

The

Summer 2016

# Skirmisher

Volume XCIII No. 3

St. John's Military School



bering our SJMS Family, Old Boys and Friends

Derry Henke February 26, 2015	Michael Ross September 5, 2014	Joel Cornsall November 7, 2014
Patricia Munn October 2, 2015	Paul Riley August 9, 2014	Chia Sook January 23, 2015
Cynthia Taylor January 20, 2015	Samuel Gannon 2014	Carla Gann March 21, 2015
Kevin 2014	Smoky Dean Capps November 11, 2014	Caroline Barnes March 07, 2015
Elizabeth Meier November	Heaven Lee November 25, 2014	John Hester July 26, 2015
Guadalupe Cona Cosio November 21, 2010	Steve Patricia October 28, 2015	Gary Conant January 5, 2011
Dolores Gilbert November 12, 2014	Richard Barbour December 7, 2014	Corey Salter January 23, 2011
Chuck Sheldon September 20, 2012	Timothy 11, 2014	Tyler Sullivan April 17, 2015
Verita Alonzo May 4, 2015	John June 20, 2014	Laura Harrell Sept 4, 2014
	Ronald Jones April 30, 2015	Alan Smith April 26, 2014

THE **128th**  
COMMENCEMENT EDITION

# The Skirmisher

# CONTENTS

**2** **FAREWELL TO OUR BOYS**  
Three boys gone...but not forgotten.

**4** **GRADUATES**  
The class of 2016 diplomas in hand and smiles on their faces!

**6** **COMMENCEMENT WEEKEND**  
Pass-in-reviews, awards, and celebrating the 128<sup>th</sup> Corps of Cadets.

**8** **PASSING THE TORCH**  
The leadership of the 129<sup>th</sup>.

## Senior sneak...



Breakfast at McDonald's...jumping at Urban Air Trampoline park in Wichita...lunch packed by Linda Payne and

**10** **SJMS BOY SCOUT TROOP 1**  
Boy Scouts celebrate achievement.

**11** **"OLD BOYS" RETURN TO CAMPUS**  
The numbers in "F" Troop soar.

**12** **ACADEMIC HONORS**  
Blue Beret, Dean's Honor Roll, and Honor Roll.

**14** **THE PEOPLE MAKE A DIFFERENCE**  
Cpt. Brian Bell helps the younger Cadets navigate life.

**16** **MULESKINNER CAMPAIGN**  
Donations provide scholarships for deserving young men.

**FRONT COVER**

The table of honor for the Final Roll Call. Photo by Terry Plumberg

**BACK PAGE**

The Spring Break Trip to Florida.

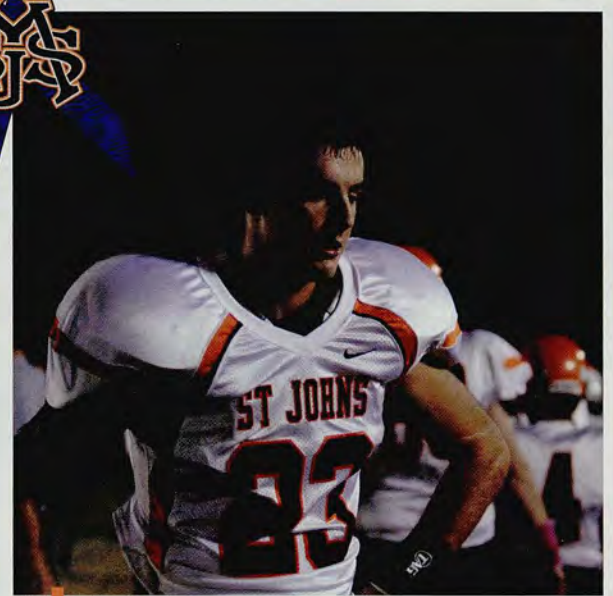


her crew...shopping at Town East Mall...dinner at CiCi's Pizza and Keanu the movie...oh what a day!

