

# Never alone

## Adapting to coronavirus pandemic as teacher, wife, mom

BY BROOKE MOSCA

*Special to the Review*

PHOTOS COURTESY ANDREA SOMMERS

Andrea Sommers will never forget her 10th year as a teacher at St. John Regional Catholic School in Frederick.

She teaches social studies, English language arts and religion to 82 fifth- and sixth-graders. Since mid-March, the coronavirus pandemic has forced her to do all that from home, which she shares with her husband, Dwight, a captain with the Frederick Police Department, and their two sons, Henry and Gabriel, who are in the first grade and pre-K-4, respectively, at SJRCS.

The challenges of distance learning were reinforced May 6, when the archdiocesan Department of Catholic Schools announced that its institutions would remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year.

"I'm very sad that we are not going back," said Sommers, noting that she won't get the chance to bid a proper farewell to Karen Smith, who is retiring as principal of SJRCS.

That admiration is reciprocated.

"Mrs. Sommers is an outstanding teacher," Smith said. "I wish I could

clone her. She is caring and compassionate, and always willing to step in where needed."

This spring, that has meant videoconference sessions with her students as often as six times a week.

"The Zoom sessions are not so much for talking about the curriculum," said Sommers, acknowledging that social distancing has made it difficult to motivate students. "It's really social interaction for them."

Sommers also has frequent Zoom meetings with co-workers.

"We're separated right now," she said, "but I never feel like I'm alone."

Amidst the uncertainty and an unsettling new "normal," Sommers finds herself feeling grateful for her own education, which she said has prepared her for the uncharted waters of remote learning.

Sommers attended public schools in Montgomery and Frederick counties, and was studying art at Montgomery College in Rockville when her father encouraged her to pursue a career in education, which would combine her creativity with her love of children.

She interned at SJRCS while earning a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, where she also got a master's in technology of education.

"My master's has been a huge help to me right now, because I have a whole toolbox," said Sommers, who uses multiple online learning platforms with her students, including Google Classroom and Padlet.

Aside from coming up with differ-



In between remote teaching her students at St. John Regional Catholic School, Andrea Sommers helps her son, Henry, a first-grader there.

ent methods to connect with students, Sommers has also tried new ways to entertain her sons. Dance parties before bed have become a favorite family ritual, and brought her sons closer. It's helped keep their spirits high, as the Sommers family had to cancel a two-week summer vacation in Ontario, Canada.

While Sommers and her sons stay mostly at home, she worries about the mental and physical well-being of her husband and their father, a first-responder. Her faith is a big help.

"This pandemic has made me a stronger Catholic," said Sommers, a longtime parishioner of St. John the Evangelist in Frederick who sets aside specific times for prayer and reflection. "Everything comes back to love." •



Before the pandemic, Andrea Sommers organized her sixth-graders' "Medieval Feast."



Andrea and Dwight Sommers, a police captain, are the parents of Gabriel, left, and Henry.



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# *Urbana* Neighbors

OCTOBER 2019



*Happy Fall From*  
**the Hallowitz Family**



Best Version Media

Cover photo by  
Sarah Burns Photography





# Happy Fall From the Hallowitz Family

By Lara Schumacher | Photos by Sarah Burns Photography

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Cory and Christine Hallowitz decided to bring in the new millennium together as husband and wife. "It's wild that we are going to celebrate our 20th anniversary this year," stated Cory. "We were married at the church connected to my old Elementary school, St. Columba in Oxon Hill, MD. Our reception was at Lowe's Hotel in Annapolis. We wanted a New Years Eve Wedding with all our family and friends. Most of our family and friends stayed over the weekend, and we had an amazing time," added Christine.

Their story starts at the University of Delaware, where the two Maryland natives met. "He was a left-handed pitcher on the UD baseball team, and we met at a mutual friend's house." After they both graduated from the University of Delaware, they moved back to the DC area and settled in Alexandria, VA. Cory started working in sales, and for the last 12 years, he has been working for Bio-Reference Laboratories. Christine went on for a Masters in Social Work from The Catholic University of America. After graduating, she worked as a child/adolescent therapist.

