

This issue

As we approach the end of the Winter semester and welcome the Spring season, we reflect on the truly remarkable year that our community has navigated through. Over twelve months have passed since the pandemic altered our way of life and when our students needed our community the most, our network of supporters answered the call.

This Spring edition focuses on that spirit of commitment to highlight some of the amazing stories and initiatives that have defined this past year and the impact our community of supporters has had on ensuring that our students are able to continue pursuing their goals.

From our Student Legislative Council Vice President Josh Sheppard continuing his educational journey, to Bachelor of Education student Miranda Mooney's innovative classroom initiative, these amazing students and many more have been able to succeed because of you, our dedicated community.

Your support and belief in our vision to provide our liberal arts, science, and education programs to our students has helped ensure that we are able to meet any challenge head on and continue to shape the leaders of tomorrow.



Josh Sheppard, Vice President Internal of the St. Mary's University Student Legislative Council.

A wealth of opportunities

Josh Sheppard credits donors for allowing him freedom to pursue his dreams

As Josh Sheppard comes to the end of his history degree at StMU, he is humbled by and grateful for the quality of his four years at the university. He values the small class sizes because he gets to know his classmates by name, and his professors really invest in him as a learner.

"It has been an incredible program. I think the thing that took me by surprise is when I tell people I'm a history major, the first thing they ask is what time period I focus on. I have no answer for them because I take the most incredible array of courses... having that liberal arts background, I feel more confident as a public speaker, writer and close reader. I always have something I can pull out of my bag for conversations on any discipline."

This diverse knowledge pool, as well as practice in small seminar-style classes, has prepared Josh for his next degree in law. His professors were more than willing to contribute reference letters to his applications, and they check in with him regularly about the progress of his acceptances.

Applying for law school required a lot of time and energy on Josh's part throughout his entire degree, and he could not have come as far as he has without the generous contributions from the donors of the scholarships and awards

that he has won over his tenure at STMU. While Josh did work throughout his degree, the financial support provided a safety net for him.

"The word that defines what my awards and scholarships have meant to me is 'freedom' ... StMU made it as easy as possible for me to write the LSAT and find extra curriculars to help develop a law application. It is humbling and gratifying to see hard work come back to you."

Josh encourages his fellow students to apply for the over \$350,000 in scholarships and bursaries that the university has put in place. For him, scholarships allowed him to excel at his studies, but also to giveback to the university in meaningful ways, including through his long-standing role as VP Internal on the Student Legislative Council.

Josh found that talking to people about law was not only motivational but reaffirming to his dreams. When he attended the President's Dinner at StMU a few years ago, he was sat beside His Honour Willis and Betty O'Leary, who established the scholarship that Josh had won. While talking with them over dinner, he was surprised to discover that they were both lawyers and they reaffirmed the importance of his Liberal Arts training for his future career.

President's Message

Spring is in the air, and with it a sense of renewal, optimism, and hope. Hope that this past year, one of the hardest in our collective history, is coming to an end as we navigate our way through the pandemic and slowly return to a sense of normalcy.

While this past year has been anything but ordinary, our students, staff, faculty and community have continued to do extraordinary things in extra-ordinary circumstances.

Our university community mobilized as volunteers to support the President's Volunteer Team initiatives supporting Field of Crosses and Feed the Hungry; we have continued to deliver first rate in-person and on-line academic programming; and our Student Council has initiated meaningful initiatives supporting Black History Month and even hosting a stunning Talent Show featuring our StMU students.



The spirit, compassion, and commitment to social justice — and to each other — demonstrated by our community has never been stronger. I could not be more proud of our students, staff, and faculty who have embraced the challenges over the past year and continued to demonstrate the values and strength of character that has come to symbolize St. Mary's University.

May these stories help you discover how your gifts and generosity support, encourage and inspire all members of the St. Mary's community. It is my hope that these stories motivate you to continue your support for St. Mary's University in a way that is most meaningful to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerry Turcotte".

