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Arrivals

By Mike Dauplaise '84

The first moments on campus open the door to a world of possibility



First impressions matter, and that made by St. Norbert College packed quite a punch for both prospective student **Alyssa Wapneski** and her mother, **Marie**, when they toured the campus in September.

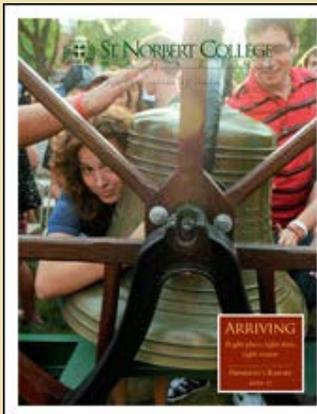
While Alyssa was most concerned with the college's offerings from an academic perspective, the aesthetic appeal of the campus caught her mother's eye. The pair were among the first visitors to be welcomed via the college's newest "front door," the Ariens Family Welcome Center on College Avenue.



"St. Norbert has a good reputation, so I wanted to come here and look at it," said Alyssa, a no-nonsense high school senior who aspires to a career in the medical field.

"I would like to be involved in music, and I like that you can participate in music without having it be a major or minor. I was hoping to get a feel for the campus, and I'm very satisfied with my visit."

Her mother, on the other hand, was so taken by the visual appeal of the campus



Look here for web-exclusive content that expands on topics presented in the current issue of St. Norbert College Magazine.



SNC Day

It's our annual fall open house, and a chance to share our cherished tradition of radical hospitality.



Getting in the game

Photographer Evan Siegle says that shooting sports is about preparation, timing – and a little good luck.



Somewhere in time

A forgotten time capsule, rediscovered, reveals what was top-of-mind at St. Norbert College half a century ago.



A warm welcome

Tour the new building that is transforming the arrival experience for our visitors.



The move-in

Join **Haley Bass '15** on her very first day of college, as the first-year and her family set up her room in Madelaine/Lorraine.



Teach me your ways

Retired educator the **Rev. Gery Meehan, O.Praem., '57** remembers **Abbot Bernard**

and the friendliness of the people they encountered that she found it difficult to contain her enthusiasm. "My first impression is, the school is absolutely beautiful," Marie stated. "Looking at the updated buildings, it's so appealing. Alyssa is very smart, loves the smaller setting and class sizes, but all the while I'm thinking, "Yes, but it's beautiful!"

The experience of first-time visitors to campus has been transformed by the Arians Family Welcome Center, and all was made possible by a wholesale reimagining of the original Third Street admissions building – a reimagining that has seen the college's core tradition of radical hospitality now actually rendered in bricks and mortar.



The project, completed in August, more than doubles the original building's square footage and reorients its main entrance to focus on the heart of the campus. Windows in the building's Glenn and Barbara Madrigano Gallery and Presentation Theatre provide a wide view of Third Street and the St. Norbert arch.

Visitors have a clear view of

landmarks such as the Mulva Library, Abbot Pennings Hall of Fine Arts and Baer Mall. The gallery in the building's rotunda greets visitors with its high-impact images illustrating the St. Norbert experience and words used in iconic fashion to encapsulate the essence of the institution.

"Your introduction to *communio* begins right here," explains **Bridget Krage O'Connor '93** (Enrollment Management and Communications). "The Arians Family Welcome Center is a special tribute to a family that has been involved and engaged with the college for decades. Now we can extend that welcome to countless families for years to come. This facility allows us to transcend the typical campus tour and help people understand what St. Norbert College is all about. The gallery and rotunda of the building are intended to provide a very welcoming experience, and a bit of a 'wow' factor, too."

That "wow" factor scored a direct hit on **John Angster**, who visited the campus with his daughter, **Jennifer**, on what happened to be Dedication Day for the new facility. "Our first impression was, the building looks very new, but we had no benchmark for what it was like prior to this," John said. "We went right in and told the staff we were here for a tour. They had a packet ready for us and were attentive to us, even though the dedication events were taking place."

