

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE THEIR BEST LIVES

“Wherever we go, we need to leave it a better place than when we arrived.” That was a message **Claudia Califano, M.D. ’88** heard many times growing up from her father, Joseph, who was the United States Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare under the Carter administration and served as a Canterbury Trustee from 1986 to 1988. Currently working as an Associate Clinical Professor at the Yale University Child Study Center and running a private practice, Claudia carries that lesson forward daily for children and their families.

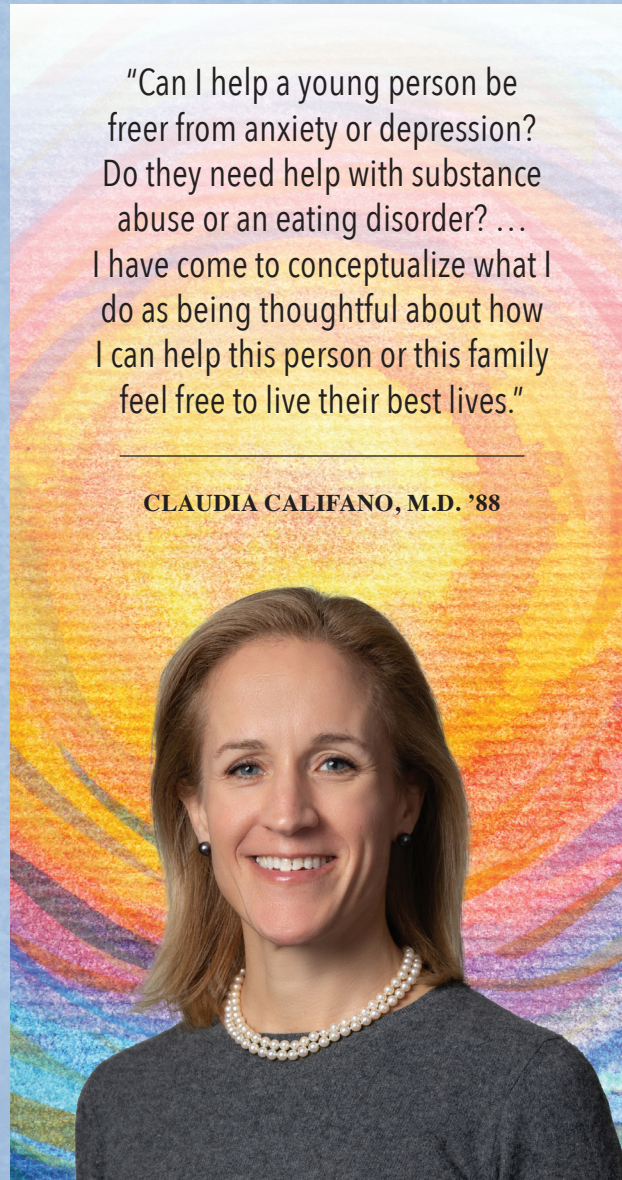
“My father’s influence is highly significant in my life,” she shared. “He emphasized the importance of education and a life of service, and at 93, he continues to instill these values in me. Canterbury helped my development in that way as well. To be in a community where values such as truth, service, respect, and forgiveness are emphasized mattered a great deal to me. Canterbury is gifted in that regard, and I am grateful for that.”

HELPING FAMILIES NAVIGATE COMPLEX ISSUES

Claudia frequently applies those values as she advocates for and helps children and adolescents manage the everyday anxieties that come with growing up in today’s world. Her role includes extensive time meeting face-to-face with youth and their families to work through their specific needs. “Can I help a young person be freer from anxiety or depression? Do they need help with substance abuse or an eating disorder? These are the nuances of my day-to-day work,” she said. “I have come to conceptualize what I do as being thoughtful about how I can help this person or this family feel free to live their best lives.”

Taking a methodical approach to her work, Claudia first meets with the parents. She then asks permission to talk to the child’s school, prior therapists or psychiatrists, or even a coach, teacher, or any other significant influence. Then she sits down with the whole family before meeting twice with the child alone. “The idea is that children do not live in isolation,” she explained. “I strive to learn as much as I can about a child and how they live in the world and to get perspectives from all the different people in their lives. The goal is to be as holistic as possible when making recommendations.”

Claudia’s job is often challenging, but the success stories are tremendously rewarding. She shared how she recently spoke



with a young woman with a complicated family history whom she had known for years and continues to see. “The woman told me that today she is living the best life she could have possibly imagined,” Claudia said. “On some level, her family circumstances have not changed, but she felt empowered to follow what she loves and believes in. There is humility in sharing the gifts that I was given with others and then bearing witness to the goodness they can create.”

