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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Annual Thanksgiving Liturgy to be Held at Ursuline High School;
Ursuline Senior to Receive Special Honor**

Ursuline High School will have the annual Thanksgiving Liturgy on Tuesday, November 22nd at 10:15 a.m. in the school gymnasium. Bishop George Murry, S.J., Bishop of Youngstown, will be the celebrant.

Following the liturgy, a special presentation to an Ursuline student will take place. As we approach the season of Advent, this story illustrates the spirit of giving as well as the close-knit nature of the Ursuline High School community.

Each week, the Office of Alumni and Advancement sends an electronic or “e” newsletter to more than 11,000 alumni and friends. The e-newsletter includes upcoming alumni events, some school news and athletic notices. It calls upon Ursuline Alumni to volunteer, to donate and to support the mission of our school. In October, Principal Patricia Fleming suggested that we request the help of our alumni once again ~ this time for a current and most deserving student.

In the weekly e-newsletter, we wrote that Senior Shannon Lytle embodies the best of Ursuline High School. He is a scholar (and a National Merit Semi-Finalist), involved in countless extra-curricular clubs and gives many service hours to both the school and to the community. Plus, he is a talented musician. So talented, in fact, he was selected to play his violin at Carnegie Hall as part of a young musicians’ symposium. He also shares his musical talent with our school community at school liturgies. Since purchasing his own instrument is so costly, Shannon has always been forced to rent a violin.

We ended the newsletter by stating that Ursuline High School would love to present this young man with a violin of his own. Then, we challenged our alumni and friends to help. How? We asked if an alumnus or someone they knew had a violin that is no longer being used, would they consider donating it? This donation would not only be tax deductible but it would be wonderful gift to a talented young man.

This e-newsletter was sent on a Friday afternoon. By the following Monday morning, the Alumni Office had received several emails from alumni who wanted to do their part ~ either with a cash gift, a recommendation for a violin tuner and finally, a possible donation of a violin. Several alumni were familiar with Shannon's abilities from his time as a member of Youngstown Symphony Youth Orchestra. These graduates wrote that Shannon had the ability to be the Concert Master – the most important violinist in an orchestra. Next to a conductor, the concert master is the most prestigious and celebrated member of the orchestra.

In this unfolding story, however, the power and the positive influence of both the social network and the Ursuline Alumni network were demonstrated. An Ursuline alumna was touched by the story of the Ursuline student and violin request. While she did not have a violin to donate, she posted the story on the wall of her Facebook page where it was read by a friend and recent transplant to Youngstown, Ohio from Odessa, Texas.

After learning about the Texas-transplant and her violin donation, the Alumni Office contacted her. Renee Burks had played the violin through her college years. Life and career choices brought her to V& M Star. The violin, which she so enthusiastically played for years, now sat in the dark recesses of her closet. It bothered her that the violin was unused. She wanted to donate it but wanted to make sure that it would be appreciated by a musician who loved playing as much as she had. In essence, Renee wanted to “pay it forward.” Furthermore, Renee was getting married soon. Her fiancé's children had no interest in taking violin lessons so when she read about Shannon on Facebook she realized that her violin would now have a good home. The violin, now newly tuned, will be presented to Shannon Lytle following the annual Thanksgiving liturgy.

This story illustrates the Ursuline High School connection – how it's important to help one of our own even if we do not know them personally. There are many parallels between Odessa, Texas (the violin's original home) and Youngstown, Ohio (the violin's adopted home). Though separately by thousands of miles, the blue collar residents are more likely to rally around the local high school football teams than the violin-playing honors student. Odessa, Texas gained notoriety as the basis for the book and subsequent television series, *Friday Night Lights*, which details the 1988 football season of the Permian Panthers. And a hardscrabble town like Youngstown too often finds itself in the news as the poorest city in America according to the Brookings Institute recent report.

Yet, this story illustrates the Mahoning Valley is rich in the values that matter – generosity of spirit, compassion and kindness. It also shows the power of the Ursuline network and how Ursuline Family ties reach far beyond the Valley.

Ursuline High School was founded in 1905 by the Ursuline Sisters of Youngstown. We are a co-educational, college preparatory high school of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Youngstown.