**My** teaching career spans 37 years and thankfully most of those years have been spent celebrating the accomplishments of my students and sharing the milestones they reach as they move on to build their lives. All that changed the morning of May 11, 2016, when I received a call from the mother of one of my students who had graduated from St. John's just a few days before...the trembling tone of her voice and the message she was relating will never leave my mind and heart. Her son Jake Whitting and two of his traveling companions, John Yoder, and A.J. Ricketts, both due to return to St. John's next fall, had tragically been taken from this world in an auto accident. From that moment on, the St. John's family was forever changed. The outpouring of support for the families who lost their sons was incredible. The word spread like lightning throughout the St. John's community. "Old Boys" who attended St. John's recently were in disbelief, "Old Boys" from past corps offered their condolences. Current parents opened their homes to offer a place of repose to reflect and remember Jake, A.J., and John. What we remember will vary from person to person...but one thing is for sure, each of these young men left an indelible mark on St. John's and left it a better place. *Wendy Stein*

**Jake** spent seven years at St. John's and was just a child when he started his journey. Whitting quickly became a favorite among his classmates. He walked with a swagger and had a twinkle in his eye. Jake stood out because his energy surpassed the others. His athletic talent was evident very early and he became an integral part of varsity athletics at St. John's. During his junior and senior years, Jake set passing and catching records on the gridiron and became the core of the basketball team as a high scorer and great playmaker. His high school career landed him a spot on the Santa Barbara City College Vaquero football team. In addition to his contributions athletically, Jake rose through the ranks to command Alpha company his junior year and was named battalion commander his senior year. As one of his last requests to the 128<sup>th</sup> corps, he joined the battalion on the Browning Parade Field doing pushups in honor of and thanking the parents for all their support. Jake's English teacher, Chris Zerger, worked closely with Jake on his college English class. Zerger explains, "Jake loved haiku and we discussed a passage by the poet Kobayashi Issa who writes about a 'world of dew' and the fact that we know life is impermanent and fragile. Jake was a deep thinker, an introspective soul. I always told him that instead of playing football he should major in literature or philosophy. He would smile and then say no."

Jake was one of a kind and will be remembered for all his many contributions to St. John's.



**JAKE** WHITTING

**John** came to St. John's at the beginning of his sophomore year. Having only been at St. John's for two years, his potential became quickly apparent. John's infectious smile spread cheer in the barracks and the academic building. Well liked by his peers and the St. John's staff, John could light up a room with his energy and smile. Assigned to Bravo company, he played the piper role among the younger Cadets. Admired by the middle school Cadets, John acted as sage and mentor. At his memorial service, his older sister mentioned that when John's parents Mark and Deborah traveled to the Philippines to adopt six-year-old John, they found all the smaller children looked up to and adored John. This natural ability to lead and his winning smile gave John all the components necessary to work and live in Bravo company. He joined the soccer team at St. John's and became a crucial part of the Muleskinner offense. Playing with finesse and vigor, he looked unencumbered by gravity as he reached up to catch a pass or kick a goal. On the basketball court, he could travel with the quickness of a panther. Lightning-fast transitions on offense and a blistering three-point shot were part of his signature on the basketball court. John was named to the 129<sup>th</sup> battalion staff as the command sergeant major.

John will be remembered for that smile and for being grateful for the opportunity to live and grow in a country far away from his birthplace. He made the best of his time at St. John's.

**A.J. Ricketts** was a presence among the corps of Cadets. Quiet by nature and unassuming, A.J. towered over most of his St. John's brothers and enjoyed the camaraderie of life at St. John's.

A.J. was a "New Boy" as a sophomore and spent much of his first year getting used to life in the United States. Born in Nigeria to Ifeoma and Akin, A.J. was a proud man and spent his days at St. John's quietly taking care of business. He was a member of the SJMS drill team, the Black Knights.

