



*Distinguished*

**ALUMNI**

*& Friends*

OF THE WORCESTER  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**A W A R D S**

*11th Class of Honorees*

*October 27, 2022*

*College of the Holy Cross*

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# **Distinguished Alumni and Friends of the Worcester Public Schools 2022**

**ORLANDO BAXTER**

Entertainer

**NINA BARBER & MIRIAM BARBER**

Educators (posthumous)

**BRIAN D'ANDREA**

Attorney / Clerk Magistrate

**LAINY FEINGOLD**

Disability Rights Lawyer & Author

**ROSEMARY F. FORD**

Philanthropist

**JAMES LAURIE**

Journalist & Author

**BARBARA ABRAMOFF LEVY**

Musician, Conductor & Historical Interpreter

**AARON LUBOWITZ**

Private Equity & Investment Banker

**SEAN MITCHELL**

Public Servant

**JOSÉ ROLÓN**

Public Figure, LGBTQ+ Advocate & Wedding Planner

**REV. JONATHAN SLAVINSKAS**

Spiritual & Community Leader

**QUINSIGAMOND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Friend of the Worcester Public Schools

October 27, 2022

Dear Honorees and Guests,

Welcome to the 11th Distinguished Alumni and Friends of the Worcester Public Schools ceremony. We are delighted that you are joining us in celebrating the accomplishments of individuals who have achieved at high levels and received their foundation here in our city's public schools. We are also recognizing Quinsigamond Community College that has a long-standing partnership with the Worcester Public Schools and has been a gateway to higher education for so many of our students.

The Worcester Educational Development Foundation, Inc. (WEDF) is sincerely grateful to our many partners who make our work possible. From large foundation grants to corporate and individual donations, each and every contribution is deeply appreciated. WEDF has invested \$7 million in our most precious resource, the students of today who will be the leaders of tomorrow.

Over the last 11 years, WEDF has recognized more than 100 alumni. They represent a host of fields and have had spectacular careers. They have pioneered for social justice, healed the spiritually and physically wounded, and authored books. They are inventors, performers, doctors, humanitarians, entrepreneurs, leaders, philanthropists, spiritual luminaries, educators, and heroes.

Tonight we recognize talented and dedicated individuals who have brought great pride to their families and this community. As you hear their stories, the word WOW will come to mind. Thank you again for being here to celebrate their accomplishments.

Sincerely,



Stephen E. Mills  
President  
Burncoat High School  
Distinguished  
Alumnus



Louise Clarke  
Executive Director  
South High School

PS - Do you know of an outstanding Worcester Public Schools graduate? Send us an email at [advancement@wedfwps.org](mailto:advancement@wedfwps.org).  
Thank you!



# **Program**

## **October 27, 2022**

**5:30**

### **Reception**

#### **Burncoat High School String Ensemble**

under the direction of Mr. Dani Rimoni

William Ryan – Violin

Tiffany Vuong – Violin

Michaela Bonsu – Viola

Thimjos Richards – Cello

**6:30**

### **Welcome**

Hank Stolz, Emcee

### **Welcome**

Tom Murray, Chairman & WEDF Board Member

Remarks - Dr. Rachel Monárrez,

Superintendent of the Worcester Public Schools

Invocation - Father Jonathan Slavinskas

### **Dinner**

### **Presentation of Awards**

Stephen Mills, President of WEDF, Tom Murray,

Mayor Petty, and Superintendent Monárrez

*Special thanks to the College of the Holy Cross  
for its generosity and hospitality,  
to Holmes Shusas for the lovely centerpieces,  
to Elyse Gagne and her Doherty High School  
Multimedia Technology Class,  
and to our master of ceremonies, Hank Stolz, for  
11 years with this event!*

