

Central Catholic High School alumnus learned to translate faith into action

Henry Van de Putte III remembers exactly how he chose to attend Central Catholic High School. He was an eighth grader at St. Martin Hall when his class visited the historic Marianist school.

Central Catholic, which offers a comprehensive, college-prep curriculum, was founded on Aug. 26, 1852, by the teaching Priests and Brothers of the Society of Mary (Marianists). Central Catholic is the oldest high school for boys in Texas and now the only all boys school in San Antonio.

"The brothers and priests at Central Catholic interacted with us eighth graders," he says. "They were so personable, so available. They made a personal connection with me." That was 1998 when Henry became the first member of his family to attend Central Catholic. He admits that he had a tough time during his freshman year.

"I was failing freshman English," he remembers. "But the faculty worked with me. They wanted us to be successful. By the time I graduated, I was in

Honors English and the National Honor Society."

Service to the community also became part of his daily high school life. Mary's challenge to "Do whatever Jesus tells you" was engrained into him at Central Catholic.

"I try to live by that even today," Van de Putte says. He was active in campus ministry — especially the student retreat program — and the Guardian Angels (Central Catholic's community service organization through which he gave many volunteer hours).

Central Catholic Senior JROTC Instructor Major Louis Ullrich remembers Van de Putte as a good student with a positive attitude who easily earned the respect of his peers and the younger students.

Steve Hemphill, a Class of 2000 Central Catholic graduate and now Central Catholic Advancement Associate for Alumni, agrees.

"Henry sets such a great example as a Central Catholic alumnus. His story is one of many that shows how our



Photo provided

The Van de Putte family tradition runs strong at the Dixie Flag Company which includes, from left, Isabella Van de Putte (Providence '06), Pete Van de Putte, Henry Van de Putte (Central Catholic '02) and Vanessa Van de Putte (Incarnate Word High School '99).

alumni serve our community while they are students and how they continue to serve the community the rest of their lives."

Van de Putte graduated from Central Catholic in 2002. Want-

ing to continue to have the Marianist influence on his life, Van de Putte chose to attend St. Mary's University where he found like-minded service and faith oriented students.

"Any school can provide an education. The Marianists teach you to be a complete person," he says.

It didn't take long before Van de Putte became active in community service through several St. Mary's University programs including the Marianist Leadership Program and the Marianist Lay Community.

He organized 300 students to work at 20 different community service sites on Continuing the Heritage Day.

The students painted houses, mowed yards, organized canned goods at the food bank, dished up plates of food in soup kitchens and more.

In 2004, he convinced his fellow students to put an extra

change into a jar. When the first freeze hit San Antonio, they purchased 250 warm blankets, then drove up and down San Antonio streets to personally hand them out to the homeless.

When Hurricane Katrina brought thousands of refugees to San Antonio in 2005, Van de Putte and some of his classmates spent 72 hours straight at the shelters providing emergency services.

Through service, Van de Putte has touched the city, but he says, "The impact is on me. Service gives me far more than I give."

He graduated from St. Mary's in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in political science and accepted a position with ESPN in New York City.

In celebration of the organization's 30th anniversary, Van de Putte challenged employees to give at least five hours of community service. Van de Putte gave over 40. The company read to children, refurbished parks, picked up trash — for a total of more than 30,000 volunteer hours.

While in New York, Van de Putte served on the coordinating board of the Special Olympics. He organized the track and field competitions, a position that he fully enjoyed.

Today, Van de Putte is back in San Antonio where he is in charge of custom sales at Dixie Flag Manufacturing Company which his grandfather, Henry Van de Putte, Sr., founded in 1958 and his father, Henry "Pete" Van de Putte, Jr., now runs.

Numerous flags flying all over the world proudly come from Dixie Flag.

He is already looking for ways to translate his faith into action in his new position. "I guess community service is in my DNA," he grins.

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