When he first came to St. John's, A.J. found it difficult to adhere to the rules and regulations required of Cadets. As he settled in, A.J. grew to accept the structure and discipline of the school and decided to make the best of his situation. Before finals, A.J. mentioned to one of his teachers, "Ma'am, I think I understand now what I need to do to succeed next year." His Honors English 11 teacher remembers, "During a classroom discussion of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, A.J. took my breath away with his insightful and mature analysis of a very complex and challenging novel. He wasn't afraid to share the fact that the novel showed him we must love one another, that everyone deserves love. He felt so much compassion for the novel's protagonist Pecola, a little girl whose innocence is systematically destroyed by the cruelty in the world. I was so moved by A.J.'s candor and insight. I told him so. This occurred only a few weeks before the end of the school year."

A.J. would have been a senior during the 2016-2017 school year and will be remembered fondly by both the staff and his peers.



**JOHN**  
**YODER**



**A.J.**  
**RICKETTS**

# CLASS OF



*St. John's Military School  
Salina, Kansas*



Rafael  
Abraham  
Arroyo



Tyler  
Jared  
Adams



Garrett  
Mahn  
Burr



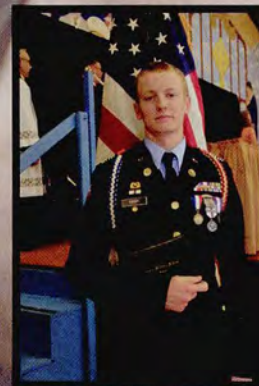
Christopher  
J.  
Castro



Mason  
Daniel  
Clanton-Brown



Marco  
Edward  
Dunbar



Connor  
Ian  
Ebert



Allen  
Jediah  
Gandy

Valedictorian



Jake  
Louis Whitting

Salutatorian



JiaJi  
Liu



Xavier  
M.  
Ryan



Easton  
Beach  
Ryser



Demear  
Thorne



Sean  
Ekemini  
Udofia



Jacob  
Dennis  
Gengler



Andres  
Hajj Tame



William  
J.  
Johnson



JiaJi  
Liu



Peter  
Elliott  
McCauley



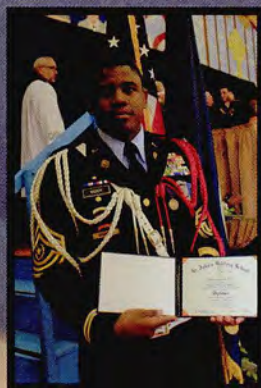
Yuehai  
Pan



Miles  
Timothy  
Pappas



Keith  
David  
Pierce



Alexander  
Russell  
Weber



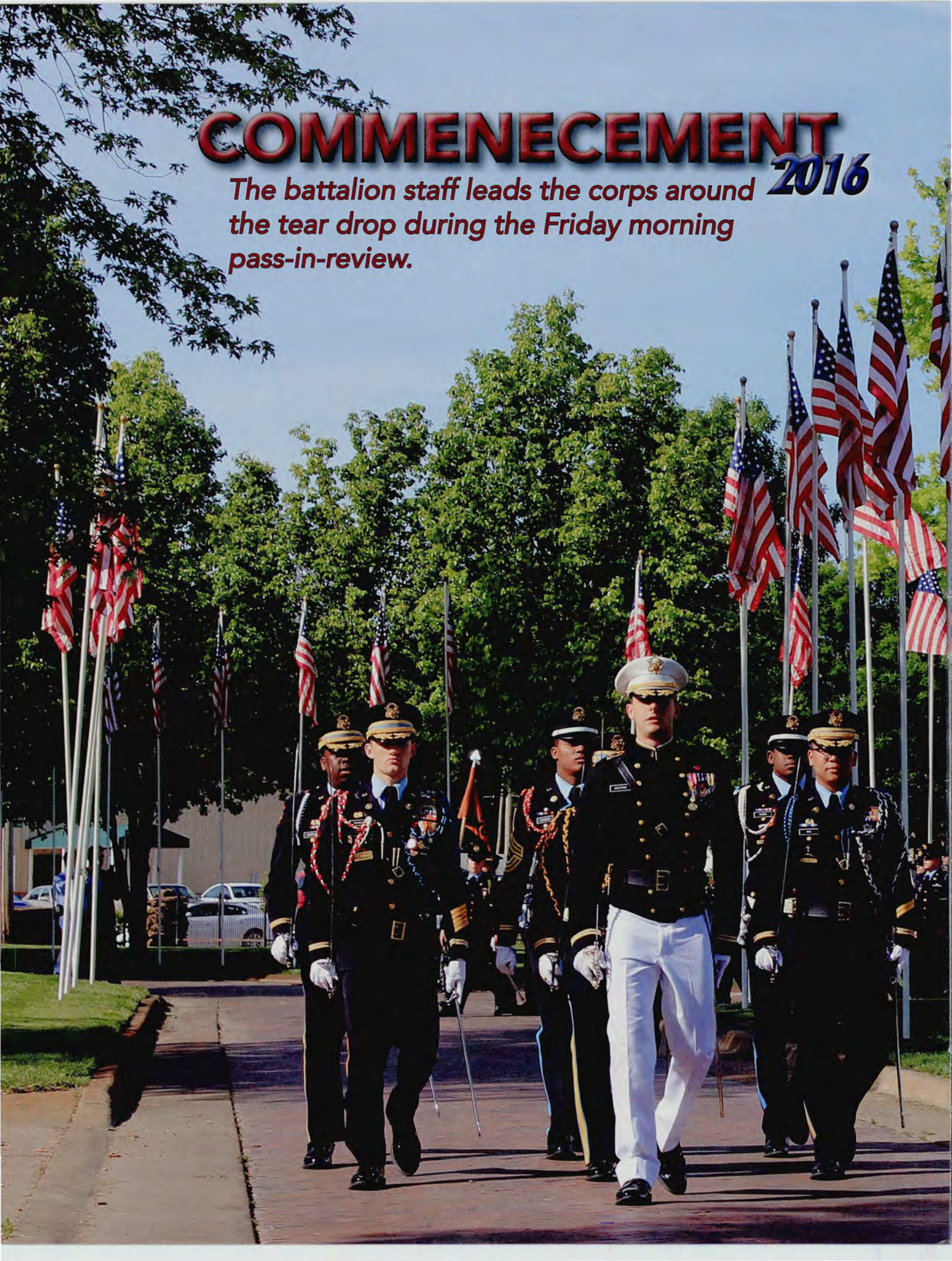
Jake  
Louis  
Whitting



Hongyu  
Wu

# COMMENCEMENT *2016*

*The battalion staff leads the corps around the tear drop during the Friday morning pass-in-review.*







James Ushman celebrates with Julia Ushman-Peterson and Matthew Peterson after winning a Browning achievement award.