It was their desire to start a family that led them to the Villages of Urbana. Christine shared, "Once we started our family, we decided that I would stay home with our children. I loved that my mom was home with me when I was little, and I wanted that with my children. We wanted an area that was less congested and crowded, but we didn't want to be too far. We visited the models and fell in

love with Urbana." Cory added, "We moved into a townhome in November of 2002 before there was a Giant, pool or anything beyond Bush Creek Drive."

They cherish those early memories of Urbana, "we met a lot of nice neighbors. Halloween was especially magic. It was like out of a movie. Everyone was outside because you had so many kids; there wasn't time to come inside. At Christmas time, Santa would come around on the fire engine, and we would wake up our oldest to take her out to see him. It was a nice community even before all the amenities we have today, although it was great once Giant came!"

They have three children, Olivia who is currently a Junior at Urbana High School and is about to start the International Baccalaureate program. "Olivia loves art, skiing, and the beach. She has been attending Art and Soul since it opened. She loves it and has learned so much!" Isabella is a 7th grader at St. John Regional Catholic School (SJRCs). She is a cheerleader and has been cheering for Urbana Rec since she was only eight years old. "Isabella loves it and mixes in tumbling classes." Nicholas is in fourth grade at SJRCs and, "LOVES sports, any sport!"

It's football season, and Cory is coaching Nicholas's Pony D2 team for the Urbana Rec Council. "There is no greater joy than see-





ing a child perform a task you have been trying to teach them, and when they finally get it, their excitement is the payoff," he stated. Cory has enjoyed coaching through the years with fellow neighbors James DeMayo, Turtle Sexton, Abu Sesay, Bob Hartford, Mike Van Housen, Greg Flyte, Marty Hawk, and Justin Horvath. "I really enjoy watching individuals and the team perform at higher levels than they ever thought they could. These are lessons that will stay with them through adulthood and help them be successful outside of sports," Cory added.

As their family grew, they upsized as a lot of families in our community do. "When we decided to get a single-family home we wanted to stay in the Villages. We just loved the community and how the kids could go outside and play with friends. Urbana is amazing. It's so good to know there is always someone close by you can count on."

All three of their kids went to St. John Regional Catholic School. "People always asked why we would do that because we do have amazing schools here in Urbana. I always appreciated the smaller class size and smaller school size. I also grew up going to Catholic school, and it was important for us to have religion as part of their education." Christine served on the Executive Board as a Secretary and then as Vice President for the Home and School Association which is that schools version of a PTA. She has helped coordinate many major events for the school committee for several years. "We felt SJRCS provided a strong foundation for Olivia to succeed at Urbana High School. It's a great community, and I have met a lot of wonderful people there." They are parishioners at St. Ignatius of Loyola, where all three children made their first communion.





Olivia was confirmed this past summer, and will often serve as a lector at mass.

As the colder weather approaches the entire family looks forward to skiing. "Cory taught all the kids how to ski at four years old," shared Christine. Nicholas loves to hit the slopes but prefers snowboarding. He competes at ski resorts in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Isabella is looking forward to learning how to snowboard this year. The family loves to travel and goes to the beach every summer. This past summer, "Olivia, my sister and I went to Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. It was a great experience for Olivia to see the history and culture of those countries."

The family wants to wish everyone a beautiful fall, and an early, "Happy Halloween!" They look forward to meeting even more members of the Urbana community.





# Catholic Courier



Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori speaks in favor of increased federal funding for religious sites during a Jan. 13, 2020, news conference. (CNS photo by Tim Swift/Catholic Review)

## Government urged to boost funding, strengthen security at religious sites

Tim Swift / CNS | 01.14.2020

Category: [World and Nation](#)

PIKESVILLE, Md. (CNS) -- U.S. Sens. Benjamin Cardin and Christopher Van Hollen, both Maryland Democrats, joined Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore and other local faith leaders to call for increased federal funding to strengthen security at religious sites amid a recent rise in anti-Semitic attacks.

