

News

St. Xavier coach honored for faith on the field

By Carmen M. Hubbard

ST. MARGARET MARY DEANERY — Using God's gifts to win football games is important to Steve Specht, but equally as significant is his message to students and players to live for others and make the world a better place.

"We play to compete, but you can't lose sight of why we compete — because of the gifts God gave us," said Specht, the head football coach and an English teacher at St. Xavier High School. "God put us on earth to leave it a better place than we found it."

The Sports Faith Hall of Fame honors coaches, athletes and teams for their sportsmanship and demonstration of their Catholic faith

On Feb. 21 Specht was inducted into the Sports Faith Hall of Fame in Chicago. He was named Division AA Coach of the Year. The ceremony, which included Mass, honored 14 men and women for the 2009 All Star Catholic High School Hall of Fame for Athletes, Coaches and Teams. The hall of fame is part of Sports Faith International and a division of the nonprofit BVM Helping Hands. This year's theme was from Matthew 5:16, which reads, "Just so, let your light shine

before men, so they may see your good works and give glory to their Father in Heaven."

"I've been to a lot of award ceremonies, but this one was really special. All of the inductees had stories of why they accomplished what they did. It was really something," Specht said of the ceremony.

Specht has been the head coach at St. Xavier for the past five years and has coached high school football since 1990. He will be among the keynote speakers at the 2009 Answer the Call Catholic Men's Conference in Cincinnati on March 21.

He strives to share three pieces of advice with his players: Love one another, be the best you can be and lean on one another for help along the way.

The Sports Faith Hall of Fame honors coaches, athletes and teams for their sportsmanship and demonstration of their Catholic faith. Last year's inductees included the late George "Papa Bear" Halas, founder of the National Football League and of the Chicago Bears; Danny Abramowicz, a former NFL wide receiver and Bears assistant coach; and former New York Giants right guard and Super Bowl XXI champion Chris Godfrey.

"With each practice, (Specht) reinforces the message that everything is a gift from God and one that each player should be grateful for," Chicago Bears owner Pat McCaskey said. "He loves to share the story from Matthew 25:14 to express his belief that each person on the team is gifted in talents from the Lord."



COURTESY PHOTO

Chicago Bears owner Pat McCaskey, left, and Steve Specht, head football coach at St. Xavier High School, pose together at the 2009 All Star Catholic High School Hall of Fame for Athletes, Coaches and Teams in Chicago.

McCaskey is also the chairman of the Sports Faith International.

"Football is a very important tool in helping to educate kids," St. Xavier High School principal David Mueller said. "(Specht) commands such respect and allegiance from all students. He is an evangelist in his own way — by the way he acts. He's a deeply spiritual man and not afraid to show his faith."

Ricky Mathews of West Chester nominated Specht to be inducted into the hall of fame. Having watched Specht coach his sons, Adam, 21, and Nicholas, 18, a senior at St. Xavier, Mathews said he is both remarkable and inspiring.

"He's built a program around faith that starts each year [with] reading the Book of

Matthew," Mathews said. "He gives a thought for the day that it's better to be a man of principle than a man of success."

Mathews said he's gotten to know Specht through the years and has seen how the coach motivates his players. Specht reminds his team of their surroundings and emphasizes the importance of studying for tests, weight lifting to condition and build strength for the next game and spending time with family in summer.

Mathews said he's confident about his sons' futures after seeing men like Specht express their Catholic faith.

"It's critical to be a full man of Christ. It's something to do 24/7," Mathews said. ■

St. X hosts acclaimed Muslim author

ST. MARGARET MARY DEANERY — St. Xavier High School will host Muslim-American author, activist and attorney Melody Moezzi for a lecture and book signing at 7 p.m., Thursday, March 19, in the Chapel of the Holy Companions at the school, 600 W. North Bend Rd..

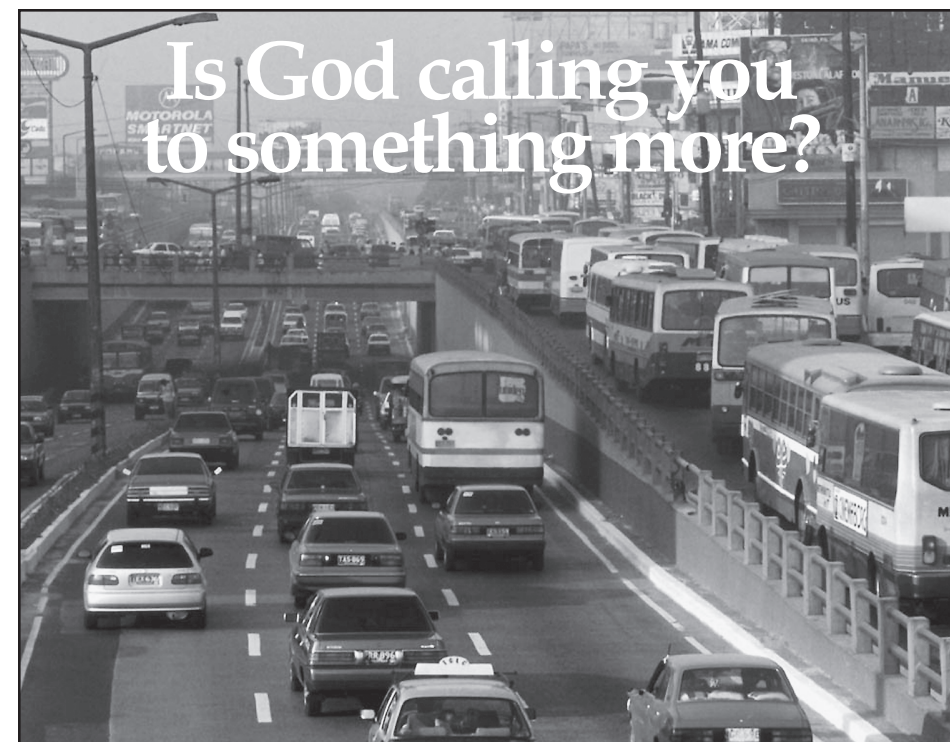
Moezzi earned Georgia Author of the Year honors for her first book, *War on Error: Real Stories of American Muslims*, which was released in the fall of 2007.

The St. X student diversity and inclusion group, Hands Across Campus, St. X diversity group, Parents Across Cultures and Muslim Mothers Against Violence

are sponsoring the visit. There is no cost to attend.

Moezzi was born in Chicago but grew up in the Dayton area, part of a strong Iranian-American community there. She is a columnist for *Muslim Girl Magazine*; her work has appeared in an array of other publications, including the *Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine*.

For more information on Moezzi's visit, please contact Michaela Barbour, St. Xavier High School diversity coordinator, at either mbarbour@stxavier.org or 513-761-7815, ext. 176. ■



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