The Admissions staff leads four scheduled tours that start from the rotunda throughout the day. Staff make an effort to accommodate additional requests, such as visits with faculty members or even sitting in on a class. Prospective athletes also meet with coaches and tour the athletics facilities.

 **Web Extra**
Take a video tour of the Welcome Center. [>>MORE](#)

"Every family has a different agenda when they visit the campus," said **Jim Stamatakos** (Admissions). "Our tours are very modular, so the pieces can be moved around and adjusted as needed."

Jennifer Angster is a high school track star who is interested in continuing her athletics career at the college level. Soon after she clicked the "How to Apply" button on the St. Norbert website, she received a call from track coach **Don Augustine**.

"He set up the tour for me, and we even had lunch during our visit with some of the track and cross country people," Jennifer said. "The tour definitely got my interest."

"It was quite impressive as we walked the campus to see all the capital

Pennings – founder of both abbey and college.

 **Memories you can touch**

A First Communion dress, a family drawing and an early biography of Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt – all speak to a life full of meaning.

 **Ready for primetime**

Sir Norby Knight stars in promo spots for live TV broadcasts of Green Knight athletic events – and more.

 **Alumni Award Winners 2011**

Each year the college is privileged to honor a few among its many outstanding alumni. Meet this year's winners, recognized at a celebratory dinner in October.

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expenditures either in progress or recently completed,” her father noted. “Today’s experience was the best of the four other significant campus visits we’ve had.”

Three moments of decision arrive

Donors talk about why they give – and the deeper context where possibility begins to take shape.



Members of the Ariens family

Families and individuals who have the capacity to make major gifts are used to fielding requests for financial assistance. It takes a special relationship with the organization and a project that triggers a passionate desire to make a difference before donors can arrive at a point of taking action.

Major gifts are the lifeblood for private institutions like St. Norbert. The task of matching donors with a campus need for which they have a passion is the responsibility of **Phil Oswald** (College Advancement) and **President Tom Kunkel**.

“Major gifts don’t happen unless there is a level of trust for the leadership and financial stability of the institution,” Oswald explains. “Projects need to be meaningful for donors. An additional arrival point is when we can help donors see where their passions align with the needs of the college in getting to where it’s trying to go.”

St. Norbert has benefited recently from the generosity of several families who arrived at their own points of decision, yet with each building on the strength of the other. The result is an impressive transformation of the campus, ushering in a new era for new generations of students.

“There certainly is a lot of momentum on campus,” Oswald says. “When you have three cranes working at once, you’ve got some good things happening.”

The Ariens Family Welcome Center

The Ariens family has a history of giving that stretches back to the early 1950s, when the parents of **Mike Ariens** donated homes on Fourth Street and Reid Street to the college. Mike is a former board of trustees chair who attended St. Norbert from 1949 to 1952, and then graduated from M.I.T. He met his wife, Mimi, near the spot where the Ariens Family Welcome Center stands today, at the corner of College and Third.

Six of the couple's nine children are St. Norbert graduates, Mike's three brothers attended the college, and even Mimi's father attended the old St. Norbert High School in the 1920s. The family's ties to the college truly run deep.

"Our family has a history of gifting to the college, so we agreed to meet with Tom Kunkel when he called and asked to talk about a building project they had," Ariens recalls. "He and Phil [Oswald] came for a visit and talked about redoing the Admissions center. Mimi and I talked about it, and along with [college trustee] **Ed Thompson** being interested in giving as well, the combination made the project a possibility. We have a great group of children that, long-term, can be helpful to the college. It was important to us that the Ariens family get involved."

Ariens says the family bases its giving decisions on the availability of funds; the closeness of the family to the request; its worthiness; their knowledge of the people behind the request; and the organization's ability to function with what they require. "This was the largest gift we've ever given," he says. "The building is very attractive and practical. Their architectural sense was, this is a gateway to the campus. It's got a welcoming sensitivity to it, which is very critical to a young student and their parents who might not have been there before."

