



Boylan Senior Wrestler Wraps Up 4 Years with 3 Visits to State, 2 State Championships, 1 National Ranking

ROCKFORD— The Boylan Central Catholic High School community gathered in the main gym on March 1 to celebrate senior Netavia Wickson’s State Championship win in the IHSA Girls Wrestling 140 pound Weight Class State Finals.

Wickson and the Boylan Wrestling team is coached by her father, Dathan Wickson, assisted by her brother Dathan Wickson, Jr.

She ended her 2023-2024 regular season with a 23-2 individual record. She won the 2024 title in Bloomington after an undefeated 4-match run in the tournament and a huge 19-5 Major Decision win over Madeline Zerafa-Lazarevi of Schaumburg High School.

She was one of three NIC-10 female wrestlers to take home a title in their respective weight classes.

This year was Wickson’s second-straight state title and third-straight appearance in the state championship match (placing second as a sophomore). This past summer, she also represented the state of Illinois at the 2023 USA Wrestling Junior National Championships, where she earned 3rd place in the nation in the 138 pound weight class.

—By Anabel Nosek, marketing coordinator.



(Photo provided/Anabel Nosek)
Netavia Wickson ‘24 poses with her coaches: head coach Dathan Wickson (left), her father; and assistant coach Dathan Wickson, Jr. (‘21), her brother.

ACC Student Named NMS Finalist; Places in Top One Percent of Nations’ Test Takers

AURORA—In 2022, over 1.5 million students throughout the nation entered the 2024 National Merit Scholarship (NMS) Program competition by taking the Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).

Only 15,000 of those students — just one percent of all test takers — will compete as finalists for 7,140 National Merit Scholarships worth nearly \$28 million. One of those finalists is Jack Lucas, an Aurora Central Catholic High School student. His school congratulated him on his academic accomplishment.



(Photo provided/Patti McCumber)
Jack Lucas

What’s the Buzz?

‘Your confessional is ready’: Buzzers encourage confession at Denver school



(OSV News photo/courtesy Archdiocese of Denver)

BY KELLY CLARK, NEIL MCDONOUGH
OSV News

As you walk the halls of Bishop Machebeuf High School in Denver, you won’t find any lines for confession. Instead, students simply pick up a buzzer, like the ones you see at your neighborhood restaurant, and wait for it to light up.

“At first, it was kind of a joke, we were just laughing about it,” said Father CJ Mast, the chaplain at Bishop Machebeuf. “But then I think it was our principal, Mr. (Harold) Siegel. He said, ‘Well, let’s just go for it. If it’s a flop, it’s a flop. But it could be a great thing, and it could work out, so let’s just go for it.’”

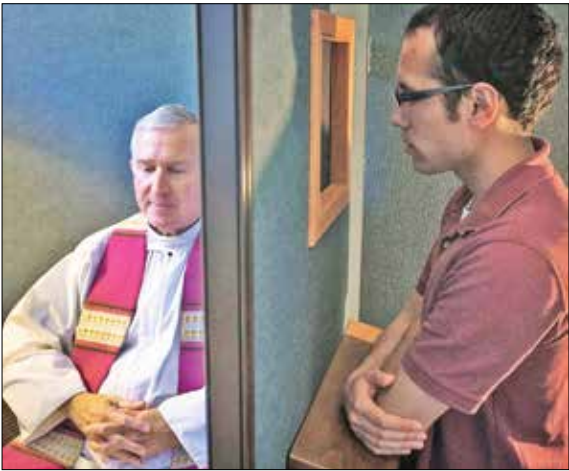
Once the buzzer’s light goes off, the students know it is time to head to Father Mast’s office for confession. The idea came out of prayer during Father Mast’s first year at the school.

“When I was thinking through when I first got assigned to Machebeuf, and I was thinking through how do I structure my day, you know: When is Mass going to be, when am I going to do Bible studies, when am I going to hang out with the students? One of the things that came up was when am I going to do confessions,” he said. “And for high schoolers, I think they’re one of the busiest (group of) people in today’s culture, and you know, it’s really hard for them to come before school.”

The students pick up a buzzer in the morning and write down the top three times during the day they can be buzzed out of class, which helps Father Mast know when to call them to confession. Paola Chacon-Arredondo, a junior at Machebeuf, said it has helped her state of mind.

“There’s nothing to worry about, and I think that’s what’s really nice about it is that Father CJ doesn’t want you to be afraid to go and confess,” she said. “He’s inviting you, and this is why he has the buzzers, and I’ve seen that it’s really helped.”

Without a line, these teens don’t have to feel awkward or like they are being judged for their sins. “I used to be so scared to go to confession,” Chacon-Arredondo said. She thought she might scare away the priest with her sins. But the ease of the buzzer system allows her to feel more



(OSV News photo/CNS file, Chaz Muth)
Father Timothy J. Mockaitis, pastor of Queen of Peace Church in Salem, Ore., and penitent Ethan K. Alano of Salem demonstrate a confession in a 2019 file photo.

relaxed, which takes some of the pressure off.

Nebyu Ablel is also a junior at Machebeuf. He said when Father Mast took over at the beginning of the school year, he was afraid to confess his sins, so he didn’t seek out confession. But over time, Father Mast told him it would be OK, just like Machebeuf’s former chaplain before him.

The teachers at Machebeuf are also fully supportive.

“I just think it’s wonderful. (It) brought some humor to us when we first heard about it, but it’s really flourishing,” said Ralph Pesce, dean of faculty and the humanities teacher at Machebeuf. “Because it’s fun, I think it also encourages students to go to confession. It’s one of those sacraments that people are very daunted to go to.”

Theology teacher Christian Grandon agrees. “I’ve seen it work really well,” he said. “It’s not something that’s been terribly disruptive. The students just discreetly say, ‘It’s my time.’ We can really help them stretch and develop those virtues that will serve them in ways that their formation outside of here in the secular world is lacking.”

While the buzzer system may have started with a laugh or two, it is a light-hearted way to bring students closer to knowing the love and mercy of Jesus Christ.

Religious Essay Contest Closes March 29

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — High school juniors and seniors are invited to enter an annual religious liberty essay contest hosted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Religious Liberty, along with the USCCB Secretariat of Catholic Education and Our Sunday Visitor Institute.

The contest, titled “Witnesses to Freedom,” asks entrants to “share the story of a witness to freedom.” Participants should choose one person or group, such as an organization or community, who is important in the story of religious freedom,” according to the contest

rules. Participants must include a completed consent form. Both the contest rules and consent form can be found at usccb.org/religious-liberty-essay

Essays are due March 29 and can be submitted via email: ReligiousLibertyEssay@usccb.org. Winners will be announced in May.

The first-place essay will be published by *Our Sunday Visitor* and the author will be awarded a \$2,000 scholarship. Second place will receive a \$1,000 scholarship, and third place will receive a \$500 scholarship.
—By OSV News.