# Distinguished Alumni and Friends of the Worcester Public Schools

## 2021

Sydney Taylor Brown  
Enmanuel "Manny" Familia  
John Goldsberry, M.D.  
Mary Beth Bolduc Heffernan  
Dmitry Kustanovich  
Barry Levenson  
Stacey Luster  
Timothy MacDonald  
Walter Shea  
College of the Holy Cross

## 2018

Rabbi Andrew Baker  
David Brunelle  
Cliff Goodwin  
Edward G. Hyder  
Steve Joseph  
Peter Kazanovicz  
Robert Moylan, Jr.  
Jo-Anne O'Malley Shepard, MD  
Andrew Ory  
Paul Proko  
Rev. Richard Trainor  
Susan & Cliff Rucker & The  
Worcester Railers

## 2019

Matthew Aselton  
Penelope Bitzas  
Megan Condron Smith  
Diane Benson Davis  
David Greene  
Matt Mattus  
Lester McCorn  
John Morello (Posthumously)  
Donna Olsen Red Wing  
(Posthumously)  
Jonathan Starr  
Fallon Health

## 2017

Jaki Byard (Posthumously)  
Barbara Carroll (Posthumously)  
Dennis Dimitri  
Kimberly Haddad  
Sheila Harrity  
Mark Holden  
John Mirick  
Gail Radcliff  
John Vo  
Geoffrey Zakarian  
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## 2016

The Honorable  
John Anderson  
Erica Ayisi  
Amy Lynn Chase  
Edwin "Ted" Coghlin (Posthumously)  
Robert Goddard (Posthumously)  
James Leary  
Gail Randall  
Daniel Sedgwick, DMA  
Eric Sedgwick  
Marcy Supovitz

# Distinguished Alumni and Friends of the Worcester Public Schools

## 2015

Mary Aframe  
Phil Bolduc  
Arthur Chase (Posthumously)  
Leslie Fish  
Laura Goldstein  
Stephen Mills  
Joe O'Brien  
Tony Simollardes  
Ann-Marie Soulliere  
Donna Williams  
Gerry Weston & WICN  
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care

## 2014

John Conte  
Mary Beth Leonard  
Paul Gervais (Posthumously)  
The Honorable Mel Greenberg  
Dorothy Hargrove  
Gordon Hargrove  
Mark Harootian  
Frances Perkins (Posthumously)  
William Soutra, Jr.  
Joshua Swidler  
UNUM Corporation

## 2013

Myrna Benson  
Laddavanh 'Anna' Bouphavichith  
Deborah D. Cary  
Allan P. 'Kool  
Kojak' Grigg  
James Hogan  
Alexis Hyder  
Audrey Kurlan-Marcy  
Erin Moran McCormick  
Michael Orland  
The Pagano Family  
James Rushton  
Jonathan Silverman

## 2012

John Durkin, Ed.D.  
Jeffrey Greene  
Robert Harizi, M.D.  
Thomas Hehir, Ed.D.  
The Honorable Jordan Levy  
The Honorable Paul Mullaney  
Rachel Markarian  
Gladys Rodriguez-Parker  
Milton Peterson  
Ralph Santana  
The Hanover Insurance Group

## 2011

Charles Birbara, M.D.  
Joanne Feinberg Goldstein  
Lee Gurel  
Jarrett Krosoczka  
Helena & Christos Liazos  
Miguel Lopez  
Jessie Randall  
Stephen Pezzella, M.D.  
Isaac Spencer  
The Junior League of Worcester

# The Class of 2022



## **Orlando Baxter Entertainer South High School**

Comedian Orlando Baxter was a Worcester Public Schools student since Kindergarten, and a graduate of South High School. As a young man growing up in Great Brook Valley, Orlando worked hard to take advantage of all the opportunities the school afforded, made strong connections with his peers and teachers, and remained an active member of the school community. He fondly remembers some of his South High teachers and coaches as being some of the most positive influences in his life and career: Jerry Creamer, Frank Walsh, Donna Ghize, June Eressy, Lee Hull and Jim Miller....just to name a few!