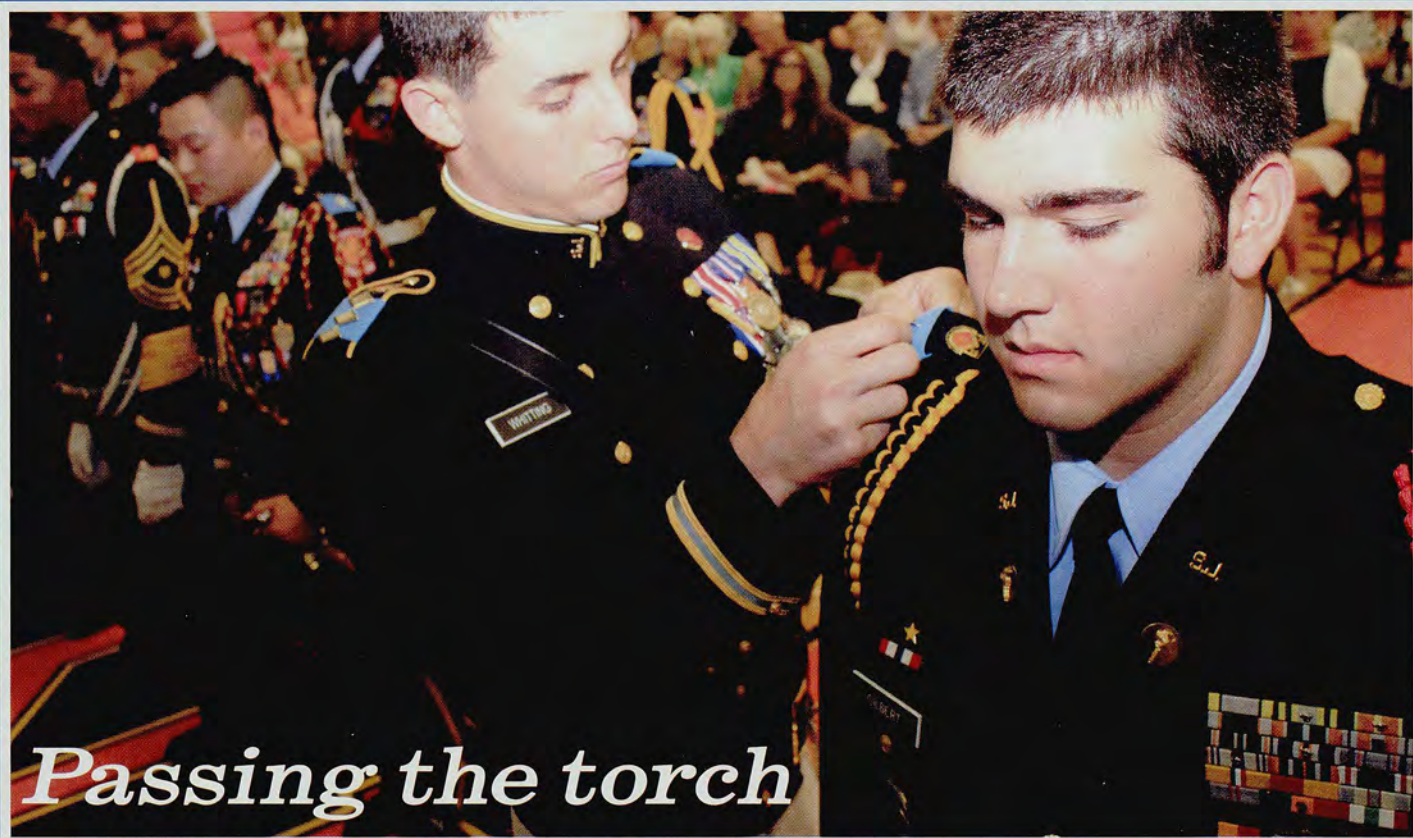
Allen Gandy stands ready to receive his senior Bible. His mom, Helene Gandy, walks with him.



Sean, Jason, and Bryan Udofia render honors to their grandmother.



Mamie, William, and Mark Johnson gather for a Kodak moment to celebrate William winning the "I Dare You Award."



## *Passing the torch*

**Battalion commander of the 128th Corps, Jake Whitting, pins rank on the battalion commander of the 129th Corps, Justin Gilbert.**

**St. John's special order #1-16, Cadet Major Justin Gilbert is designated Battalion Commander of the 129th Corps of Cadets, by order of Major George Stelljes, Commandant of Cadets, St. John's Military School.**



**Justin Gilbert  
Battalion Commander  
Las Vegas, NV  
Son of Susan & Donald Gilbert**

During the graduation ceremony, the battalion commander (BC) named to lead the next Corps of Cadets participates in a ceremony with the St. John's flag. The colors (St. John's flag) is handed to the commandant of Cadets, from the outgoing BC. The Commandant of Cadets then hands the colors to the incoming BC. The colors are crossed from side to side to ensure the flag passes over the heart of each participant. It is a solemn ceremony meant to signify the completion of the outgoing commander's tour of duty and the beginning of the next commander's commission. With the official transfer of command completed, Colonel Jake Whitting transferred the heavy weight of the responsibilities of command to the shoulders of Cadet Major Justin Gilbert.

