

Catholic High swimmer is focused in and out of the pool

From the moment she began swimming at age 4, Shelby Kestler was hooked.

“My whole life has been in the water,” said Kestler, a 16-year-old junior at The Catholic High School of Baltimore. “I like the quietness of the sport because you can’t hear people around you while you’re swimming. It’s completely your race and nobody else can change what’s going to happen.”

A member of Catholic High’s varsity swim team for the last three years, Kestler competes in the 500-yard freestyle, the 100-yard butterfly and the butterfly leg of the 200-yard medley relay. She has the reputation of being a focused competitor, posting a personal best time of 6:59 in the 500-yard freestyle.

“Whether for practice or a meet, I can always count on Shelby to give her all,” said Kelly Ballwanz, her coach, “as she is always striving to do a personal best time.”

Kestler is just as dedicated to academics and reaching out to the community. Holding a 3.8 grade point average, she is a member of the National Honor Society and the Tri-M music honor society. Kestler is involved in theater, the forensics team and playing the clarinet in the band. For the last two years, she has been a member of Catholic High’s champion golf team that competes in the IAAM B Conference. She intends to play again this year.

Kestler said her life is grounded in faith. She serves as a sacristan and lector at St. Michael the Archangel in Overlea and is a member of the Archdiocesan Youth Leadership Team. Very active in her parish’s youth ministry program and the Girl Scouts, Kestler volunteers with friends once a month at Our Daily Bread in Baltimore. She recently coordinated a project to beautify a wall on a pharmacy across from her church that had been constantly tagged with graffiti.

“We wanted to put a stop to that and give the youth something to do over the summer,” said Kestler, who recruited young artists to paint a mural on the wall. “The idea was to cover up the white wall with something pretty. Studies show that if

you put up a mural, people who do graffiti will actually leave it alone because they are artists and they will respect that.”

Kestler hopes to pursue a degree in law and political science in college.