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 - [Past Recipients](#)
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2009 Young Alumni Award

Christopher Koszuta '01 & Jenny Thiel-Koszuta '01

This year's recipients of the Young Alumni Award are unique in that they are the first couple to ever receive the honor. As students of voice during their time at St. Norbert College, Chris Koszuta and Jenny Thiel-Koszuta initially met through the SNC music program, specifically through their participation in SNC choral groups. Though their majors differed (Chris: Music, Communications and Technology; Jenny: Music), the two overlapped some classes as Chris sang in Concert Choir and Chamber Singers, while Jenny performed in the Concert Choir, Chamber Singers, Swinging Knights and Knight Theatre.

Although music was a shared passion for the now graduates, they had other hobbies and interests during their time at SNC: Chris played on SNC's soccer team (Captain, 1999-2000), was President of Burke Hall in 1997-98, filled duties as RA from 1998-2000, was program director for WSNC radio, and served on the Knight Theatre's executive board. Besides Jenny's countless endeavors within the music program, she etched out time to be a member of the SNC track team and sang the national anthem at various area sporting events throughout her college career.

Even years after their graduation, the couple's endless devotion to music has propelled them into active careers within their field. Familiar to local audiences as a television and stage personality, Jenny has participated in local dinner theatre, been a co-host for WBAY-TV's Cerebral Palsy Telethon since 2007, was named Jazz Artist of the Year in Milwaukee, has released commercial recordings and is actively performing at various public and private venues.

Chris, on the other hand, began his career in 2002 as an editor at the world's largest music publishing company: Hal Leonard. At his work, Chris has held duties as audio technology specialist, associate producer, national textbook editor, and is a voice in product development. Also an accomplished keyboardist, Chris teaches piano lessons, and frequently performs at various public and private venues.

In 2006, the couple spearheaded the creation of the Friends of Music organization at SNC. The focus of the Friends is on providing opportunities for alumni and friends of the College's music programs to participate in and provide support for activities of the music department. Friends of Music now has a governing board, web page, has organized and hosted three alumni recitals in Walter Auditorium, has helped with organizing an alumni reception at the Wisconsin State Music Convention, and has a list of over 700 music alumni.

In 2008, Chris and Jenny were honored by the music department by receiving the "Christmas

Angel Award" in recognition of and appreciation for their service to the College's music activities and for their continuing support of cultural programming at SNC.

Both Chris and Jenny feel that Dr. Michael Rosewall of the music department made the greatest impact on their lives and the choices they made as students at SNC. "He inspired me to follow my dreams of performing" and "to give back to SNC and the community," said Jenny of Dr. Rosewall. Chris added, "He always challenged me" and "helped and encouraged me during my transition from Business to Music. And it continued as I became 'Swinging Knights' soundman, vocalist, composer/arranger and, lastly, Music Director...all key ingredients into what I've become today."

As established musicians and college graduates of St. Norbert, Chris and Jenny continue to bypass obstacles in order to follow their hearts and live out their dreams pertaining to the music industry. Whether performing or editing, the couple has dedicated their lives to their career and each other and has luckily found importance in giving back to the place that shaped their many talents.

St. Norbert College

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