After high school, Orlando stayed in Worcester and attended the College of the Holy Cross, earning a BA in History.

Orlando eventually went back to the Worcester Public Schools to try his hand at teaching in a variety of settings. It was there in the classroom that he cultivated many of the experiences that became the foundation of his comedy content with characters to whom every teacher can relate! While teaching, Orlando was persuaded by one of his own high school students to pursue his passion for comedy and dreams of being a comedian. So, Orlando traded in his textbooks and chalk for a stage and a microphone!

Since leaving school to pursue comedy, Orlando has been a fan favorite and contest winner of comedy festivals all over the world. Orlando has toured and performed with some of the greats and has been featured on shows such as DryBar Comedy and Late Night with Conan O'Brien. Earlier this year, Orlando produced and recorded his first live comedy special "Live from South High," performed in the new South High auditorium in front of some of his first and forever fans: his teachers.

Currently, Orlando resides in Worcester with his family. He continues to travel the world and takes to stages performing at clubs,

colleges and on cruises. His performances online have over 3 million views on YouTube and over 6 million views on Facebook. Orlando will forever credit his school and teaching experience in Worcester with helping shape who he is as a performer.



*Nina*



*Miriam*



*Grandaunt Myrtie  
Webber, Miriam, and  
Nina in 1929*

### **Nina Barber and Miriam Barber Educators (posthumous) North High School**

Nina and Miriam Barber grew up in the Elm Park neighborhood and graduated from North High School. Raised by their mother in a single-parent home, they were encouraged to pursue college degrees by their aunt, and both graduated from Middlebury College with undergraduate and graduate degrees and became teachers of world languages.

Nina taught in Vermont and was the Religious Education Director at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Barre, VT. She later became a full-time social worker for Vermont. A life-long lover of language, Nina was a voracious reader and loved the challenge of all types of crossword puzzles. She was also an accomplished seamstress.

Miriam 'Mim' majored in French at Middlebury and taught at Northfield School for Girls and then at Cobleskill High School in east-central New York. After taking time to raise a family, she began teaching again in New York.

In the spring of 2022, Sally Cummings, Nina's daughter, in tribute to her mother and aunt, established the Nina and Miriam Barber Scholarship at the Worcester Educational Development Foundation. This legacy gift will support North High School female graduates in the years to come as they enter the world of higher education.



**Brian D'Andrea**  
**Attorney / Clerk Magistrate**  
**North High School**

Brian D'Andrea graduated in the class of 1993 from North High School and is a cum laude graduate of Suffolk University Law School (2003) and a magna cum laude graduate of Stonehill College (1997). A member of the Massachusetts bar since 2003, Brian has been professionally employed in a variety of capacities, mostly within the legal sector. Brian is currently the Clerk Magistrate of the Worcester District Court, where he serves as a chief administrator of one of the busiest court divisions in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Attorney D'Andrea manages a staff of more than 30 employees and also presides over probable cause hearings, applications for search warrants, and small claims trials among other matters. In his nearly twenty years of professional employment in the justice system, Attorney D'Andrea has earned a well deserved reputation as a very effective manager and fair arbiter of justice.

Prior to his elevation to the position as Clerk Magistrate in Worcester, Brian served in the Fitchburg District Court, first as an Assistant Clerk Magistrate, then First Assistant Clerk Magistrate and eventually as Acting Clerk Magistrate. Prior to that, Brian worked as an Assistant District Attorney for the Worcester based Middle District of the Commonwealth, where he tried many cases in the six member jury session in Worcester. During his time in the District Attorney's office, he eventually ascended to the position of Supervising Attorney of the Fitchburg, Gardner and Winchendon sessions.

Brian is an active member of the Worcester County Bar Association and the Massachusetts Bar Association. He is also active in the District Court Clerk Magistrate Association as well as various organizations outside the legal arena. He has volunteered extensively with Paxton Little League and the Jesse Burkett Little League softball program.

