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### Michael Brennan : Young Alumni Award

St. Norbert College

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- [Alumni Awards](#)
  - [Past Recipients](#)
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- [Student Alumni Ambassadors](#)
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# 2005 Young Alumni Award

## Michael Joseph Brennan '99

“Dream big and follow your heart...God will lead you in the right direction.” In his own words, Michael Brennan clearly delineates his life since he first arrived at St. Norbert College and since he graduated in 1999 with majors in psychology and philosophy. As much as anything, it was “the beauty of the people who welcomed him and made him feel so at home at SNC.”

Individuals like Fr. Jim Baraniak and Tami Schmitz helped him to see the path to his life’s journey: the opportunity to work with young people. His service and volunteer opportunities at SNC most influenced his life decisions, in particular, to teach in inner-city Catholic schools.

While a student at SNC, Michael belonged to PEER educators, Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity and the College Activities Board. But most of his campus involvement was with Campus Ministry, which included teaching and coordinating the Religious Education Program, leading and participating in retreats and taking part in four alternative service-oriented breaks: two trips to inner-city Chicago, the Christian Appalachian Project in Kentucky and a trip with the Good News group to St. Vincent Island. Altogether, these opportunities to serve helped him decide to continue to involve himself in volunteer services after graduation. After being accepted into the University of Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education program, Michael spent two years teaching in Louisiana while earning his Masters degree in education at Notre Dame. Consequently, he realized that teaching and coaching were what he truly loved doing. Since then, the opportunity to work with young people has become the most valuable and important part of his life.

Now in his seventh year of teaching (6th-8th grade math, science and religion) and coaching (basketball, mainly), Michael’s work was recognized when he was named Teacher of the Year at Our Lady of Prompt Succor in White Castle, Louisiana and again at Ascension Catholic Middle School in Donaldsonville, Louisiana. Currently, he is a math and religion teacher at Visitation Catholic Grade School in Chicago.

Michael feels that, as a teacher, he is empowered every day with the ability and opportunity to help children “recognize their God-given goodness within themselves” so “they are more able to seek out and cultivate this goodness in themselves and others.” Michael intends to teach and coach in the near future and to eventually become a Catholic school principal.

Just as Michael felt the beauty of St. Norbert’s people when he was a student, he is continuing that legacy by helping create beautiful young people where he teaches.

# St. Norbert College

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