



Alumni Spotlight

Kevin Palma

Class of 1992



Since you have graduated from James L. Collins Catholic School what academic, career, and/or volunteer paths have you taken? What is your current job title and company?

September 2016 marks my ten-year work anniversary with B-29 Investments, LP, which is the family office representing the business interests of John Schmitz, who is a lifelong entrepreneur in the oil and gas space. My role has been as Chief Financial Officer since joining the firm, and it has been an incredibly rewarding experience since no two days are ever the same. Our landscape is divided into two distinct focuses: 1) a private equity team that provides strategic and financial advice to emerging oil and gas companies under our control in the hopes of growing them into larger, more diverse operations and 2) a support services team that manages our non-energy companies in addition to serving as the experts in the disciplines of accounting, human resources, information technology, and legal for the entities not yet large enough to perform these functions independently. At B-29's peak before the oil market dramatically altered course in the second half of 2014, the B-29 family office played a role in approximately 5,700 jobs across 136 different facilities. In addition to being the CFO of B-29, I serve on the Board of Directors for ENGlobal Corporation, a publicly-traded engineering services and automation company based in Houston, and volunteer as the Chairman of the Trust Committee that benefits JLCCS and as the Finance Chairman for the Corsicana Country Club. I have been a past Board President and Board member of the Corsicana Country Club, a past Board member of the Harvard Business School Dallas Alumni Association, and a past member of the Finance Committee for the Colonial Country Club. I am an alumni of the Harvard Business School and of the University of Texas, having earned the degrees of BBA, MPA, and MBA along the way. I am licensed as a CPA in the state of Texas, and I graduated as the valedictorian from Corsicana High School in 1996.

What lesson did you learn while at James L. Collins Catholic School and how has it shaped you into the person you are today?

My favorite JLCCS lesson remains that the term Catholic means "universal". It is an extremely powerful concept to me, because in my humble interpretation, it implies that we are all created equally under God's likeness and image. The practice of Catholicism positively and optimistically defies society's stereotypes and evil's vast temptations. In an ever-increasing global world, it is comforting to me that I can attend a Mass in virtually any country, and the traditions, the symbols, and the lessons communicated remain free from local influences and populism. These lessons and observations remind me of our calling to be a servant of the Lord, dedicating each day's actions as a living prayer in honor to our one Creator. And in the spirit of continuing the brave and noble work of generations before us, the term Catholic constantly reminds me that this lifetime is not about what you get, but what you give!

How have any of the four cornerstones of James L. Collins Catholic School allowed you to transform the world in your own way?

The business community receives a lot of negative publicity, particularly regarding greed and corruption. Personally, I can attest that the four cornerstones of JLCCS have everything to do with any business's success and that the overwhelming majority of businesses strive to make the correct choices. In B-29's landscape, it begins with integrity, as each of our professionals is only as good as our reputation and our ability to fulfill our verbal promises. The respect of others makes us a preferred place of employment, since we value the input and participation of all of our employees given their unique perspectives and experiences. Involvement allows us to look past our own operations and to actually see the impact that we can have on the local communities in which we operate. Our companies are known for contributing well in excess of seven figures cumulatively every year to fulfill our mantra of being a good corporate neighbor. And lastly, especially in challenging conditions such as the current, faith is imperative in carrying through with the tough decisions for the sake of longevity and believing that others in our industry will make the economically-beneficial and not politically-motivated choices.

What advice would you like to give to the students at James L. Collins Catholic School?

The usual clichés of "give it your best" and "always follow your heart" certainly apply. However, since my career has largely centered around taking outsized risks at an early age, I recommend two more philosophies: 1) embrace the role of David whenever the David versus Goliath match-up presents itself (no progress or inventions would ever materialize if we simply let the well-accepted norms prevail) and 2) explore your own version of the "road less traveled" (since your whole life is ahead of you, will your story be unique or someone else's view of how it should be?). And lastly, since I'm often asked why I still remain active in Corsicana despite residing in Dallas, "Know from whence you came - if you know from whence you came, there are no limitations to where you can go!"