Brian comes from a Grafton Hill family of public servants. His brother and father have served for many years on the Worcester Police Department. Brian is married to Tara (Tokarz), and resides in Paxton. They are the proud parents of two daughters and two sons.



**Lainey Feingold**  
**Disability Right Lawyer & Author**  
**Doherty Memorial High School**

Lainey Feingold is a disability rights lawyer, an author, and an international speaker. Although she has lived in Berkeley California since college, her roots in Worcester run deep. Lainey attended

Worcester Public Schools from kindergarten through 12th grade and graduated from Doherty Memorial High School in 1974.

Lainey's parents, Saul and the late Norma Feingold, graduated from Classical High School in 1950. When Saul was a first grader at Belmont Street School in the 1930's, his teacher Sarah Ella Wilson advanced him six months, putting him in the same grade as Norma. Saul has long believed that this action by Miss Wilson, one of the first African American school teachers in Worcester, changed his life. In 2019 he established an endowed scholarship in her honor for Worcester State students studying to become teachers.

At Forest Grove Lainey served on the "Ad Hoc" committee — a student-run group trying to shake things up under the brave tutelage of history teacher William Woodfin. While at Doherty, Lainey played on the tennis team and helped start an alternative program called Students Involved in Their Education (S.I.T.E). Students enrolled in S.I.T.E. took classes at Doherty in the morning and did internships in the afternoon. One of Lainey's internships was with the ACLU. Another was working at a bike shop. Lainey's mother Norma was one of the program's volunteer advisors.

Lainey always wanted to be a lawyer and graduated law school in 1981. For the past 30 years she has advanced the rights of people with disabilities to participate fully in the digital world.

Instead of filing lawsuits, Lainey works in collaboration with her clients and public and private organizations. Using a process called Structured Negotiation that she co-created, Lainey has negotiated accessibility agreements with organizations as varied as Bank of America, Walmart, the City of San Francisco, and the American Cancer Society, all without fighting in court.

Lainey's book about her work, 'Structured Negotiation, a Winning Alternative to Lawsuits', was published in 2016, with a second edition in 2021. She has been named a Legal Rebel and



Problem Solver of the Year by the American Bar Association and has twice received a California Lawyer Attorney of the Year award. (Learn more on her website at [LFLegal.com](http://LFLegal.com).)

Lainey lives with her husband Randy Shaw, the executive director of a non-profit serving tenants and the unhoused in San Francisco. Their daughters are both public school teachers in the San Francisco Unified School District.

Lainey thanks the Worcester Educational Development Foundation for tonight's honor, and thanks the Worcester Public Schools for providing a strong foundation for her life's work.



**Rosemary F. Ford**  
**Philanthropist**  
**Doherty Memorial High School**

Rosemary Fraser Ford began her education in Worcester at Lee Street School. She was accompanied by 5 of her 7 siblings. Rosemary remembers a day while in second grade being called out of class so that Mr. Ryan, the custodian, could give her a pair of mittens knitted by his wife. While in third grade her family began an adventure moving to Surrey, England for two years and Geneva, Switzerland for five years. It was a world wind for all, but like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, they all felt like there was no place like home, Worcester, Massachusetts. Rosemary came home and entered the ninth grade at Forest Grove and continued to Doherty Memorial High School graduating in 1975. She entered Assumption College in September of 1975 and graduated in 1979. Rosemary married in 1982 and had three children of her own, ran a daycare, and worked nights at a local restaurant while attending Anna Maria College to receive her Master's in Education. She worked as a second-grade teacher at Union Hill School for 26 years retiring in 2020 during the height of COVID.

Her daughter, Kristin Ford, teaches at South High School along with her husband Peter DiFrancesco. Daughter Brittany Ford Petty is the school adjustment counselor at Flagg Street where Rosemary's grandchildren attend or will attend school. Rosemary now spends special time with her grandchildren as she is well aware of how quickly time passes.