A STRONG VOICE FOR YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Beyond her private practice, Claudia has made it a personal goal to raise awareness of mental health issues in young people. “There has been a huge deficit in the amount of child and adolescent mental health care that is available. And the pandemic just made it that much more apparent,” she explained. “Even prior to the pandemic, I was stretched by the large number of people in my practice. I often think about how we can approach this from a more systemic, preventive standpoint. There are skills that we can teach children and coping mechanisms that we can embed in school learning.”

Claudia has been doing her part in her own children’s school, volunteering to speak to every grade about anxiety because “that is the most common reason a child comes to see me.” She assures students that anxiety is normal and suggests ways they can address and tolerate it in a healthy way.

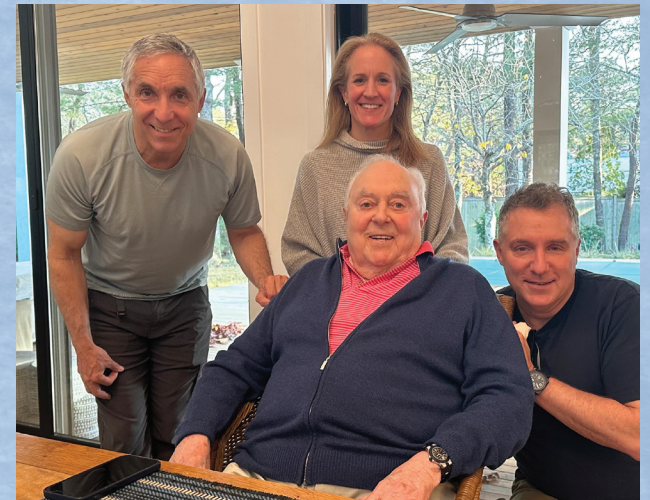
“In some of our most vulnerable populations, you have children who cannot speak for themselves,” she said. “There are children with emotional challenges that make it even harder for them to speak for themselves. And then you have children who are impoverished and do not have access to resources, so that can be a triple whammy for many families. I try to help them figure out how to navigate these kinds of things.”

The Yale Child Study Center is equally involved in advocacy efforts, helping shape policies that impact children and families both domestically and internationally. Its educational efforts include training professionals in child psychiatry, social work, and child psychology, as well as in research, specific intervention, and prevention approaches. Like Claudia, the organization is strongly committed to improving the lives of children and their families.

“I have been fortunate to be appointed to different administrative positions both within my department at the Child Study Center and on the Medical Executive Committee of the hospital,” she said. “I get to see, participate in, and be thoughtful about a larger systems approach.”

DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM HER SAINTS EXPERIENCE

Claudia’s time at Canterbury will always hold a special place in her heart. “I consider it a privilege to be a touchstone for someone and give them the important experience of ‘being seen’ as an individual. Canterbury played a strong role in my becoming that person,” Claudia said. “I especially want to acknowledge **Lou Mandler P ’87, ’91, ’94, ’99, GP ’19**



Claudia enjoys family time with her father, Joseph Califano (seated), and brothers Dr. Joe Califano and Mark Califano.

(former English Teacher, Dean of Faculty, and Academic Dean). She was the most influential person for me there and, thanks to her support, I definitely felt ‘seen’ as a student.”

Even though more than three decades have passed since then, Lou remembers Claudia vividly—and fondly. “I got to know her well when she was a student in my American Literature class and lived in Duffy House, where I was a dorm parent,” she said. “I recall Claudia as a sensitive and intelligent person who met the challenges of adolescence with an unusual analytical perspective. It seems natural that she would devote her talent and experience to helping children navigate what can be difficult formative years. I am proud to have been a small part of her experience.”

Claudia has many wonderful memories of her years on the hilltop, from time spent with friends to attending School Meetings to participating in athletic endeavors. “I came to campus not having played many sports, but I loved how athletics were so integral to the experience and appreciated the value of being on a team,” she said. “Everyone who knows me knows that exercise is a central part of my life, and I owe that dedication to Canterbury.”

And, of course, the strong service component of her Saints experience left a significant impression on Claudia. “I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to be of service to others,” she said. “Any of us can do this on any level, from smiling at someone in the grocery store to pursuing a career in medicine to donating a million dollars. It does not matter what form it takes. To any extent that we can help better the lives of others, it is a gift to them—and a gift to *all* of us.”

30 YEARS OF DOING THE LOURDES WORK Continued

INSPIRING GENERATIONS OF SAINTS

Lourdes has a deep impact on both the students and leaders. “The pilgrimage gives young people a space for community in a way they have not experienced before,” said Kate. “They get to know themselves and others in a new way—and not just in their own group, but youth from around the world and the people they are serving. Those interactions are when they shine and come alive. Lourdes brings out the best in people.”

