

Comet Alumni Spotlight

John Donnelly

St. Thomas Class of 1995



Educational Background: graduated from Peoria Notre Dame in 1999, University of Notre Dame in 2003, and MA from Bradley in 2010

Recent Achievements: I'm currently in my 17th year of teaching at Peoria Notre Dame. I also recently got engaged, which is pretty exciting. I think that counts as an achievement.

Family: My parents are both former parish council members, something I know they really enjoyed. My younger sister and brother also graduated from St. Thomas. I'm thrilled that my niece started pre-K at St. Thomas this year and just loves it. I have a couple cousins working at St. Thomas now too - I have a lot of cousins, so I suppose it's just odds on that they'd be working somewhere/everywhere. I also have a cousin attending St. Thomas.

Favorite experience as a St. Thomas Comet: Gosh, there's a lot. Getting to know Msgr. Watson was an amazing thing. I was fortunate to be a server a fair amount, and whether it was a school mass, a funeral, or a wedding, he was just so good with people at all those occasions, whether sad or joyful. There were a lot of really great teachers, staff, and students during my time there. We took some fun field trips to the planetarium and to Maquoketa caves. It was fun being a part of some really good soccer and basketball teams - a very tiny part that is. I had a lot of classmates who were great athletes. I could always appreciate how good, though I wasn't much of one myself.

St. Thomas teacher who made an impact on you: Wow that's a tough one because they all did in their own way. Mrs. Zarley and Miss Golden (now Mrs. Winkler, who I got to work with at PND - hi Molly!) were incredibly kind to me when I started at St. Thomas as a 2nd grader. Mrs. Stoltz always demanded the best from me and all her students. I loved all the projects Miss Durham and Mrs. Herr had us do. I'm delighted that Ms. Hozie is still there working with students. I suppose that she's a teenager by now, with that Feb 29th birthday and all :) Mrs. O'Toole was so good with music, Mrs. Bahnsen and Mrs. Heiser helped me with science, which was always the toughest subject for me. They made it fun, which most all of the teachers at St. Thomas did while I was there.

Piece of advice for current Comets: The best advice that I can think of (and it is wildly unoriginal) is to try the best you can and to spend your life getting to do what you love. Most days teaching is pretty fun. I get to talk to other people about things I'm passionate about and get to hear their thoughts on those things and then also about what matters to them. It's pretty great.

The other piece of advice I have is to try as much as possible to do some concrete good deed for others each day. I half joke with my students that they should do a good deed each day and then that they can do whatever they want after that. I'm joking that they can do whatever after, but I'm also half serious about the doing good deeds. As interested as I am in what they believe, I'm much more interested in what they do and how they treat others. Take advantage of the opportunities you have to do good for others.