Ten years ago, Rosemary and her husband Paul founded the 365Z Foundation in memory of their son Zachary who was known for his thoughtfulness and kindness to others. The Foundation helps to inspire kind acts within our community. 365Z offers guidance and resources for a multitude of schools and provides scholarships, meals, and opportunities to showcase kind acts. As the president of 365Z, she organizes activities to achieve the Foundation's mission of spreading kindness. The Foundation awards scholarships for college and summer camps and partners with schools, veterans, senior citizens, the district's Mini-Olympics, food pantries and shelter programs. The 365Z Foundation envisions a world where everyone performs a kind act for someone else – every single day, and Rosemary Ford is the exemplar of that mission.



**James "Jim" Laurie**  
**Journalist & Author**  
**Classical High School**

Jim Laurie is an international writer, lecturer, broadcaster, and media consultant who has witnessed many defining moments in global history in the past 50 years. A recipient of multiple Emmy, Peabody, and Overseas Press Club Awards, Jim roamed the world first for NBC News (1972-1978) and ABC News (1978-2000).

For most of his career, he has specialized in Asia – China, Japan, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Jim was the only American TV correspondent to cover the fall of Saigon in 1975 and remain to watch the Communist victory through the month of May. Earlier, he flew out on the US helicopter airlift as Phnom Penh collapsed under the Khmer Rouge onslaught.

In July 1981, Jim opened the first network news bureau in Beijing for ABC News. He covered developments in China and Hong Kong in 1989 and 1997. In January-February 1989, he reported on the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and returned to Afghanistan in November 2001.

In the early 1990's, based in Moscow, Jim reported on the collapse of the Soviet Union and independence movements in the Baltic states and Ukraine. Jim is rare among journalists having interviewed Russian leaders Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin, and

Vladimir Putin. He has lectured on the rise of Putin.

Jim has produced or written documentary films about Japan, China, Vietnam, and Cambodia. He has interviewed leaders over the years including China's Deng Xiaoping, India's Indira Gandhi, Cambodia's Norodom Sihanouk, and the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

From 2005 to 2012, Jim served as head of the broadcast department at the Journalism and Media Studies Center at the University of Hong Kong. He taught courses in Chinese and media history. Jim is the author of 'The Last Helicopter: Two Lives in Indochina' (2020), a memoir of war, love, and survival in Cambodia and Vietnam in the 1970's.

Jim was a 1965 graduate of Classical High School, Worcester where he was the class orator. He also attended Flagg Street School and Chandler Junior High School in Worcester. In Washington DC, he attended both American University and George Washington University, graduating in 1973 from AU with a BA degree in History with a concentration in Asian Studies.



**Barbara Abramoff Levy  
Musician, Conductor  
& Historical Interpreter  
South High School**

Barbara Abramoff Levy was the founder and director of Barbara Levy Associates, a consulting group that helped history museums and history organizations across the country improve their interpretive planning and educational programs. A sample of her many projects ranged from interpretation planning for the John J. Glessner House, in Chicago, IL, and the Yin You Tang House at the Peabody Essex Museum, in Salem, MA, to the educational programs of the Pocumtuck Valley Historical Society, in Deerfield, MA, and three conferences on historic site interpretation for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, DC. She worked for Gore Place, in Waltham, the J.G. Whittier home, in Amesbury, the Mcfadden-Ward House, in Beaumont, Texas, the Middleborough Historical Society and Museum, in Middleborough, MA, the Molly Brown House, in Denver, CO, Stenton in Philadelphia, PA, planning for the town of Monterey, CA, the Manship House, in Jackson, MS, and the LaSalle Canal Boat

Planning Charette, in LaSalle, IL. She prepared Oral Histories for the Boston Natural Area Fund and developed a program called Teaching with Blackstone Valley History, for Historic Massachusetts, and many others. Prior to this, she was the Director of Interpretation and Education for the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, now Historic New England.

