were active in sharing memorabilia and history of the school were Conrad Cloetta ('31) and Joe Webb Martinez ('32). She noted that many of the historic photographs and items that line the Administrative Building's halls were due to their efforts. She also lauded Meme Garza ('68), who was instrumental in locating alumni from multiple generations.

With the assistance provided by Cloetta, Martinez and Garza, she was able to organize a series of alumni activities, including class reunions, an alumni golf tournament and an alumni basketball tournament. Her work included extensive research, seeking out alumni addresses and family information, which was used in preparing an alumni directory. She established and maintained communications with alumni, keeping them informed about activities and new developments at St. Joseph. She credits countless alumni who gave of their time, gifts and talents and who brought the association to life. The alumni activities have grown tremendously by hosting great reunions and events. As development director, in 1991, she assisted in organizing a fund-raising effort to help fund construction of several new facilities; a multi-purpose building, four classrooms, a chemistry lab and a guidance center. As part of this project, the old cafeteria was converted into two classrooms, an art studio and a faculty workroom. Beth noted these additions were greatly needed by St. Joe to meet the increasing number of new students.

She worked under the leadership of the St. Joseph principal, Brother Francis Garza ('58), and she credits the success of the campaign to his stewardship and a large network of hardworking alumni, parents and friends.

This \$2 million project, which was paid off by the time it was completed, was made possible through the efforts of school board members and other friends of St. Joseph Academy. The project was supported by a generous response from many alumni and parents. In addition, the Sisters of the Incarnate Word made a sizable donation to the project in memory of their founder, Venerable Mother Jeanne Chezard de Matel.

Among those who served as leadership donors to the campaign were Mr. and Mrs. Raul Tijerina Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Carlos Cantu, the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament, Mrs. William Love Hardee, The John G. and Marie Stella Kennedy Memorial Foundation, Mrs. Brian Long (Marcella), The Burkitt Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Conner, The Cleve Tandy Foundation, and Mr. and Mrs. Roselle Clegg.

Beth left her position in 1997 to become a fulltime mother. Later, she and her husband, Pat Pace Jr., enrolled their daughter Allison as a St. Joseph student.

In recent years, Beth and Pat have continued their relationship with the school in their role as parents. Beth also served on the inaugural Saint Joseph Academy School Board. In 2014, daughter Allison graduated from St. Joseph and now attends Texas A&M University. Son Conner is now a St. Joseph high school student.

Beth recognizes the leadership of the Marist Brothers of the Schools and the faculty for continuing academic excellence of St. Joseph Academy. In addition, she attributes the growth and success of the Academy to the support of the extended network of alumni, faculty and parents.

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