

ih FAMILY



Immaculate Heart High School & Middle School ♥ *Fall 2019*

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Remembering Lauren Anne Muñoz Geoghegan, Class of 2006

A Woman of Great Heart & Right Conscience

“But I have a new love for that glittering instrument, the human soul. It is a lovely and unique thing in the universe. It is always attacked and never destroyed – because ‘Thou mayest.’” —The character Lee in John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden*

by Callie Webb

While reading John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden* for her high school English class, Lauren Geoghegan found inspiration in the novel’s theme of “Timshel”—a word Steinbeck interpreted to mean “Thou mayest” in Hebrew. Timshel represents the ability people have to choose how they live their life. Although we all rise and fall based on our actions, everyone has the potential to triumph and even overcome failure. Why? Because another choice is always at hand. Because *thou mayest*.

As an Immaculate Heart student, Geoghegan sought to live deliberately and meaningfully through choices that enhanced her life and the lives of countless others she touched – through friendships, academic pursuits, and even the memorable character roles she adeptly played in Genesian theatre productions. So fully did Geoghegan embrace “thou mayest” that the high school senior selected “Timshel” as her parting quote for her Class of 2006 yearbook.

Geoghegan left a lasting impression on her IH teachers, too.

“Hard working, talented, and loving, Lauren openly shared her gifts with our school community each and every day she was here,” Immaculate Heart High Principal Naemah Morris said. “Her smile and boundless energy lit up the classroom and the stage.”

Morris, who taught Geoghegan in her social studies class, remembers her former student as an enthusiastic learner. “Lauren loved history and clearly understood the importance of studying the past to understand the present. She was a sponge, soaking up every drop of information she could – never afraid to ask questions or take on a challenge. She was wise beyond her years,” Morris added.

“I remember Lauren’s sincere interest in every subject, in learning deeply what and why,” recalled Immaculate Heart math chair Maria Gale, who also instructed Geoghegan. “I think every teacher here thought that his or her subject was Lauren’s favorite. But she did not have favorites. For her, it was all interesting.”

Following her graduation from Immaculate Heart, Geoghegan volunteered in the local office of Congressman Adam Schiff before she attended Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. At Georgetown, she majored in government and minored in Arabic and Spanish. During her junior year, she spent a semester in Madrid to become fluent in Spanish and then spent a summer in Beirut to study Arabic. She traveled throughout Europe, the Middle East including Turkey, and North Africa. Upon her return to the U.S. she interned again for Congressman Schiff, but this time on Capitol Hill.

After earning her college degree, Geoghegan worked in Georgetown’s Office of Undergraduate Admissions for seven years. According to colleagues, she was committed to providing an equal opportunity for higher education to all students and sought to make Georgetown’s student body more diverse. Her recruitment efforts often brought her back to Immaculate Heart, where teachers and administrators warmly welcomed her return.

In early 2016, Geoghegan and her partner, Jay Austin, decided to quit their office jobs to plan a bike trip around the world. Both cycling enthusiasts, they sought adventure, but also the chance to experience life on simpler, more meaningful terms, together. “There’s magic out there, in this great big beautiful world,” Austin wrote on the couple’s blog, simplycycling.org, which chronicled their travels.

The pair started their trip in South Africa on July 6, 2017. They cycled through 26 countries in Africa, Europe, Turkey, and Central Asia. They biked in all weather and terrain. At times they faced daunting conditions as they battled frost and snow and even illness.

Yet they persevered – and managed to each live on \$15 a day for more than a year.

Through their blog, Geoghegan and Austin regularly featured posts and photos highlighting the many acts of kindness and generosity they encountered from strangers – including gifts of flowers and ice cream, shelter from the cold and rain, and even a family’s spontaneous musical performance as the pair set up their tent one evening.

On July 29, 2018, the couple and several European cyclists touring with them made their way down a scenic stretch of highway in southwestern Tajikistan. It was on this road near Dushanbe, the country’s capital, that a car driven by ISIS militants deliberately struck the cyclists. Both Geoghegan and Austin died, as did two cyclists from Switzerland and the Netherlands.

Since their tragic deaths more than a year ago, Geoghegan and Austin have been the focus of national and international news coverage, including a recent segment on the television documentary series “The Weekly” from *The New York Times*. The story of their journey has prompted an outpouring of sympathy and support from around the globe, from people who never knew the two Americans but admired their calling.

At a memorial service on campus last fall, Geoghegan’s friends and family members, including her parents, Robert and Elvira Geoghegan, and her sisters, Carolyn, Class of 2009, and Jacqueline, Class of 2012, gathered to pay tribute to the young woman who, they noted, lived life fully and passionately.