"We are deeply disturbed by the recent apparent rise in anti-Semitism, in particular, the violent attacks that took place last year during the [Hanukkah celebration in New York](#) and on the kosher market in Jersey City," Archbishop Lori said at Jan. 13 news conference outside the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in Pikesville.

"I commend our Senate leaders for calling us together today to condemn these acts, but also to take concrete and necessary measures to do everything we can to protect the rights of all people," he said.



The senators are proposing to quadruple funding in next year's federal budget for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which provides assistance to religious and other nonprofit institutions that are potential targets for terrorist attacks. They were joined by Rep. John Sarbanes, a Maryland Democrat.

Stressing the need for the increase, Van Hollen said the FBI has reported anti-Semitic attacks rose 35% between 2014 and 2018. Speakers also cited attacks on mosques and Christian churches, including recent [mass shootings in Texas](#).

If the proposal is successful, the program would provide an additional \$360 million in security assistance each year.

"Religious institutions are targets. Europe's known this for a long time and their governments have participated in making these facilities safe for people to be able to attend," Cardin said. "We now recognize in the United States that we are similarly vulnerable with religious institutions being targets for terrorism."

Howard Libit, president of the Baltimore Jewish Council, said the federal funds are greatly needed amid the threat posed by the rise in anti-Semitism. Libit said many members of Jewish congregations have had to give more to their synagogues to offset the increased security costs.

Rabbi Shmuel Silber of Suburban Orthodox Toras Chaim Congregation said he was saddened by the recent spate of anti-Semitic attacks, but he was hopeful in light of the support of the government and other faiths.

"We are emboldened and we will continue to shepherd our respective communities in our faith traditions and never bow to hate and bigotry," Silber said.

Last year, Maryland institutions received more than \$3 million under the program. The fund supported Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Suburban Orthodox Toras Chaim, the Islamic Society of Annapolis and St. John Regional Catholic School in Frederick.

Sheila Evers, director of advancement for St. John Regional, said the school received \$100,000 to upgrade its security, including adding magnetic locks, new lighting and a perimeter fence. Evers said the funds helped implement the recommendations of threat assessment conducted by the Department of Homeland Security and the Frederick Police Department.

Both Cardin and Van Hollen praised Archbishop Lori's efforts at forging stronger bonds among the interfaith community in recent years.

"He's been an incredible leader on bringing us all together, all the faith communities together," Cardin said.

Archbishop Lori said he would work with his colleagues at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to ensure that the bipartisan grant program, which began in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, continues to grow.

"The concrete steps we support here are vitally important, but we also continue to put our faith in the simple act of coming together, standing side by side, to demonstrate that love will always be a greater power than evil," Archbishop Lori said.



# Maryland legislators, faith leaders back funding increase in wake of religious hate crimes



Maryland U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen speaks at a news conference announcing support for a proposal that would quadruple federal funding for security at houses of worship in Maryland and across the country. Pictured from left: Baltimore Jewish Council Executive Director Howard Libit; Baltimore Archbishop William Lori; Anne Arundel County Muslim Council President Rudwan Abu-ramman; Orthodox Union official Nathan Diamant; President Alvin J. Gwynn Sr., of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Baltimore; Maryland U.S. Sen. Benjamin Cardin, and Rep. John Sarbanes. (Jonathan Pitts, Baltimore Sun/Baltimore Sun)



"America is in a national crisis. I'm calling for much stronger federal action to increase funds to protect places of worship and prosecute hate crimes," Schumer tweeted Dec. 31 as he introduced the idea.

Van Hollen agreed with his Senate colleague on the urgency of the situation.

