

ALUMNI UPDATE

ALUMNI IN ARCHITECTURE

JILL VAN AUKEN MAROUS
CLASS OF 1974



Award-winning architect Jill Marous, who recently sold her highly successful design firm, was not thinking about her future career when she was a student at St. Dominic School. Nor did she know that she would someday be called upon to design the new lobby for the school. A member of the graduating class of 1974, she says that during her time at the school, she was more focused on socialization and enjoying the sense of belonging she found in the school community.

After St. Dominic School, Marous, whose maiden name is Van Auker, attended Beaumont School, graduating in 1978. From there, she entered the architecture program at University of Notre Dame, a prestigious five-year program that included a full year of studying the architecture of Rome. She was one of only nine women who graduated from the program. Marous says that she didn't think much about being a woman in a male-dominated field since she grew up with six brothers.

Marous' father was an architect and had his own construction firm which allowed her to see that career as a possibility. She says that as a student, "I loved buildings, art, and math, and architecture combines those three." Following graduation from Notre Dame, she worked for two other architectural firms in Cleveland before deciding to start her own business in 1991.

She founded Van Auker Akins Architects, or VAA, in Cleveland. Marous grew her firm from a single employee to over twenty-five in thirty years. The company has been awarded major projects and has also been part of some team projects like area sports facilities like Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse.

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MICHAEL MESZAROS
CLASS OF 1995

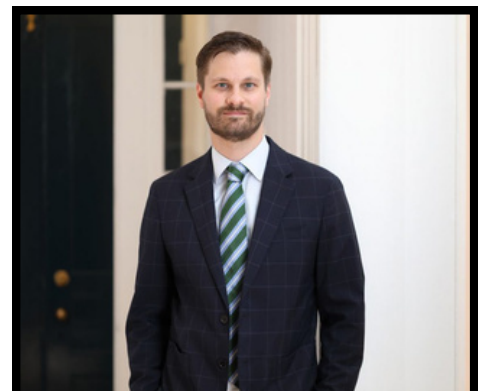
Architecture, for 1995 St. Dominic School graduate Michael Meszaros, was a career he felt drawn to while growing up. He always had an interest in houses and buildings around him and knew he wanted the kind of career where he wasn't stuck sitting in an office.

In high school, he spent more time studying the buildings around him and wondered about why the builders made the choices they did. After graduating from St. Ignatius High School, he studied architecture at the University of Notre Dame.

Meszaros's first job was at McCrery Architects in Washington, D.C., where he was responsible for both residential projects and did work on religious architecture such as churches and sanctuaries. His task was often to "bring a sense of the sacred" to a church sanctuary. One big job was a full-scale addition to the Church of the Holy Cross in Rumsford, New Jersey, a job that tripled the size of their church.

Five years after graduating, Meszaros returned to Notre Dame and completed a Masters program. He came back to D.C. and continued to work for McCrery until 2018 when he joined the Barnes Vanze company. He now works in D.C. on primarily residential spaces but did a big job for the Basilica School of St. Mary, completely reorganizing the campus and connecting an existing structure to a convent building. He recently worked on redesigning the interior of a Presbyterian church.

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Marous, continued.

Some of her biggest projects have been with schools. Her company has worked on many Cleveland public school buildings, the Hunting Valley and Shaker Heights campuses of University School, and the fitness facility at Laurel School.

Even though she sold her company and retired, she is continuing to work on a project that was secured five years ago -- the new gorilla primate forest at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Marous shared that it was important to the client that she stay involved in the project, so she was happy to stay on and help.

When she thinks back to her time at St. Dominic School, Marous shares that she has great memories of roller skating in the cafeteria on Saturdays. She says, "the classes were wonderful, but to me, it was more about kicking the ball in the parking lot or hanging out at the snack bar during roller skating." Marous was a cheerleader during her St. Dominic School days. She also fondly remembers the St. Patrick's Day Show.

Reflecting on her career in architecture, she says that the best part of her work is "interacting with clients. We are fortunate to learn all about them and touch so many parts of their lives." She adds, "The work is really all about the client." While she has coordinated major building projects, she says that projects for children hold a special place in her heart. The schools they've designed and the work they have done for small non-profit organizations stand out as particularly satisfying.

The biggest challenge she faced was keeping the business diverse enough for economic ups and downs. Owning an architecture firm is not just about design, but "the general running of a business." Because Marous took on a variety of projects, she was able to not just survive during economic downturns but thrive.

Marous advises anyone considering a career in architecture to "take as much art and math as possible. Learn how to draw." She says that though designs are now computerized, it's helpful to be able to sketch out thoughts. Architects-to-be should also explore their neighborhoods and cities and spend time looking at the buildings. Marous has traveled extensively and enjoys seeing remarkable architecture around the world.

Today, Marous lives in Concord with her husband, Ken. They have four adult children between them. Still a member of St. Dominic Church, she says, "I enjoy it as much now as I did then. St. Dominic is such a lovely community."



Michael Meszaros
(center) in 1st grade
(above).

Jill Marous in 6th grade
(left).

Meszaros, continued.

Meszaros's faith is an important part of his life. He says, "My decision to go to Notre Dame was influenced by faith." He was looking for a community in which he would be able to flourish even if he decided architecture was not for him. As a young, working person he used to ask God to tell him if the job was not what He wanted him to do, and thankfully, he never got an answer to do something else.

His favorite part of being an architect is sketching designs to solve an interesting problem for a client. He says, "The ability to imagine something beautiful and bring it to life" is a highlight. To that end, he encourages anyone considering architecture as a career to start drawing. Meszaros says he was not a natural artist but he learned from classes he took in high school and continued to develop the skill in college.

During his days at St. Dominic School, Meszaros says his fondest memories are of the times he and his friends were on teams together. He enjoyed playing basketball and baseball, and the annual St. Dominic Basketball Tournament was a highlight. He also played clarinet in the band under the direction of Mr. Hegedus, who would sometimes speak to him in Hungarian, especially when he was upset.

Meszaros now lives outside of Washington, D.C. in Maryland. He and his wife Marie have been married for ten years and have four children, ranging in age from nine to three years old.



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