# Cadet Leadership 129th Corps of Cadets



**Reece Turner**  
Executive Officer  
West Columbia, SC  
Son of Shirley Turner



**Marshall Otter**  
SGM  
Ulysses, KS  
Son of Sheila & Mark Otter



**Caleb Kirkpatrick**  
S1  
Woodland Park, CO  
Son of Melissa &  
Richard  
Kirkpatrick



**Christopher Reilly-  
Reed**  
S2  
Wichita, KS  
Son of Brenda Reed



**Scott Dunagan**  
S3  
Holcomb, KS  
Son of Wendy &  
Travis  
Dunagan



**Carter Newby**  
S4  
Broomfield, Co  
Son of Amanda &  
Steven Newby



**Bryce Kisner**  
S5  
Ludell, KS  
Son of Meghan &  
Larry  
Anderson



**Blase Whitting**  
A CO Commander  
Glen Head, NY  
Janine & David  
Whitting



**Joshua Smith**  
B CO Commander  
Ossining, NY  
Son of Idania Abreu-  
Valazquez  
& Rory Smith



**Daniel Wei**  
HHQ Commander  
Superior, CO  
Son of HuiRu Ding &  
Zongying Wei

Brian Bell and his assistant Scoutmaster, Micah Stahl, meet with the Boy Scouts weekly throughout the school year. This year during commencement weekend, a Boy Scout ceremony was held in Armstrong Memorial Chapel to pin Life Scout ranks on Kody Sudol. Life Scout is the last rank before Eagle Scout. Scott Dunagan leads Troop 1 in the Boy Scout Oath prior to the ceremony.



# LIFE SCOUT



from left: Coronado Triconda Council District Director, Matthew Jacquier; James Grasmick, Kody's maternal grand father; Brian Bell; Kody Sudol; Micah Stahl; Kaden Sudol, Kody's younger brother; Kimberly and Kevin Sudol, Kody's parents.



Bob Odell, Class of 1989, prepares to raise his flag Friday morning the 6th of May.



*"OLD BOYS"*

Members of the Class of 1986: Neil Therrien, Tom Smathers, Jeff Baker, Chuck Vaile, and John Scott.



"F" Troop gathers after the pass-in-review. *from left:* Bob Odell, Mike Wagner, John Scott, John Calhoun, James Pena, Jeremy Baerns, Caelon Tautz, Greg Saville, Jonah Comeaux, Craig Roukema, Gary Stone, Ryan Harris, Stefan Roberts, Drew Fager, Jeff Guernsey, Justin Ferraro, John Mitchell, Chris Coulson, Graeme Slack, Tim Tribble, Russell Davis, Tom Smathers, Kevin Kerns, Jeff Baker, Tom Wilson, Chuck Vaile, George Lang, Neil Therrien, D. Michael Gambetta, and William Heath.

# Academic Honors

2nd Quarter

The Blue Beret Cadets are also members of the Dean's Honor Roll!

High School



Demear Thorne      Garrett Burr      Peter McCauley

Middle School



Kody Sudol      Jackson Forbes      Brandon Burrage

Dean's Honor Roll



Connor Ebert      Hongyu Wu      Lian Lavoignet      Daniel Leon Wei      Xavier Ryan      Caleb Moscati      Eric Omdahl      Alex Turner

Middle School



Caden Lohrenz      Carver Patterson      JiaJi Liu      Andres Hajj Tame      James Thomas      Osahon Mike-Irabor      Jason Udofia      Xander Tamblyn



Miles Pappas      Rafael Abraham Arroyo      Tyler Adams      Mark Pearsall      Jeremy Tuck      Mason Clanton-Brown      Cameron Ojennes      Reece Turner      Blase Whitting



Jackson Brinn      Zachary Mazer      Sean Udofia      Allen Gandy      Yuehai Pan      Jacob Gengler      Oluwatimi Osunkoya      John Poyton      Akinwumi Ricketts

Middle School



Adrian Cabildo      Isaiah Arias      Michael Winters      Dawson Odegard



James Ushman      Trey Bahler

# Academic Honors

## 4th Quarter Blue Beret

The Blue Beret Cadets are also members of the Dean's Honor Roll!

