



## Blue Marists carry out ministry in war-torn Syria

Georgia Lattas  
senior reporter

The Marist Brothers' service and aid to the Syrian people dates back to 1904 when four Brothers arrived in Aleppo to run a school for Armenian Catholics in Telal Street. Since then, the Brothers built Champagnat College in 1932, becoming nationalized in 1967.

In 1976, the group Champagnat-Jabal was formed, and they began educating through the Marist tradition by scouting in the poorer neighborhoods. For over 100 years, the Marist Brothers have aided the people of Syria, and the 2012 crisis is no exception.

In July 2012, armed groups affiliated to Al Nosra, a branch of Al Qaida, invaded the Eastern and Southern neighborhoods of Aleppo, causing the displacement of 500,000 people. Refugees fled to Western Aleppo, which was under control of the Syrian government.

Aleppo was eventually divided into two: the Eastern neighborhood, with 250,000 people living under rebel control, and Western Aleppo, with 1.5 million people living under government control.

Joseph Hallak and his family witnessed the harsh reality of the war and came to the United States in 2016.

Hallak and his wife, Carla, grew up in Syria and got married in 1998. The couple welcomed their son Karam in 2000 and their daughter Lea in 2003. Before the crisis hit, Hallak describes Aleppo as a nice place to live, surrounded by family and friends.

The family moved to New Jersey in October 2016. Hallak's sister-in-law is an American citizen, and the family obtained

the appropriate documents before coming to the U.S. While in Syria, Hallak practiced dentistry for several years. Currently, Hallak works as a dental assistant until he can receive his license to practice in the U.S.

"Coming to the U.S. was a great decision," Hallak said. "We are lucky to have known someone living here. It was not easy leaving my country, but the safety of my family is of the utmost importance. The destruction we've witnessed and the devastation the war has caused is unbelievable."

Hallak explains that the Aleppins lived without water or electrical power because the pumping stations and power plants were in rebel-controlled areas. Mortar shells and gas canisters filled with nails were launched by the rebels every day and killed dozens of people.

Hallak does not want his family to forget the great memories they have shared in Aleppo, however.

"Before the crisis hit, Syria was very peaceful and growing economically," Hallak said. "We love to play basketball, and Samaki Walker, a onetime N.B.A. champion with the Los Angeles Lakers, played two seasons for Aleppo's Al Jalaa Sporting Club, winning championships in 2008 and 2011. I never want these memories to fade. The rebels will never take away any of the good memories we've shared in our country."

Shortly after the war began, the Blue Marists began helping the people of Syria. Brothers dressed in blue sweatshirts would come and provide aid to those in need, offering shelter, clothes, hygiene products and basic necessities.

"The Blue Marist program expanded its scope to help hundreds of displaced



photo courtesy of Joseph Hallak

Joseph Hallak, his wife Carla, daughter Lea and son Karam moved to New Jersey from Syria in 2016 after rebel forces invaded Aleppo in 2012. The Hallaks shared their experiences at the faculty retreat on Nov. 5.

Christian and Muslim families," Hallak said. "That is my favorite thing about the Blue Marists. They help everyone, no matter what their religious affiliation is."

The transition to the U.S. was difficult for the Hallaks, but they have found ways of incorporating Syrian traditions, such as cooking Middle Eastern food and attending an Armenian Catholic church.