The Ed and Sally Thompson Office of Communications

Ed Thompson has been a friend of St. Norbert and advisor to its presidents for many years, going back to a brainstorming session with then-president Neil Webb in 1973. Thompson and his late wife, Sally, later played a major role in helping the college turn its face toward the Fox River with a gift to create the Ed and Sally Thompson Marina, which now hosts the Knights on the Fox concert series in front of the Ray Van Den Heuvel Family Campus Center.



Mike Ariens and Ed Thompson.

"I've had a very strong passion for the college from the beginning of my involvement there," Thompson says. "It attracts and sends out into the world some great students."

His decision to provide the resources needed to begin redevelopment of the original Roland and Helen Murphy Admission and Visitor Center was in part a logical next step in campus development and in part a sentimental journey. A new facility would provide for an expanded Admissions area and, perhaps, the opportunity to house the college's marketing and recruitment teams under one roof. This initial step was to be followed by a major gift from Thompson toward the new Ed and Sally Thompson Office of Communications wing.

"Ed and I started sketching out some ideas while sitting in a local café," remembers O'Connor. "Ed said that not only did he think it was a good idea to combine these offices under one roof, he was willing to contribute the resources to flesh it out. Without that, we wouldn't have been able to get the ball rolling."

The result of their brainstorming session became a focal point for positive energy as Thompson endured a challenging stretch in his personal life. His beloved wife was in declining health – she was to die in August 2010 – and the couple's home had burned down during the 2007 holiday season.

"Our arrival point was we wanted to do something more for the college, something beyond the marina," he says. "We knew my wife was seriously ill and this could be one more thing we could do together. Plus, I really wanted to team with Tom [Kunkel] and Bridget."

To work on the project, Thompson recruited the architect who helped him design his replacement home, Chris Renier, and the team quickly grew to include The

Boldt Company, a respected construction contractor. "They were eager to do a project on campus," Thompson says. "My donation was important, but the involvement and creativity of putting this together in an attractive way also helped. Another important arrival point for me was understanding the value of attracting the right kids and communicating well with them. The combination ... deserved to be on that main street and in an attractive building."



Pat Michels '81 speaks at the groundbreaking for the Michels Commons project.

When Kunkel and Oswald paid the family a follow-up visit in September of 2010, the Michelses reiterated their desire to contribute in a way that would make a broader impact on the student experience.

"We wanted to help the college in some way, but the science building was not a good fit for us at that time," explains **Kevin Michels '89**, one of three brothers to graduate from the college.

When Kevin asked about the potential of updating the Sensenbrenner Memorial Union and cafeteria, it caught Oswald and Kunkel off-guard. The building certainly needed renovation, but it wasn't high on the priority list and the college had yet to develop a proposal for such a project.



The next generation of the Michels family gear up for the groundbreaking.

"Pat Michels then asked what would happen if the family gave us a large donation. How quickly would the union project move up on the priority list?" recalls Oswald. "Tom [Kunkel] looked at his watch, and that elicited some laughter."

The president's tongue-in-cheek response wasn't really an exaggeration. The St. Norbert team quickly huddled with designers and the Union staff over the next four weeks to develop a concept. The Michels family then traveled to campus to tour the facility and ask a number of questions. Upon exiting the union, the family asked for some privacy to discuss their decision. A few minutes later, they were ready to move forward.

Tim Michels '84 sealed the deal when he symbolically handed a check to Student Government Association representative **Keri Hodnik '13** at a later building committee meeting. As Tim told Hodnik, this was for her and all the students at St. Norbert.

When Michels Commons opens next spring, it will stand as a state-of-the-art dining facility and reception space.

"We felt we'd be able to help the most for a student body that potentially visits that building three times a day or more," Kevin Michels says. "We knew it was in need of major work and we felt it was a worthy project. Whether you're a

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prospective student or current student, that's the one place you go all the time. It fit our goals very nicely."

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