

THE Eagle

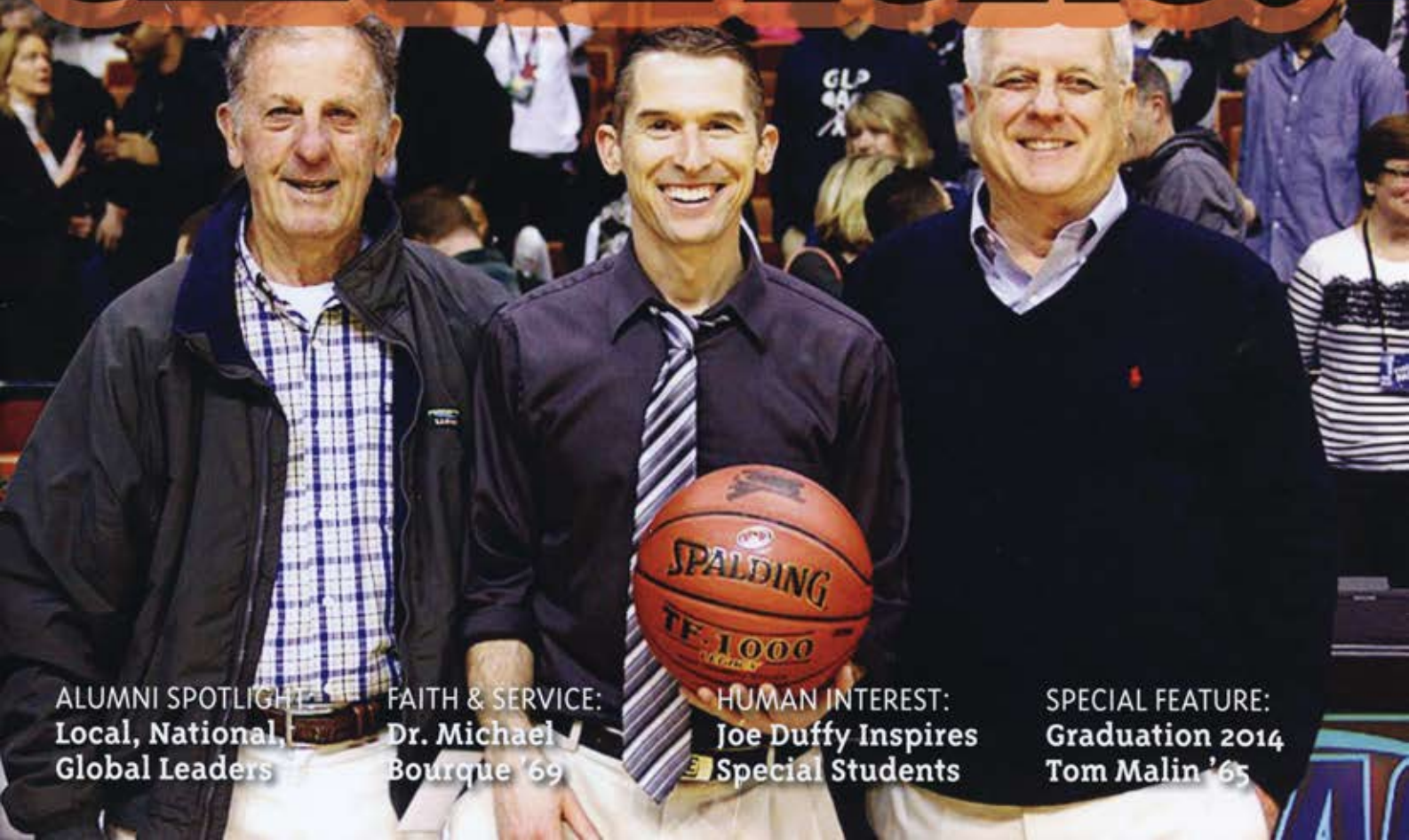
SUMMER 2014

Vol. 25 Issue 2

East Catholic High School
Alumni Magazine



STATE CHAMPIONS!



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Dr. Michael Bourque '69, Inspiring Service Above Self

BY LENORA SUMSKY



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r. Michael Bourque '69, who has been recognized nationally for his medical mission work in Haiti, spoke to East Catholic students earlier this year. He returned to the school after more than forty years to meet current

students and share his passion for serving the poorest of the poor in forgotten places of the world.

Through his presentation, Dr. Bourque shared some of the joys, challenges, and hardships of providing medical and surgical services in a third world country where language, logistics, and desperate need create significant impediments. But more importantly, Dr. Bourque wanted to encourage students to understand and appreciate the important concept of "service above self."