### High School



Jaiji Liu



Daniel Wei



Blase Whitting



Brandon Burrage



Jackson Brinn



Isaiah Saya

### Middle School

### Dean's Honor Roll



Xavier Ryan



Jake Whitting



Peter McCauley



Hongyu Wu



Rafael Abraham Arroyo



Jack Kramer



Lian Lavoignet Leon



Eric Omhdal



Alex Turner



Brice Shao



Marco Dunbar



Sean Udofia



Connor Ebert



James Thomas



Jason Udofia



Xander Tamblyn

### Middle School

### Honor Roll



Cameron Ojennes



Yuehi Pan



Christopher Castro



Andres Hajj Tame



Bryan Udofia



Caden Lohrenz



James Peterson



Jeremy Tuck



Justin Gilbert



Alexander Weber



Scott Dunagan



Miles Pappas



Easton Ryser



Garrett Burr



Zachary Mazer



Jacob Gengler



Steven Linville

### Middle School



Brandon Burrage



Chen Hao Yu



Osahon Mike-Irabor



Nicholas Rosenthal



Dawson Odegard



Isaiah Saya



# The People

During the past 33 years (my tenure at St. John's), it has become very apparent that St. John's is special because of one constant: it's the people who make a difference. The campus is stunning, the grounds are manicured, and the buildings ship shape...but it's the folks who manage the day-to-day business of helping turn boys into men that really matter. Brian Bell reaches the boys on many levels...first and foremost in the quest for growing into responsible young men. On the following page you will gain a bit of insight into what it means to work at St. John's and learn that St. John's is a special place...because of the people. Wendy Stein





# Cpt. Bell

*"The most rewarding part of my job is when a cadet decides to start making positive choices. The first success that young man has is a very powerful one, and I feel fortunate to be a part of that process."*

Brian Bell, known as Cpt. Bell to hundreds of St. John's youngest Cadets, works in Bravo company as the senior military advisor. This might very well be even more challenging than his two tours of duty, one at Ft. Riley and one in Iraq while in the United States Army.

Bell joined the St. John's military staff working with Charlie company in the 118th Corps of Cadets. Like other members of the military staff, Cpt. Bell has served in numerous positions. During his 10 years of service, he's been a military advisor, who assists the senior military advisor, the in-school suspension officer, and now fills the role as senior military advisor. The senior military advisor position brings with it more responsibility for the overall day-to-day operation of the company. Many times, the senior military advisor is called upon to return to campus when off shift to help deal with special situations. When asked to describe why he enjoys working in the barracks, he responded, "Working in the barracks is the most interesting portion of the job. There isn't a spare moment or a shortage of something to do. We affectionately call Sage Hall 'the hive,' and it can be exactly that with middle school cadets moving constantly. There is never a dull moment."

Like other St. John's staff members, Cpt. Bell is also involved in numerous events throughout the year that serve to enhance Cadet life. Bell serves as Scout Master for Troop One, the first Boy Scout troop formed at St. John's many years ago. The scouts travel with Cpt. Bell and his assistant scoutmaster Sgt. Micah Stahl to the Trappers Rendezvous event which helps scouts celebrate scouting and encourages networking. Harvey County West Park, south of Salina, Kansas, is turned into an old-fashioned wilderness campground where thousands of Boy Scouts from across the country come for black powder rifle shooting, tomahawk throwing, trading, and bartering. This event has become a favorite of the St. John's scouting program and a work-intensive trip for the adult sponsors. Camping equipment,

food, water, extra clothing, and first aid gear needs to be packed and transported to the event and the sheer numbers of scouts in attendance requires Bell and Stahl to remain vigilant throughout the event!

Bell also coaches the middle school soccer team through the fall soccer season, giving up time with his own two young sons, Porter, 8, and Ethan 4. Both boys can often be seen tagging along with their dad as he logs many extra hours both at school and at sporting events. Each year the middle school Cadets look forward to Cpt. Bell sponsored camp outs.

Bell also tries to make life at military school feel more like home and sees to it that the Cadets have the opportunity to trick or treat in Salina neighborhoods and to go Christmas caroling with Katy England, first lady of St. John's.