Gerry Turcotte, PhD
President

Supporting Social Justice

On Sunday, March 7th, ten members of the St. Mary's University President's Volunteer community and other StMU community members participated in a Feed the Hungry volunteer initiative that saw over 225 guests served and 450 snacks and meals distributed.

Joining Dr. Turcotte for this amazing initiative were St. Mary's students Renata Bayardo-Morena, Timothy Evans, Kiara O'Shea, and Leonie Quedenbaum. StMU faculty member Dr. Peter Baltutis and his daughter Hannah, StMU staff member Stephanie Law and close friend Tasha Barata and St. Mary's University Board of Governors Member and Superintendent of Christ the Redeemer School District, Dr. Scott Morrison also participated in this amazing initiative.

"It was extremely heartening to see the intrepid team of PVT volunteers for this initiative," said Dr. Gerry Turcotte, President and Vice Chancellor of St. Mary's University. "Normally over 100 volunteers join me for this event, but because of COVID we had to scale down the size of the team. So it was especially meaningful that we were able to have representatives of every facet of St. Mary's at the event.

This initiative was made possible thanks to generous funding from the Lyceum Society, an endowment from the Knights of Columbus. As costs for social justice and community impact initiatives continue to rise, St. Mary's relies on this type of financial support to continue to do amazing work and help us pay it forward. With your help, St. Mary's can ensure that we continue to have meaningful impact on our community.



The Mind behind *The Five Minute Mind*

StMU student Jordan Britton publishes first book aimed at helping others

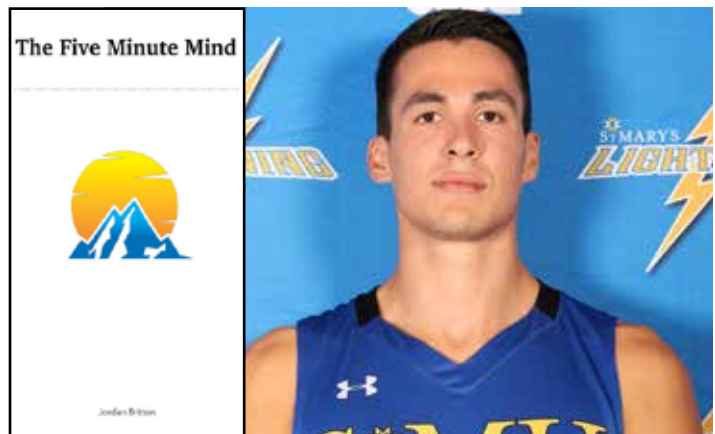
Jordan Britton has been up to some very big things during the 2020-2021 school year.

As one of St. Mary's University's committed athletes, Jordan adapted to the changing restrictions on practices with appreciation for how the school supported the athletes: "StMU went to bat for us by putting in tons of work to make sure we were able to practice when government restrictions allowed it. We know that virtually every other team has not had the same opportunity with their institution."

Being a part of a small institution became crucial for Jordan as his family was directly impacted by the COVID-19 virus. He notes that "I can genuinely say that the gestures and actions from the people of StMU made a big difference in making me feel like I had the strength and resources I needed to get through it. It's something I'll remember for a long time." He also found comfort in playing card and board games with his entertaining roommates or engaging in home workouts to stay on top of his game.

Another one of Jordan's passions lies in the discipline of Psychology. His keen personal interest and many hours of independent research were a great match for the Psychology degree at StMU. He took his knowledge a step further and published a journal for individuals to check in with themselves on a daily basis.

His book, entitled *The Five Minute Mind*, now available to purchase on *Amazon* and *thefiveminutemind.ca*, provides readers the opportunity to spend 5 minutes each day reflecting on the most essential things that help us grow forward positively into the next day.



Readers of the book will find that 100 days of simple, guided exercises is enough to cement some of the healthiest habits toward wellbeing and health.

"I think it's super important to be mindful of the things that go on in our mind and after reading a few journals that aim to do something similar, I decided to do some independent research to put something out that I believe could be better based on my own information."