[Maryland lawmakers consider expanding hate crime law to include attempts at racist, anti-Semitic acts »](#)

"We have to come together here in the state of Maryland and across the country to confront this hate and division, not just through words, but in our actions," said Van Hollen, a Democratic member of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee who supported the increase in the current budget.

Baltimore faith leaders said they could use any increased funding to harden security in houses of worship and to support outreach programs that would encourage awareness and

Government funding for the protection of synagogues, mosques and churches has been on the rise in Maryland and across the United States in the past half-decade and more, but legislators and faith leaders are calling for a vast increase in such funding as threats against religious institutions persist.

Maryland's U.S. senators, Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen, U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes, and Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders were among those who gathered Monday at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in Pikesville to back a proposal calling for a quadrupling of funding provided by the federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program, to \$360 million in fiscal year 2021.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security received a 50% increase in funding for the program, to \$90 million, as part of the budget for fiscal year 2020.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer of New York floated the proposal for a further increase after the stabbing last month of five people at a Hanukkah celebration in the New York City suburbs and a recent string of attacks against Jews in the streets of Brooklyn, New York. He has said the apparent rise in such attacks in New York and elsewhere have



Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, Baltimore Jewish Council Executive Director Howard Libit and Mubaraz Razvi of the United Maryland Muslim Council were among the faith leaders and local legislators who also called for unity in the face of acts of hatred.

“The concrete steps we support here are vitally important,” Lori said during his remarks, “but let us also continue to put our faith in the simple act of coming together, standing side-by-side to demonstrate the love that will always be a greater power than evil.”

Established in 2002 in response to the 9/11 terror attacks on New York and the Washington, D.C., area, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program allows houses of worship to apply for up to \$100,000 in grants to improve their protection against terror attacks.

Maryland organizations received more than \$3 million last year through the program, including grants to Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Suburban Orthodox Toras Chaim in Pikesville, the Islamic Society of Annapolis, and the Baltimore Catholic diocese.



Such funding has been “vital” in Maryland — a state “that has a long and proud tradition of religious tolerance,” Lori said — in helping “Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and other religious groups, and other nonprofit organizations ... to provide security-related training and security equipment, as well as to undertake other security-enhancing activities.”

Baltimore-area institutions have received more than \$11 million over the history of the program, according to Libit, including about \$1.45 million awarded last fall.



**Chuck Schumer**  
@SenSchumer

I am honored to stand against hate and anti-Semitism with the community at [@JCCRokland](#).

America is in a national crisis.

I'm calling for much stronger federal action to increase funds to protect places of worship and prosecute hate crimes.



1,973 12:56 AM - Dec 31, 2019

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Lori said St. John's Regional Catholic School in Frederick has been one beneficiary in Maryland, and Rudwan Abu-rumman, president of the Anne Arundel County Muslim Council, said the Islamic Society of Annapolis has received \$200,000.

Libit said Maryland's congressional delegation has worked in a bipartisan way to increase the flow of grants to the state and to the Baltimore area, in particular, over the past few years.

He added that their efforts "helped inspire leadership in Annapolis," as Republican Gov. Larry Hogan and the Democratic-controlled Maryland General Assembly "have led the creation of state programs over the past two years that are creating new pools of money" to help create "better security at our schools and institutions at risk of hate crimes."

He pointed to state funding that dedicated \$2 million to enhancing security for religious schools and child-care centers, \$3 million for places of worship, and \$3.5 million for security upgrades at aging nonpublic schools, all as part of the current budget. The \$2 million figure represents a doubling of the previous year's total.

At a time when security costs at synagogues and other houses of worship are skyrocketing, the funding is "making a difference," Libit said.

Despite the increases, speakers such as Cardin, Van Hollen and Nathan Diament, executive director for public policy for the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, said more money is needed at a time of frighteningly frequent religious hate crimes.

Diament cited the recent attacks in New York, as well as firebombings of mosques and shootings at churches as he applauded Cardin, Van Hollen and Sarbanes for joining the push for a dramatic increase at the federal level.