Bell explains, "I hope that cadets learn from me the value in doing what is right and what is fair, that it is possible to be both. I want them to see that the way you treat people is how they will treat you, that understanding isn't always an impossibility." It's clear from the way the younger Cadets respond to fellow Cadets, their teachers, and the Salina public that most of the Bravo Cadets have learned that lesson well.

Cpt. Bell is working on earning his Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Fort Hays State University.

He is married to Lisa and they will celebrate 15 years of marriage in May of 2017.

For those that know Cpt. Bell and have worked closely with him, it comes as no surprise that he is fiercely loyal to St. John's and believes in our mission to provide each Cadet with the opportunity to grow spiritually, morally, intellectually, and physically. A cancer survivor, father and husband, Cpt. Bell is another reason St. John's continues to flourish and attract and retain quality young men.

# Muleskinner

## Scholarship Fund



Join the ranks and become a Muleskinner today!

### ***The history and purpose of the fund...***

Former SJMS President Keith G. Duckers formed the Muleskinner organization in 1967. The objective of the organization is to raise funds in order to provide scholarships to Cadets who exemplify the high standards and ideals of the school and who have demonstrated the need for financial assistance. Over the years, in excess of \$900,000 has been raised to provide hundreds of young men the opportunity to receive a quality education at St. John's.

Thank you to all the current and former Muleskinners for your generous donations...because of your generosity, we have helped many young men reach their potential.

### **LEVELS OF GIVING**

Cadet (\$25-\$149)

Trooper/Lieutenant (\$150-\$249)

Commandant/Captain (\$250-\$349)

Dean/Major (350-\$549)

President/Lt. Colonel (\$550-\$999)

Brigadier \$1000-up)



"Thanks to the Muleskinner scholarship funds, I was able to succeed at St. John's. I graduated with honors and am truly excited to be attending the college of my choice. Your continued support will allow SJMS the ability to give other Cadets the same opportunity to succeed."

-Connor Ebert  
SJMS Graduate of 2016  
Scholarship recipient

Join online at [sjms.org/become-a-muleskinner/](http://sjms.org/become-a-muleskinner/)

## SAVE THE DATE

This year's Muleskinner Golf Tournament is scheduled  
for Friday, September 30, 2016.

\*Information regarding the tournament will be mailed in August



Hole & cart sponsorships, along with a silent and live auction help raise additional funds for scholarships. Build your foursome and plan to join us on the links of the beautiful Salina Country Club for a great day of golf!

St. John's Military School  
Box 5020  
Salina, KS 67402-5020



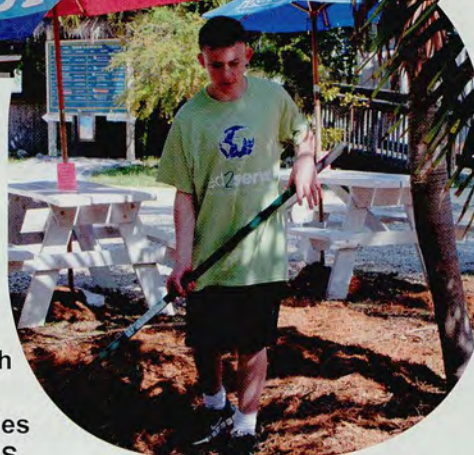
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SALINA, KS

Elizabeth Duckers  
147 Overhill Rd  
Salina, KS 67401-3581

OR CURRENT RESIDENT



The Dolphin Research Center was the site of the 2016 Spring Break Mission Trip. The goal of the center is to "promote peaceful coexistence, cooperation, and communication between marine mammals, humans, and the environment we share, through research and education." Eric Omdahl, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, worked to spruce up the landscaping at the research center. The week included visits to the Sawgrass Recreational Park in the Everglades and Universal Studios. The Cadets and SJMS staff worked hard and played hard! Father Randy McIntosh is in the process of planning mission trips for the 2016-2017 school year! *Stay tuned for details!*



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