Describing Geoghegan as humble, intelligent, thoughtful and kind, they shared a portrait of an alumna as the embodiment of Immaculate Heart’s motto – a “Woman of Great Heart and Right Conscience.”

During the service, Geoghegan’s parents announced the creation of a scholarship endowment that bears both their daughter’s name, Lauren Anne Muñoz Geoghegan, and, fittingly, the word “Timshel.”

On the front of the scholarship announcement, a photo of Geoghegan shows her smiling next to a stand of sunflowers, her favorite flower. Just as sunflowers turn their yellow heads each day in a steady gaze that tracks the sun across the sky, Geoghegan encourages us all to bask in life’s possibilities, to discover and pursue our dreams. Why? Because *thou mayest*. ☺

Sometimes Small Things Contain Whole Universes

by Marc van der Woude
English teacher and department chair

A comma is such a small thing. The tiniest hook on the underbelly of a dot. Only the period is smaller. But sometimes small things contain whole universes.

I recall convening with Lauren Geoghegan one afternoon to discuss a timed essay. I'd written "C-S" in a margin, so it was time we resolved her issue with the comma-splice, a type of run-on sentence. Lauren showed up, of course, with her ever-present smile, all teeth and braces at the time, but it was always her "lamping eyes," dancing and twinkling, that spoke most about Lauren's spirit.

As we discussed independent clauses and how to punctuate them, our talk shifted to restrictive phrases, appositives, items in a series, and other moments when commas may be called for. Right, you get the picture. Really exciting stuff!



In response to these, however, I recall Lauren commenting, something like "such a small thing, but it has such a big impact."

"Yes," I responded. "It's usually the tiniest of things that make the biggest differences." Then I probably bludgeoned poor Lauren with a thousand anecdotes about how it's the details that matter, how good writers sweat the small stuff.

I needn't have bothered. Lauren was a fine writer and a quick study. She grasped the comma rules easily, so soon our talk drifted toward her college plans. Her dreams of Georgetown were firm even then. She wanted the East Coast, Georgetown, something to do with international relations, or the like, and afterwards the world itself.

More than anything, Lauren expressed how dearly she wanted to travel, how deeply she wanted to connect with various peoples.

Over the following school year, after she applied to Georgetown, Lauren would stop by my room often to shoot the breeze. Inevitably we'd talk about Europe, Mexico, the Middle East. Sometimes it was geopolitics we examined. Other times it would be backpacking. Then again, we would discuss music, space exploration, literature, languages, physics, and the internet just to name a few of our topics. In every conversation, however, Lauren showed her insatiable intellectual curiosity, her desire for her life to play out on the huge stage of our beautiful planet.

I remember how proud I was when Lauren was admitted to Georgetown. She was one of the top three students in her graduating class at IH and, better yet, a kind, helpful, caring soul. Lauren was simply wonderful. She was everything we hope for in a graduate from Immaculate Heart — and so much more.

I only saw Lauren one more time after she graduated. She visited campus and we caught up on her studies in Washington, D.C. The best part of our reunion was Lauren's indomitable exuberance. She was no less passionate about her future and the world than when we last spoke. I know that spirit is with her still—open, curious, loving, indefatigable, undefeatable.

Now when I think of Lauren, I sometimes go back to our simple talk about the rules of grammar. And though it's such a throwaway moment, a seemingly insignificant aside, one of many such talks teachers have with their students every day, I still hear Lauren's voice.

She was speaking of commas, tiny things that do not seem to matter all that much. But when I recall my meeting with Lauren and her precious, absolutely singular life, it's not punctuation I think of, it's her: "Such a small thing, but it has such a big impact."

I couldn't agree more.

*In Memoriam Mei
Carissimi Amantes Discipulus,
Lauren Geoghegan*

It is my abiding hope that all recipients of the endowed scholarship in her name be aware of the exceptional and unforgettable young woman who was Lauren Geoghegan. ☞

Let Love Grow

The Lauren Anne Muñoz Geoghegan Timshel Scholarship Endowment

This scholarship awards financial assistance each year to an Immaculate Heart Hispanic student in need. The principal of the endowment remains untouched, creating a permanent source of income for scholarship awards through the years.

Those interested in giving to the endowed scholarship in Geoghegan's memory should visit the following link:

<http://www.immaculateheart.org/laurengeoghegan>



Checks made out to "Immaculate Heart High School," with Geoghegan's scholarship in the memo line, may also be mailed to **Immaculate Heart High School, Attention Development Department, 5515 Franklin Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90028.**

For additional information or if you have questions, please contact Lindsay McGregor, Immaculate Heart's director of development, at 323-461-3651 x253.