Barbara was the author of 'Great Tours: Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites', Alta Mira Press, two chapters of 'Interpreting Historic House Museums', Alta Mira Press, and several magazine articles. She was also a choral conductor and singer, and was the Director of Choral Activities at Clark University, Founder and Music Director of the Arkansas Chamber Singers, Conducting Assistant to the Director of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and a director of a number of other choruses. She also wrote "The Organ at Mechanics Hall," The Diapason, 74th year, No. 6, Whole No. 883, June 1983, and "Teaching Vocal Techniques from the Musical Score," The Choral Journal, Official Publication the ACDA, Volume XX, Number 1, September, 1979

Barbara went to Granite Street School, May Street School, Chandler Junior High and South High School. At South, she was a student of Loukia S. Bitzas, who focused and aided her in music throughout her time there, and helped her to become the best musician she could be. Mrs. Bitzas became the music director for the Worcester Public Schools and was devoted to her students and music until the day she died.



**Aaron Lubowitz**  
**Private Equity & Investment Banker**  
**Doherty Memorial High School**

Aaron Lubowitz is the Managing Member and founder of Alternative Capital Partners, LLC ("ACP"), a private investment and boutique advisory firm based in New York. At ACP, Aaron has been involved in closing well over \$500MM of transactions in a variety of areas and capacities such as: renewable energy project finance, multi-family affordable housing, commercial real estate financing, domestic tax credits, and early-stage corporate equity capital raising. Today, ACP owns, leases

and manages approximately 1,500 residential photovoltaic rooftop solar systems in a variety of states, as well as over 10 megawatts of small commercial solar systems located in the western part of the US. In 2014, Aaron served as the CFO at United Wind, the leading distributed wind developer in North America. As CFO, Aaron was responsible for all of UW's capital markets related activities.

ACP has raised capital for difficult-to-finance affordable housing projects since its inception, including being hired as the court-appointed Chief Restructuring Officer for a bankrupt west-coast affordable housing developer. ACP was also hired by a prominent affordable housing developer in the mid-west to help finance the acquisition and rehabilitation of BW Cooper, one of the largest and oldest public housing projects in New Orleans. Within one year, ACP raised over \$80MM of institutionally funded tax equity capital which led to the demolition, construction, and operation of 410 beautiful mixed income and mixed finance units on the old BW Cooper site.

Before founding ACP, Aaron was Managing Director and Global Co-Head of the Global Structured Products Group at Morgan Stanley. Aaron built its affordable and public housing tax equity business in 2002, its New Markets tax credit business in 2004 and later helped to establish its renewable energy tax equity investment business, collectively which grew to over \$5BN in transactional size by 2009. Aaron began his career at Morgan Stanley in 1992 as an Investment Banking analyst, structuring and trading credit, interest rate and commodity related derivative products for the Fixed Income division during his first eight years. He then joined GSP, specializing in making tax advantaged principal investments, primarily in multi-family real estate and renewable energy based transactions.

In 2004, Aaron was promoted to Managing Director and promoted to head of the group. One of Aaron's most special transactions during his tenure at Morgan Stanley was when he led the firm's \$25MM plus equity investment into the rehabilitation and revitalization of Worcester's own Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts.

Aaron is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA), and graduated summa cum laude from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania with distinction as a Joseph Wharton

Scholar. Aaron grew up in Worcester, where several of his family members still reside. He went to May Street, Chandler Junior High, Forest Grove Middle, and Doherty Memorial High School. In 1988 he graduated from Doherty as co-valedictorian, played basketball and tennis, and served as class Vice President during his junior and senior years. Aaron is an avid Boston sports fan, a dog lover and has been an active volunteer coaching youth sports in Westchester County, NY. He is married to Karina and has three children, Benjamin, Hannah, and Jordan.