When he worked with coalition partners to help establish the Nonprofit Security Grant Program 17 years ago, he said, "we did not envision the nightmare that the Jewish community and other faith communities are experiencing today."





Courtesy photo

Thomas P. Frazier



Courtesy photo

William H. Gouker

## Frederick Troop 792 celebrates

### FOR THE FREDERICK NEWS-POST

The leaders, parents and fellow scouts of Troop 792 of Frederick congratulate four young men from their troop who earned the rank of Eagle in 2019. They were honored at the troop's December Court of Honor held by their charter organization, Calvary United Methodist Church. To attain the rank, Scouts must earn 21 merit badges and complete a service project that benefits a religious institution, a school or the community, in addition to leadership requirements.

Troop 792 meets on Monday nights at New Life Four-square Church. The troop, led by Scoutmaster Tom Dumm, was honored to welcome

its 91st through 94th Eagle Scouts its Eagle Scout roll.

**No. 91: Thomas Patrick Frazier**, 18, graduated from Gov. Thomas Johnson High School in 2019. While in high school he was an active member of the marching band where he was a section leader. He was also active in his church and was able to attend Philmont Scout Ranch. After graduation Frazier joined the U.S. Marines. He successfully completed boot camp at Parris Island and is now stationed at Fort Bragg.

For his Eagle project, he planned and held a concert for the residents of Homewood Retirement Center in Frederick featuring jazz music from the 1930s to the 1980s. After his service in the Marine Corps, he plans to at-

tend the University of Maryland and major in criminal justice with a minor in environmental science. Ultimately, he desires to become a Department of Natural Resources officer where he can protect both citizens and natural resources.

**No. 92: William Harry Gouker**, 18, is a senior at Middletown High School. He earned the rank of Eagle in August 2019. He held the positions of instructor and OA representative to fulfill his leadership requirement for Eagle. Gouker served at the districts Cub Scout Day Camp for six years and worked as a counselor at Camp Airy for four years. He is extremely active in the leadership of the Order of the Arrow where he presently serves as the





Courtesy photo

Garrett K. Yost



Courtesy photo

Theodore L. Miller

## 2019 Eagle Scout recipients

Lodge Chief of the Aman-gamak-Wipit Lodge.

For his Eagle project he led a large team of Scouts and volunteers in rehabbing the façade of the Williamsport Memorial Library which included cleaning out the garden, planting new potted gardens, refinishing the book carts and the book drop. After high school he plans to attend college and double major in political science and mass communications and then get a graduate degree in political management.

**No. 93: Garrett Kylan Yost**, 18, a senior at Tuscarora High School, became a Scout in Troop 792 in May 2013 and earned the rank of Eagle on Aug. 28, 2019. While at Tuscarora High School,

Yost has fulfilled a life-long interest in engineering by taking a heavy course load in pre-engineering, geometry, AP calculus and AP statistics. He is planning to attend either Virginia Tech or the University of Maryland to major in mechanical or aerospace engineering. He held the position of historian to fulfill his leadership requirement for Eagle.

For his Eagle project he led a team of Scouts and volunteers in rehabbing a large pavilion at Homewood Retirement Center. His team stained the pavilion and built new benches for the residents.

**No. 94: Theodore "Theo" Lincoln Miller**, 17, became a scout in Troop 792 in April 2013 and earned the rank of

Eagle on Nov. 25. Miller attends Tuscarora High School where he played football. He is planning to attend college and participate in ROTC. He hopes to major in aeronautical or mechanical engineering. He wants to be a hands-on engineer and eventually enlist in the military, possibly the Coast Guard.

For his Eagle project he led a team of Scouts and volunteers in rehabbing the snack bar for the Carroll Manor Recreation Council. His team spent 266 hours replacing the roof, ceiling, countertops, lighting in the concession stand and gave it a new paint job. The concession stand will now be ready in the spring to help bring in needed income to the rec council.