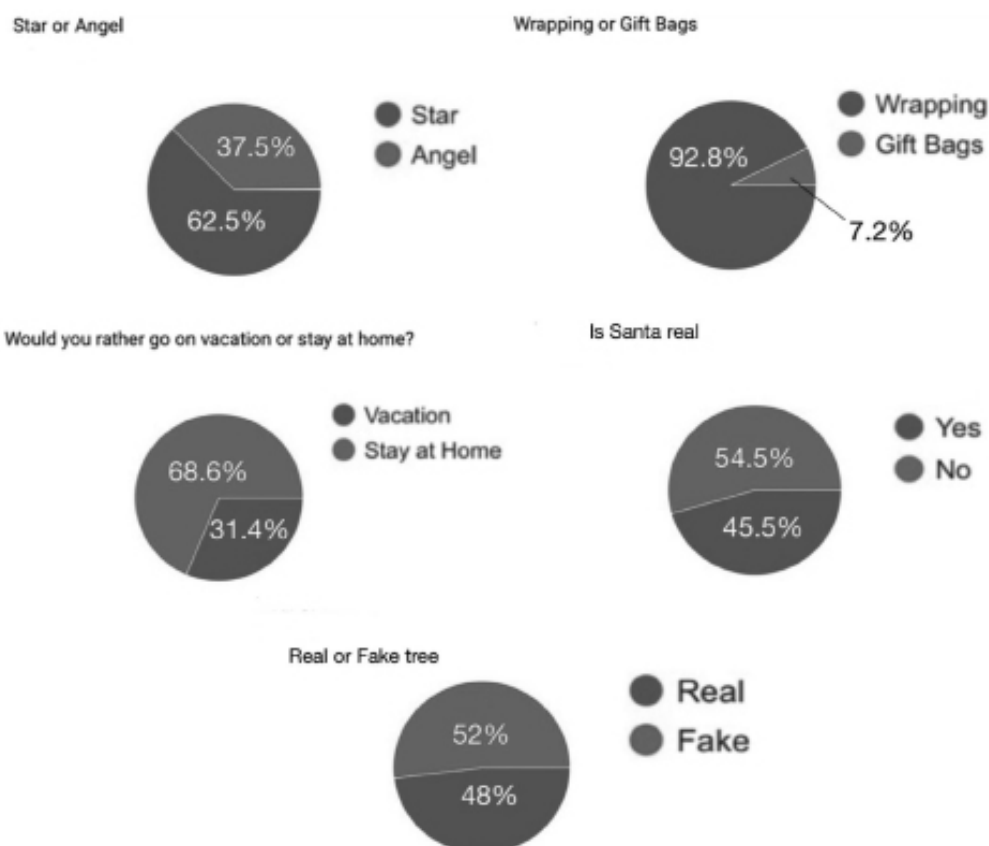
Hallak and his family watch the war unfold on American television and they

continue to pray for peace as they watch their city crumble.

"When you watch it on television, it's easy to skip to another channel and just forget it," Hallak said. "But when you've witnessed it in real life, it's a completely different experience."

"I don't know why humans kill," Hallak said. "In my opinion, they are not rebels, they are terrorists. I don't wish war upon my worst enemy."

### 775 RedHawks responded to our December survey about their Christmas preferences and beliefs...here are the results:



### Journalists win national awards



RedHawk journalists winning awards for writing at the JEA/NSPA national high school journalism convention in Chicago on Nov. 2 included (L to R) Georgia Lattas in feature writing, Gina Musso in news writing, Kaitlyn Klein in review writing and Cece Gibbons in editorial writing. This was the second consecutive national honor for Lattas, Musso and Gibbons, who took awards last spring at the convention in San Francisco.



## Keep it real and remember others in 2019

Emma Brown  
managing editor

2018 was an eventful year, filled with ups and downs for sports teams, groups and individuals. Christmas is upon us, but many people seem to forget the other important winter holiday:

New Year's Day.

Whether people party all night on December 31 or choose to sleep through it like any other night, many will set a New Year's resolution in hopes of bettering themselves.

Unfortunately, these resolutions tend not to last very long.

Personally, I have never made it past January.

This year, we should focus on choosing productive and attainable New Year's resolutions.

Most people I know aim to get in shape by dieting or exercising for the New Year, but....

Let's be honest: Who wants to stop binge eating junk food while binge watching entire seasons of "Friends" on Netflix?

Instead of telling yourself to join a gym and then feeling like a failure for not going, convince a friend to go out and play laser tag or paintball. Do something...anything that is actually enjoyable and physical. Get your blood pumping and have some laughs at the same time. Do some sort of physical activity that is entertaining instead of forcing yourself into a negative, judgemental place.

Again, the key is to make the resolution realistic and one that involves other people. Resolve to connect with family members more frequently. Go visit your grandparents and shovel their driveway while you are there. Spend time with those little cousins, nieces or nephews who annoy you. Chances are that they will grow up to become tolerable human beings who will appreciate you later in life for the time you spent with them.

Another realistic, attainable resolution is to aim to help the environment.

Make an effort to recycle more. Stop throwing cans and plastic bottles in the trash, especially here at school. Create a compost bin and encourage family members to use it. This will bring everyone together over something that they can be proud of. Resolve to stop using plastic straws and plastic bags. Conserve water whenever possible.

New Year's resolutions do not have to be hard or life altering. Keep them simple. The important thing is to stick with them.

2019 presents each of us with a fresh opportunity to improve ourselves, each other and our world.

Let's all figure something out before 2018 is a memory and let's all find the passion to see it through.

Let's make 2019 a year to remember.