Liz wholeheartedly agrees. “My first time attending, I was amazed watching the students and the leadership skills they displayed,” she said. “They gave me hope for the future of our church and our world.”

So, who *are* some of our student pilgrims, and what lasting impact did Lourdes have on them? These Saints were happy to share...



DooA Kim '12 helps a *malade* at the train station during the 2018 Lourdes pilgrimage.

treatment. But in Lourdes, people who have poor mental or physical health or are isolated become the VIPs and receive the greatest support, help, and caring. Lourdes holds a special place in my heart.” DooA and her sister, **DooYoung Kim '11**, made several pilgrimages together.



ELI TAYLOR '19

Five years removed from his time on the hilltop, Eli has devoted his life to higher causes as an Assistant for Liturgy and Church Operations at Fordham University while pursuing his Master of Theology degree. He credits his annual journeys to Lourdes for the path he has taken. “I have grown immensely from my pilgrimages. My first trip was in 2017, and I found myself deeply moved by the atmosphere and the gravity of humanity that exists there. When I saw so many people raising candles and singing in unison for the first time, *that* was when I knew I believed in something. Lourdes has been a major inspiration for how I live my life.”

But Eli also reminds people there is another aspect of the pilgrimage: “While Lourdes is obviously a spiritual place, what sometimes gets lost is that it is *fun!* Some of my fondest memories are getting gelato with my Canterbury friends or walking through the town market and finding cheese. It is such a wonderful trip and an amazing cultural exposure.”



COLLEEN COOK, R.N. '02

Colleen, currently the School's Director of Health Services, has been going back since 2000 when she was a Fifth Former on the hilltop. “Lourdes has been such a special place in my life. My first time there, I felt something shift in me, and I knew this was a place I wanted to come back to,” she said. “It has been such a gift to continue watching students experience Lourdes for the first time and see it through their eyes. It is where I learned the idea of ‘If you see it, you are responsible for it.’ Hope Carter, Guy Simonelli, and Viv Simonelli have inspired me to continue to make service an integral part of my daily life.”

DOOA KIM '12

The journey to Lourdes was *so* meaningful for DooA, a research scientist at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, that she spent nearly her entire presentation during last year's Fifth Form Retreat at Canterbury talking about it. “I first joined the Lourdes pilgrimage trip in 2010 as a rising Fifth Former. Little did I know at the time that I would go back nearly every year since,” she told the students. “The best description I have heard about Lourdes is that it is a place upside down. In our everyday world, those who are considered successful in terms of socioeconomic status typically receive better services and



EMILY LYNCH '25

Fresh off her first Lourdes pilgrimage last summer, Emily spoke of how much she loved the experience, especially her interactions with one *malade* in particular. “I brought a woman named Dupuis to Mass in her wheelchair and then saw her three more times during the week, which is rare with so many people in Lourdes,” she shared. “When she was receiving the Anointing of the Sick, there was something so comforting about her presence and seeing her smile proudly. It was beautiful. At the end of the week by the trains, Dupuis thanked me and gave me the biggest hug. I did not realize I could have such an impact on someone—or that someone else could impact me in the ways that she did. The trip changed how I see the world.”



KEEPING THE TRADITION ALIVE

Having assumed the leadership role from Guy, Julio is delighted for the opportunity to share the rewards of Lourdes with a new group of eager pilgrims each year. “I enjoy seeing what the young people do and how they interact without the distraction of their phones,” he shared. “They are always in conversation, coming up with creative new things to do, and forming friendships. Many of us flew to Lourdes as strangers and came home to campus riding a bus full of friends. It is a hidden blessing of this pilgrimage.”

Viv feels the same way being around students when “they can be themselves. You get to see a whole other side of them.” She also shared an extraordinary moment that was, for her, a powerful affirmation of faith. “In 2019, we met Sister Bernadette Moriau, who was the most recent officially proclaimed miracle of Lourdes the year before. For me and everyone else there, it was a verification that these miracles have occurred *and* been proven.”

And lastly, Viv felt it important to acknowledge the person who brought this Canterbury tradition to life in the first place. “Hope was always the oil that kept the wheel going,” she said. “Her attitude was one of, ‘Well, why not?’ Other people might have reservations, and she would say, ‘Let's just do it!’ That fortitude was contagious.”

For Hope, it was always about the students. “I love Lourdes; it is truly a special place. My role was to organize all the pieces of the trip, but my *joy* was in watching the kids when they were working, sitting, or tying knotted rosaries—seeing them happy, engaged, and peaceful. Being with these young people is one of the greatest joys of my life.”

As we reflect with gratitude on the people and moments that made this unforgettable pilgrimage possible for countless students, we look forward to many more years of our Saints doing essential work and changing lives—including their own—in Lourdes.

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISOR**