



# TCDSB'S UNSUNG HEROES



**May 2023**

**Vanessa Gentile**, Designated Early Childhood Educator, **Danny Di Giovine**, Elementary Teacher, **Ryan Giza**, Elementary Teacher, St. John Bosco Catholic School



In April 2023, our Toronto Catholic learning community experienced a remarkable situation that highlighted the quick thinking of our staff from St. John Bosco Catholic School. During a daily physical activity session, a student fell while running in the schoolyard and the impact of the fall left them visibly distressed and lying motionless on the ground. With immediate, unwavering determination, our Toronto Catholic staff sprang into action. Ms. Vanessa Gentile immediately dialled 911, while Mr. Danny Di Giovine and Mr. Ryan Giza swiftly accessed the situation. They realized the severity of the situation when the student's pulse weakened and breathing became laboured. Following the instructions given by emergency services, they also initiated chest compressions, providing crucial life-saving measures until the paramedics arrived. Both medical professionals from the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) and the paramedics involved have expressed their sincere gratitude and confirmed that the immediate response by our St. John Bosco staff members played a crucial role in saving the student's life. It fills our hearts with immense relief and joy that the student is now in stable condition, having moved out of intensive care and has embarked on a path of recovery. The incredible courage displayed by our St. John Bosco staff members along with their immediate response and commitment to our students' well-being exemplify the utmost dedication we strive for in our Toronto Catholic community. As we reflect on this extraordinary incident, let us recognize the immense strength and courage exhibited by our unwell student, our remarkable staff and the unwavering support of our extended TCDSB community.

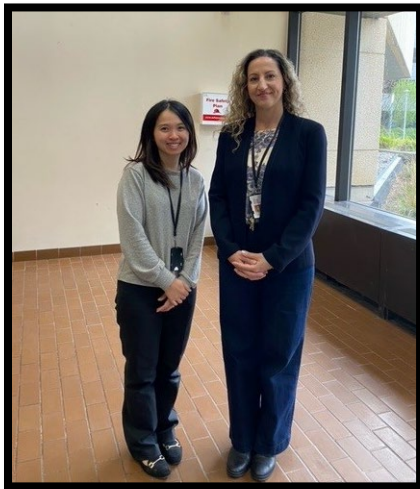
Our St. John Bosco staff members were recently commended by MPP Stephen Lecce for their life-saving rescue efforts. Please find the [Twitter link here](#) to see photos from the recognition at Queen's Park.

### Juliana Hibbett, Lunchtime Supervisor, Our Lady of Grace Catholic School



Ms. Hibbett, a dedicated Lunchtime Supervisor at Our Lady of Grace community, truly embodies the teachings of Jesus Christ when He said, “You are the salt of the earth.” Through her virtuousness and unwavering commitment to service, she has become an invaluable asset to our Toronto Catholic learning community. Over the years, she has selflessly given countless hours to our school, wearing various hats, and taking on numerous responsibilities with humility and grace. From being a parent volunteer and coordinating the snack program, to serving as a volunteer driver and translator for families who are new to the community, Ms. Hibbett has consistently gone above and beyond. One particular instance that exemplifies her dedication was when she made pancakes for our entire student population, allowing them to celebrate Carnival and Shrove Tuesday in a memorable way. Ms. Hibbett lives by the virtues program celebrated in Catholic education, in every aspect of her life. Her actions are guided by a strong sense of hospitality, kindness, charity, compassion, and love. She exemplifies the words of our Blessed Mother Teresa, who once said, “Do small things with great love.” We are immensely grateful for her presence and the invaluable contributions made within the Our Lady of Grace community.

### Sandy Hong and Marta Radic, Supervisor and Senior Manager, Health & Safety



Sandy Hong and Marta Radic, two remarkable safety professionals, joined the TCDSB in 2011, bringing with them a wealth of experience and remarkable expertise. Since their arrival, they have consistently demonstrated servant leadership, professionalism, and a genuine concern for the health and safety of our extended Toronto Catholic family. Throughout the challenging times of the pandemic, Sandy and Marta stood as unwavering pillars of strength. They worked tirelessly around the clock, serving as the *Rocks of Gibraltar*, to develop and maintain the Board’s health and safety program. Sandy and Marta have become the backbone of the TCDSB Occupational Health and Safety Department, earning the respect of colleagues and stakeholders at all levels. They consistently demonstrate exceptional teamwork and collaboration, working together to prevent suffering, property loss, financial costs and service disruptions associated with workplace injuries, health hazards and occupational diseases. The TCDSB is truly fortunate to have two outstanding individuals, Marta and Sandy on its staff. They are instrumental in safeguarding the most valuable assets within Toronto Catholic – its incredible teachers, dedicated staff and talented students. Sandy and Marta’s contributions are immeasurable, and they are shining examples of excellence in their field and especially in their character!

### **Ann O'Kane, Music Teacher, St Marcellus Catholic School**



Ms. O'Kane is an invaluable member of our Toronto Catholic learning community, and her remarkable contributions across our Toronto Catholic schools are numerous and impactful! One of her remarkable endeavours is her involvement in Trustee Markus de Domenico's *Young Emerging Artist* initiative. Through her dedication and support, she nurtures the talent of young artists, giving them a platform to shine and grow. Ms. O'Kane also spearheads the renowned talent show, *Express Yourself*, which allows students to showcase their diverse talents, whether it's through dance, art, singing or the celebration of their cultural traditions or heritage. She emanates an extraordinary spirit and

an unwavering passion for teaching that truly resonates with everyone daily. As she traverses the halls, her melodic voice can often be heard singing and uplifting the spirits of students and teachers alike. Her unwavering professionalism sets her apart, and her ability to form meaningful connections with each of her 250 students is truly remarkable. With her reassuring guidance, she brings out the best in each student, allowing their musical talents to flourish. She truly exemplifies the qualities of a dedicated educator, a compassionate mentor, a kind friend and an outstanding team player. Ms. O'Kane's impact on her students and the greater Toronto Catholic community is profound, and we are truly grateful for her nurturing presence and unwavering commitment to fostering a supportive and enriching environment for all.

### **Annamaria Morano-Fortini, Elementary Teacher, St. Benedict Catholic School**



Ms. Morano-Fortini is an exceptional teacher at St. Benedict Catholic School who has a lasting impact on students, families, and colleagues. With unwavering commitment, she flawlessly organizes school masses and leads charitable drives, supporting the community in collaboration with St. Benedict Parish. Her dedication to service is further evident through her guidance of the *God Squad*, a dynamic group focused on outreach initiatives. Under her leadership, the group has made significant contributions to the extended St. Benedict community, dedicating time to write cards for seniors, visiting long-care home residents, and spreading joy and companionship to those in need. She fosters positive relationships with students and colleagues, creates an engaging learning environment, and possesses the incredible ability to see the best in every student. Her dedication to student success was exemplified when she created unit and lesson plans for the grade 4/5 French Immersion class during a challenging period when a permanent teacher was not available.

Her love for the St. Benedict Community is evident in everything she does, and she is always ready to take on any challenge to ensure the success and well-being of those around her. When you need something accomplished, Ms. Morano-Fortini is the person to turn to, as she possesses the determination and drive to make it happen!

### **Ralph Sette, Secondary Teacher, Monsignor Percy Johnson Catholic Secondary School**



Mr. Sette, a dedicated teacher at Monsignor Percy Johnson Catholic Secondary School, deserves recognition for his exceptional commitment to his students' education. As a Religion teacher, he goes above and beyond to provide a comprehensive curriculum infused with Gospel Values and Catholic Graduate Expectations. His caring and empathetic nature is evident in his willingness to help anyone in need, both inside and outside the classroom. A notable incident showcased his attentiveness when he and Ms. Mamais swiftly acted to save a choking student during preparations for a Religion Retreat. Their quick thinking and teamwork resulted in a successful result, highlighting Ralph's attentiveness to his students' well-being. Mr. Sette embodies professionalism in his interactions with both students and colleagues. As a faithful advocate of Catholic Education and Social Justice, he ensures his students grasp the importance of respecting different religions, beliefs, rituals, and practices worldwide. His support for the World Religions trips serves as a testament to his commitment to fostering understanding and promoting peace within Monsignor Percy Johnson and beyond. Whether it is helping students, parents, teachers, support staff, or administrators, Mr. Sette consistently demonstrates his willingness to lend a helping hand. Thank you, Mr. Sette, may you continue to inspire, encourage and positively impact the lives of our Toronto Catholic students for many years to come!

### **Emilia Mamais, Secondary Teacher, Monsignor Percy Johnson Catholic Secondary School**



Ms. Mamais is a devoted and caring teacher at Monsignor Percy Johnson Catholic Secondary School, who truly deserves celebration for her kindness and dedication. As a Religion and Special Education teacher, she fosters a positive and supportive learning environment for all of her students. Ms. Mamais goes above and beyond, providing personalized attention and support to help her students thrive. Her dedication and attentiveness to her students were highlighted during a critical incident when she demonstrated quick thinking and bravery. Recognizing that one of her Grade 12 students was choking, she promptly assessed the situation and attempted to perform the Heimlich Maneuver. Her decisive actions, combined with the timely arrival of her colleague Mr. Sette, resulted in a positive outcome for the student. Moreover, her tremendous impact as an educator truly reaches far beyond her classrooms. She actively engages with her students, promoting a passion for lifelong learning and encouraging them to embrace new opportunities. She recognizes the importance of addressing the challenges students face outside of school, such as mental health issues, family circumstances, and personal struggles. By providing guidance and support, Ms. Mamais equips her students with the tools to overcome these barriers to learning. Her attentiveness, coupled with her ability to listen and understand her students' voices, allows her to establish a foundation of trust and build meaningful relationships. Her leadership and collaborative spirit make her an invaluable asset to the Monsignor Percy Johnson learning community.

**[Please click here to nominate an Unsung Hero in your community!](#)**