## Fill hearts, not stockings

Jenna Fessler  
senior columnist

Christmas is just around the corner. It is now acceptable to listen to holiday music, which means that the highly overrated Mariah Carey version of "All I Want for Christmas is You" will be playing constantly. We look forward to snow. Ugly sweaters are back in fashion.

However, during this holiday season we all need to slow down, think about the bigger picture and embrace the holiday spirit.

Part of that spirit should be focusing on the idea of bringing joy to others and not thinking so much about personal gain. I know it is easy to get wrapped up in the materialistic side of the holiday, especially with the sales, advertisements and overall hype.

People often get way too stressed about trivial things like what type of wrapping paper they should use. It does not really matter. It just gets torn to shreds anyways.

I personally prefer to give rather than to receive gifts. I think most people appreciate something small and thoughtful rather than something expensive. Finding something personal or making something yourself means that you put some real thought and effort into your gift and into that person.

As you are writing your wish list this year, try to avoid materialistic desires and make a list of things that could benefit others instead. Gifts are not based on their price tags and they come in all shapes and sizes.

Go to church with your family to please your parents, volunteer at a soup kitchen with friends, donate toys to a toy drive for those less fortunate than you and spend time with the slightly annoying relatives.

Be bigger than yourself this season.

We should also keep Jesus in mind and what He would have wanted, since it is His birthday. I know I like being remembered on my birthday after all.

Jesus asks us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Let's all work toward giving Him that gift this holiday season and throughout 2019.

Merry Christmas, everyone!



### photo opinion

## What is your favorite Christmas tradition?



**Domenic Anzelone**  
freshman

I love watching my family open their presents. The sheer enjoyment of seeing their faces light up is what Christmas is all about. The work that our parents put into buying us gifts is truly underappreciated.



**James Jurcev**  
sophomore

We have all our family over on Christmas Eve and cook traditional Croatian food for my dad's side of the family. We also go to Midnight Mass at our church, St. Alexander.



**Anna Lipinski**  
junior

Burning down our Christmas tree. Over the fire, we roast marshmallows and make s'mores. We all wear matching pajamas, even our dog. Once the tree is burnt out, we watch "A Christmas Story."



**Sofia Perez**  
senior

On Christmas Eve, my family comes over and we eat, dance and laugh until midnight. At exactly 12 a.m., we gather around the Nativity scene and uncover the Baby Jesus to symbolize his birth. Then we pray.



**Mrs. Giacobbe**  
science teacher

Every Friday after Thanksgiving, my family and I brave the cold and head to the Christkindlemart downtown. We do some Christmas shopping and enjoy some delicious German food.



**Mr. Nicholson**  
math teacher

My family makes at least 25 different types of cookies from scratch. We also go to see "It's a Wonderful Life" on the big screen at a theater. On Christmas Day, we get up at 6 a.m. to open gifts and eat breakfast.

varsity girls' volleyball**RedHawks win historic back-to-back state titles**

Carolyn Yusa  
senior reporter

The RedHawk girls' varsity volleyball team, under the leadership of head coach Jordan Vidovic, triumphed over Downers Grove North to take the state title for the second year in a row.

The team came away with a strong win, scoring 25-21 in the first set and 25-11 in the second set on Nov. 10 at Redbird Arena at Illinois State University.

Last year, Vidovic and his team won both state and nationals. This year marked the third time the RedHawks advanced to state and this is only team in school history to win back-to-back titles.

"It was interesting to be back there in the same arena with a whole new team with different strengths and weaknesses than last year," Vidovic said. "It was an awesome feeling to know we started from scratch and ended up back in that same spot while doing it in a completely different way."

Vidovic's approach this season focused on starting fresh after the team lost nine seniors at the end of last season. He continued to push his team to be the best they could. He prepared his players to expect greater resolve and competition from opposing teams this year as the returning state champions.

"One piece of advice we talked about from day one was doing all of the little things consistently," Vidovic said. "Being disciplined and detailed in everything we did on and off the court, which we did really well, contributed to our success."

Vidovic also stated that the attitude and work ethic of the players improved as the season progressed, which also played an important role in getting them to state.

"You have to keep building throughout the season," Vidovic said. "I think the belief was there. We knew it was possible, but we knew it was not going to be easy. For example, we lost to Benet at the end of the regular season, faced them again at state, but in the end you could see that our hard work payed off."

Junior outside hitter Avery Jedry also commented on how much Vidovic encouraged teamwork and trust among his players as part of his coaching style.