"We are here to talk to the leaders of tomorrow, to inspire them to consider what it really means to be a just person in today's society," said Dr. Bourque, who believes that due to technology and enhanced communications, the world is a much smaller place. "When I was a student at East Catholic, there was no Internet, no cell phones, and we



Dr. Michael Bourque '69 returns to East Catholic High School forty five years after graduation.



Faith & Service continued

only had three channels on our black and white televisions sets. I was raised with values focused on God, family, and country, which were reinforced here at East Catholic. But in today's smaller world, we all have responsibility to give back. A just life now includes a fourth pillar and that is giving back to the global community," he said.

Dr. Bourque described for students the tragedy that led him to make a promise which has changed his life forever and ignited his passion for international medical mission service. As an experienced obstetrician and gynecological physician and surgeon, Dr. Bourque joined a team of medical professionals on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. It was the first day of his first mission trip when he successfully delivered a healthy baby boy by cesarean section.

Both mother and baby were doing well when the missionary team left the surgical patients

with the hospital nursing staff. It wasn't until the following morning when Dr. Bourque went to check on his patient that he learned that she had died during the night. It was a terrible blow for Dr. Bourque who had never lost a mother during all the years he practiced obstetrics. "[We realized that] even though the nurses assigned to the hospital were wearing white, they had no medical skills," he said. "There were no blood pressure readings or vital signs [recorded through the night]."

"Because of the young mother who died when she shouldn't have died and because of her son's life, I promised her that I would change my life and learn how to provide medical mission services without comparison," he said. Although Dr. Bourque lost track of the boy from a nameless village, who will be eight years old in November, he has kept his promise and remains committed



Assorted photographs of medical mission trips with Dr. Michael Bourque '69 in Haiti.



to providing medical care for the poorest of the poor. "I finally realized what the rest of my life was going to be about; it's going to be about helping the global poor."

He's been on fourteen medical mission trips to several locations in the Dominican Republic and Haiti and currently leads the "Blue Team" of St. Francis International Medical Mission. The organization has changed the lives of nearly 6,200 people who have received medical, surgical, or dental care.

With an engaging Powerpoint presentation, Dr. Bourque showed slides to help students appreciate the challenge of providing medical services in third world countries. One photograph pictured the entrance of the building that becomes a surgical suite when volunteers arrive. Until the medical team arrives, the doors are chained and padlocked. The group brings all the instruments, medicines, and supplies they expect to use during each week-long meticulously planned trip.

Medical mission work is challenging, especially when healthcare professionals don't have blood supplies, laboratory services, or medical records to assist with patient diagnosis or care. In addition, doctors must frequently make treatment decisions based on a self-described patient history.

"The most valuable skill for this work is surgical because there are no surgeons. [Surgery also] requires a whole team for anesthesia and pre-op and post-op nurses. And there are never enough of us," he said. "We are drawing [volunteers] from across the country for our trips. These people trust us with their lives and their health. They trust that we are going to change lives during the mission trip and they trust that we will bring them home safely to their families."

It's been nearly eight years since the tragedy that led to Dr. Bourque's promise: a promise that, through dedicated service, brings hope and health to so many people. "Sometimes, if you work really hard, an amazing dream may come true. It's all due to efforts of so many who have heard the story, witnessed the need, and responded with their hearts and their skills," he said.

"Dr. Bourque was very inspiring," said Mrs. Laurie Janecko, Director of Campus Ministry and

Service Learning Coordinator at East Catholic. "He is so humble and refreshing. He really had a calling to do this. His message affirmed that if you are called, and we are called, there is a way to do it and God will create the space for people to be of service," said Mrs. Janecko, who believes that Dr. Bourque's message was encouraging for the school and for the service-learning program at the East Catholic.

Dr. Bourque encouraged students to consider the school's STRETCH Program as a first step. The acronym stands for Service That Requires Engaging The Compassionate Heart and provides students with opportunities to serve at East Catholic approved agencies. "It's all about starting at your level and having a goal that's bigger than yourself," he said.

"I cannot forget the power of prayer and the guiding principles of scholarship and service taught at East Catholic, as well as the Lord's blessings that have all helped to make my dream come true," said Dr. Bourque.

Julia Loomer Receives Service Award

Senior Julia Loomer '14 recently received the prestigious President's Volunteer Service Award in acknowledgment of her exemplary volunteer service with MARC, Inc. of Manchester, a non-profit agency supporting people with disabilities in Manchester and surrounding towns. Julia also volunteers with the non-profit organization Simply Smiles, which helps improve the lives of impoverished children and families in Mexico.



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Guidance Counselor Debra Fiori, Julia Loomer '14 and Director of Campus Ministry Laurie Janecko.