In addition to having his first book published, Jordan actively posts self-help techniques, positive affirmations and other tools to help get through the day on his blog on *thefiveminutemind.ca*.

Jordan plans to take this knowledge and interest onwards to a Masters degree, keeping his writing ability as a consistent and active part of his future goals.

StMU Student's Bitmoji Classroom Goes Viral

St. Mary's University Bachelor of Education student Miranda Mooney has taken an innovative class assignment from her time in the St. Mary's B.Ed program and created a viral learning sensation that has taken the country by storm.

The Bitmoji Classroom project creates a virtual classroom where educators can deliver content to students in a fun and engaging way. Educators can add a Bitmoji into a virtual classroom setting to create an animated experience for students.

Miranda has taken this project and created one for her Girl Guide unit and has since gone on to host workshops in teaching how to implement this platform to instructors and members of the Girl Guide community across the country.

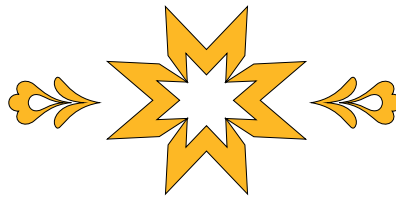
"I posted [the Bitmoji Classroom] idea to a Canadian Guider Resource Facebook page, and it went absolutely viral. People loved it.



I was receiving hundreds of messages from Guiders asking if I could host trainings on how to make one. I couldn't believe it. Within a few hours, I created a Sign Up genius to host some sessions," explained Mooney. "I was virtually meeting women from all over Canada and showing them how to make Bitmoji classrooms."

"Eventually, I got into contact with a Senior Manager of Girl Guides of Canada. I showed her my Bitmoji Classroom, and she was thrilled. She offered me a spot in the nation-wide Girl Guide convention this year called Leg Up. I put a cap on my webinar of 25 people maximum. She later reached out to me to ask if I could host another webinar during the convention. Not only was my session full, but I had a wait-list of 89 people!"

Miranda has now completed her webinars and is going on to become a Provincial Trainer for Alberta Girl Guides.



PRESIDENT'S DINNER

UnGala

Fundraising Campaign For Students

The financial ramifications of the COVID-19 on St. Mary's students have been a priority concern of our community for this past year. In response we have created the St. Mary's University Student Emergency Bursary Fund that has been supported by many generous community members and allowed us to provide some financial assistance to students in need.

The pandemic also forced us to alter our President's Dinner plans. Instead of proceeding with a virtual event we decided to launch the President's Dinner *UnGala* Fundraising Campaign for Students with a goal of reaching \$150,000 to be used for student awards and bursaries.

At the time of this publication we have raised **\$103,796 of our target goal of \$150,000!** This is a huge accomplishment and a testament to the commitment our community members have towards a Catholic liberal arts and sciences education.

We were fortunate to start this campaign with a generous matching gift of \$25,000 provided by Pat and Wes Campbell. This gift allowed our campaign to gain traction in the early stages and spurred others to join our cause.

Since the start of the campaign and the initial gift from Pat and Wes Campbell we have received two additional matching gifts. A \$20,000 matching gift from the Mauro Family Bursaries that has been activated thanks to the outpouring of support from our community members and an additional matching gift from Shirley Valentine and the Valentine Family towards the next \$10,000 raised.

At a time when our students need us the most, our network of supporters have stepped forward to lend support. However large or small the gift, the impact it has on an StMU student in need is immeasurable. Please consider making a gift today!

Upcoming Events

AUGUST
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10th Annual St. Mary's University Golf Tournament

Thursday, August 26, 2021
Silvertip Resort, Canmore, Alberta

2021 Golf Tournament

Thursday, August 26, 2021
Silvertip Resort, Canmore, Alberta



The *Marian Update* is published by St. Mary's University and distributed to alumni, friends and supporters to celebrate University accomplishments and share news and information throughout the St. Mary's community.

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