"Coach Vidovic has taught me that, in order to be successful, you have to believe in your team as much as you believe in yourself," Jedry said. "Volleyball is not a one-man sport, so in order to do big things you have to trust your coach and your team."

Vidovic now has not only coached two state champion teams, but has also made a lasting impression on his players.

"From Coach Vidovic I have learned to trust myself and others," senior captain Abby Callahan said. "I can speak for all of my teammates when I say we know that the hard work we did was the reason we finished where we did. We have now learned that in life you have to trust in everything you do, even when things get tough, and that is because of him."

An alum of Brother Rice, Vidovic learned in September that he was being inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame. He and his fellow honorees were recognized at Rice's homecoming game.

Vidovic did not attend, something that Callahan points to as yet another indication of the coach's selflessness.

The best part of having him as a coach is that he always puts us first," Callahan said. "He chose not to attend that ceremony at



photo by Patti Arvesen

Members of the RedHawk varsity volleyball team acknowledge their fans as they celebrate their second consecutive state win at Illinois State University's Redbird Arena on Nov. 10. The RedHawks are the only team in school history to win back-to-back state championships, and the team also won nationals last year.

Rice so he could be at our practice. Aside from that, he is very approachable and genuinely values our input on everything team-related."

Vidovic said that losing this year's seniors is bittersweet, but he remains optimistic about next year's talent.

"We have strong juniors who are excited to take the seniors' places," Vidovic said. "I am excited for them to take what they learned this season and step into the senior

leadership roles. I want them to put their own twist on it and make it their own. I think they're ready for next season."

Vidovic would not speculate about a 2019 RedHawk three-peat.

"We just have to take all the little things we learned this year into next year," Vidovic said. "We will not magically be this amazing team unless we remember those little things. You have to start each season fresh."

varsity football**Dawczak, team reflect on positives this season**

Elijah Ikezoe-Jones  
senior reporter

Head varsity football coach Ron Dawczak and the RedHawks wrapped up their second season together with a 14-3 loss to Brother Rice in the IHSA 8A division playoff semifinal game.

The team lost only two games this season, both to Rice.

While the team did not achieve its goal of making it to state, Dawczak is more than happy with the team's performance this season.

"It was a great year," Dawczak said. "When you look back at the year as a whole, we were able to accomplish a lot of great things."

Dawczak emphasized that winning a state title was only one of many goals he set with his players this year.

"It is not just about wins on the field, but it is about setting these guys up for success in life," Dawczak said. "They were able to learn and see what it means to be successful. The way that they grew and matured as the year went on was a great thing to see."

Dawczak feels that the strong work ethic and the bonds players formed with one another separated this year's team from other teams he has worked with.

"The level of camaraderie on the team and how hard they worked in the off-season brought them closer together and they all

really began to enjoy each other's company," Dawczak said.

Team members echoed their coach's observations about how well the team bonded this season.

"We were a big family," senior Shamar Taylor said. "Whenever we faced any level of adversity throughout the season, Coach Dawczak always reminded us that if we could not do it alone we needed to look to our brothers for help."

Because of the way Dawczak treats his players and cares about their personal success, he has earned the utmost respect and admiration of the team.

"Not only is he smart in his game planning on the field, but he helps and cares for each one of us as individuals," Taylor said.

The team is not the only one to recognize the outstanding job Dawczak has done in his short time as head coach.

After a 34-13 victory in week seven against Nazareth Academy, Dawczak was named Chicago Bears "Coach of the Week." The award is given weekly to coaches in the Chicagoland area who excel in their performance and leadership skills and includes a \$1,500 prize for the RedHawk football program.

Dawczak is invited to Soldier Field to be recognized on Dec. 16 when the Bears take on the Packers.

"To be recognized by the Bears is a great honor because there are so many great coaches and teams around us," he said.



photo by Alyssa Lang

Junior wide receiver Jadon Thompson returns the second half kickoff as his RedHawk teammates block and clear a path during the semifinal game of the IHSA Division 8A state playoffs against Brother Rice on Nov. 17. The RedHawks lost, ending their season with an 11-2 record and going undefeated in conference.

Although Dawczak has only been coaching at the varsity level for two years, he was able to finish the season with a final record of 11-2, going undefeated with a 7-0 record in conference.

Dawczak plans on preparing the team for next season by focusing on the process of what it takes to be successful.

Both the coaching staff and the team anticipate exciting challenges next season.

"There are so many things to look forward to next season," Dawczak said. "Being a part of a new conference and facing a tougher schedule are things we can look at that will be a motivating force as we move forward."