**Sean Mitchell**  
**Public Servant**  
**Doherty Memorial High School**

Sean Mitchell was born and raised in Worcester and attended Worcester Public Schools – May Street Elementary School, Forest Grove Middle School, & Doherty Memorial High School – along with his older brother Tim. Both of his parents are retired educators from the Worcester Public School system. His mother Anne taught first grade at West Tatnuck Elementary, and his father Bill was a guidance counselor at Worcester East Middle School.

Sean attended Anna Maria College where he graduated with a degree in Fire Science, which kickstarted a successful career in the fire service. He accepted a position with the Nantucket Fire Department in 2006 and worked his way up the ranks from Firefighter to Fire Prevention Officer. He is now the Deputy Chief of the NFD.

During Sean's time in the fire service, he has become intimately involved in work to not only rid firefighting gear and equipment of toxic chemicals known as PFAS, but also has worked to promote awareness of these chemicals in firehouses nationwide. His interest in the issue stemmed from meeting another Worcester Public Schools alum, Diane Cotter, back in 2017. Diane and her husband Paul (retired from the Worcester Fire Department) were just beginning their mission to prove the presence of these carcinogenic forever chemicals in firefighting gear. In 2021, after much collaboration with other firefighters and health and safety advocates, Sean co-wrote and presented a resolution at the annual IAFF (International Association of Fire Fighters) conference which called

on the IAFF to no longer accept sponsorships from the chemical industry or equipment manufacturers that use toxic chemicals in firefighter turnout gear. It also called on the IAFF to provide education to firefighters and to publish information on PFAS based on research by independent scientists with no connections to the chemical industry. The resolution passed overwhelmingly with 99% of the vote.

Sean resides on Nantucket island with his wife Allyson and three children, Thomas (7), Patrick (5), and Eleanor (1). He has worked successfully to make the Nantucket Fire Department one of the first departments in the nation to purchase PFAS-reduced gear for all Nantucket firefighters and is currently engaged in a study with researchers from Michigan State and Duke University, to monitor PFAS levels in firefighters' blood. The study will help further our knowledge of the impact these chemicals are having on the fire service as efforts are made to reduce firefighter occupational cancer.



**José Rolón**  
**Public Figure, LGBTQ+ Advocate**  
**& Wedding Planner**  
**Doherty Memorial High School**

A nuptial maestro for almost a decade, José has made a name for himself with his chill vibe and generous command. His planning and design aesthetic have made him one of the top rising wedding planners in NYC. He is frequently sought for his expertise on The New York Times, Brides, NACE, and more, has had work featured with Martha Stewart, Essence Magazine, Sophisticated Weddings Magazine, New York Weddings, the Best of The Knot, and was named one of Biz Bash's Most Influential Event Professionals.

José lives in Brooklyn Heights with his three children, and as a single dad, has learned how to keep his cool under pressure. During COVID, José and his family chose to take TikTok by storm during quarantine! As a result, he has been featured and had appearances on the TODAY Show, NowThis News, Ellen's Game of Games, Tamron Hall Show, Univision Se Habla USA, and The Drew Barrymore Show. He was named one of Tiktok's 2021 Latinx Trailblazers. José was a co-host of Season 2's webseries Parenting Wins and is now co-host of Crackle's new series, Wedding Talk with Tara Lipinski and Jove Meyer.





## **The Reverend Jonathan Slavinskis Spiritual & Community Leader North High School**

Born and raised in Worcester by Daniel and Deborah, Fr. Jonathan attended Lake View Elementary, Worcester East Middle, and graduated in 2002 from North High School. While a student, Fr. Jonathan grew to love the Worcester community while being positively influenced by his diverse classmates and guided by an array of educators. In high school, Fr. Jonathan was actively involved in many community service activities including Student Council.

