

Comberiate siblings excel to great heights

There's a saying that goes around the Comberiate family: "Being lazy is like slapping God in the face."

Judging from the astonishing track record the seven Comberiate siblings have compiled over the last several years, it's clear the Catholic school graduates and future graduates have taken that motto to heart.

All seven siblings attended their parish school at St. Louis in Clarksville. The six brothers have attended, currently attend or will attend Mount St. Joseph High School in Irvington, while their sister graduated from The Seton Keough High School in Baltimore.

Anthony Comberiate, 34, earned a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Maryland, College Park and a master's degree in the same field from The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Angela Comberiate Garippa, 32, earned a bachelor's degree in biology and psychology from St. Mary's College of Maryland and a master's of business administration from The Johns Hopkins University.

Twenty-eight-year-old Joseph Comberiate was the co-valedictorian at Mount St. Joseph High School and went on to earn bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in electrical engineering at the University of Illinois.

John Comberiate, 25, earned a bachelor's degree in computer science at the University of Maryland and is now enrolled in an MBA program. His 22-year-old-brother, Tom Comberiate, is another former Mount St. Joseph valedictorian who earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Illinois. He is now finishing a master's program and preparing for a doctorate.

The two youngest siblings are similarly on track for success. David Comberiate, 17, was the top-ranked student at Mount St. Joseph for his first three years and now

serves as president of the National Honor Society. Daniel Comberiate, 13, is at the top of his eighth-grade class at St. Louis School in Clarksville.

“As their mother, I give them full credit for what they’ve accomplished,” said Janet Comberiate. “I realize there’s only so much that I can do. It still has to be them putting themselves out there or putting in that extra effort and going the extra mile for some of the amazing things they’ve done.”

Janet Comberiate said she and her husband, Anthony, emphasized the importance of Catholic education to their children, who naturally made it a priority in their lives.

“It’s like anything else,” she said, “when you’re good at it, you feel good about it and you want to do more.”

All her children take learning seriously and have a passion for it, she said.

“We expressed that education is a valuable thing, and you want them to recognize that it’s something that’s important and therefore they should work hard,” she said. “Very few missed many days of school. Until the swine flu hit in the fall, David had perfect attendance at Mount St. Joe and my oldest did make it all four years with perfect attendance.”

David Comberiate said the drive to succeed was passed from sibling to sibling. Older siblings would help their younger ones with homework and offer advice, he said. The faith instilled in the siblings by their parents also played a key role.

“I believe God has given me the gifts to do well,” he said, “so why shouldn’t I do everything I can to use those gifts?”

Joseph Comberiate said he learned critical values at home, in Catholic school and at his parish.

“I think my faith helped me develop as a person,” said Joseph, a space physicist at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory who serves on the St. Louis school board. “A lot of people run into different temptations when they go away to college. Having a strong set of values helped keep me on track.”

His mother said she is most proud that her children have embraced their Catholic faith.

“To me, their biggest success is not academics,” she said. “It’s their clean living. I’m really proud of them.”