As Fr. Jonathan was being formed intellectually by the Worcester Public Schools, he was also spiritually inspired by the great priests and parishioners from St. John's Church. It is there and within his family home on Harold Street that his vocation was nurtured. Fr. Jonathan graduated from Anna Maria College in 2006 and went onto seminary studies at Mount St. Mary's Seminary and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Worcester in June 2012.

As a priest Fr. Jonathan served as a parochial vicar for two years at St. John Paul II Parish in Southbridge followed by two years at St. Joseph's Parish in Charlton. Bishop McManus appointed Fr. Jonathan as pastor of St. Bernard's Church on Lincoln Street in July of 2016 where he currently ministers.

Fr. Jonathan was later appointed chaplain for the Worcester Police Department and the Worcester Fire Department. In these roles he has assisted the city to move through some very difficult moments of loss and suffering. Fr. Jonathan also acts as a chaplain in the Pastoral Care Department at UMASS Memorial, a department he became familiar with through the internship program while as a high school student.

Fr. Jonathan has a true love and care for the parish that he is called to shepherd. As many familiar with him know, his goal is to be a presence of the welcoming heart of Christ to all that he encounters. He is truly engaged in the life of the Worcester community, working hard to assist the needs of many.

He has great care and concern for young people many of whom notice his presence at school and sporting events. He takes great pride in standing on the sideline with his "collar" representing and

rooting for the Worcester Public Schools students – especially when they play the Catholic Schools. Fr. Jonathan is an advocate for the students within the community and is truly grateful to be ministering in the city he loves.



**QUINSIGAMOND**  
Community College

**Quinsigamond Community College**  
**Friend of the Worcester Public Schools**  
**QCC's Commitment to Our Community:**

The Early College Worcester (ECW) Program, a partnership between Worcester Public Schools (WPS), Quinsigamond Community College (QCC), and Worcester State University (WSU) since 2018, has offered well over a thousand WPS students from its seven high schools the opportunity to enroll in a variety of MA transferable college courses each semester delivered remotely (only due to COVID), on the college campuses, or face to face at their respective high schools. All WPS students from 9th to 12th grades, especially students who are from underrepresented populations such as economically disadvantaged, African-American, Hispanic, and English Language Learners, are eligible to participate in ECW.

The ECW Program continues to provide college and career readiness activities, high quality instruction, and extensive wrap-around support services such as tutoring and mentoring to ensure student's retention and successful completion. The ECW Team has been successful in demonstrating to high school students the advantages of these higher education programs, as well as providing access to college and career readiness workshops, college resources, campus tours, summer programming and transitional guidance.

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**In memory of John E. Durkin, Ed. D.,  
Superintendent of the Worcester Public  
Schools and Distinguished Alumnus**



**1932 - 2022**

He was the quintessential gentleman  
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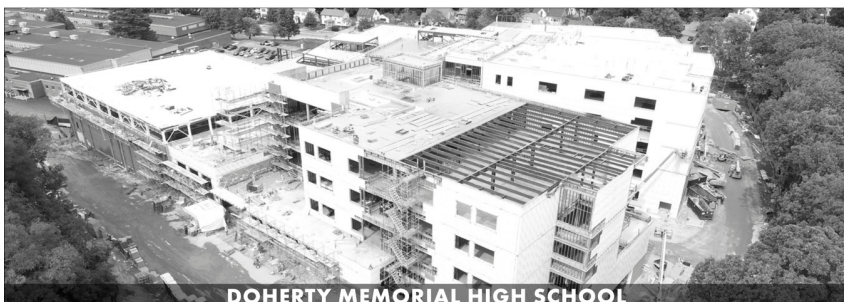
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WEDF depends on a caring community to carry out our mission. To grow and enhance support for the Worcester Public Schools, WEDF has launched "Worcester Alumni & Friends", a network for alumni and supporters of the Worcester Public Schools. Learn more and join at [www.worcesteralumni.org](http://www.worcesteralumni.org).

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