



GRADEBOOK

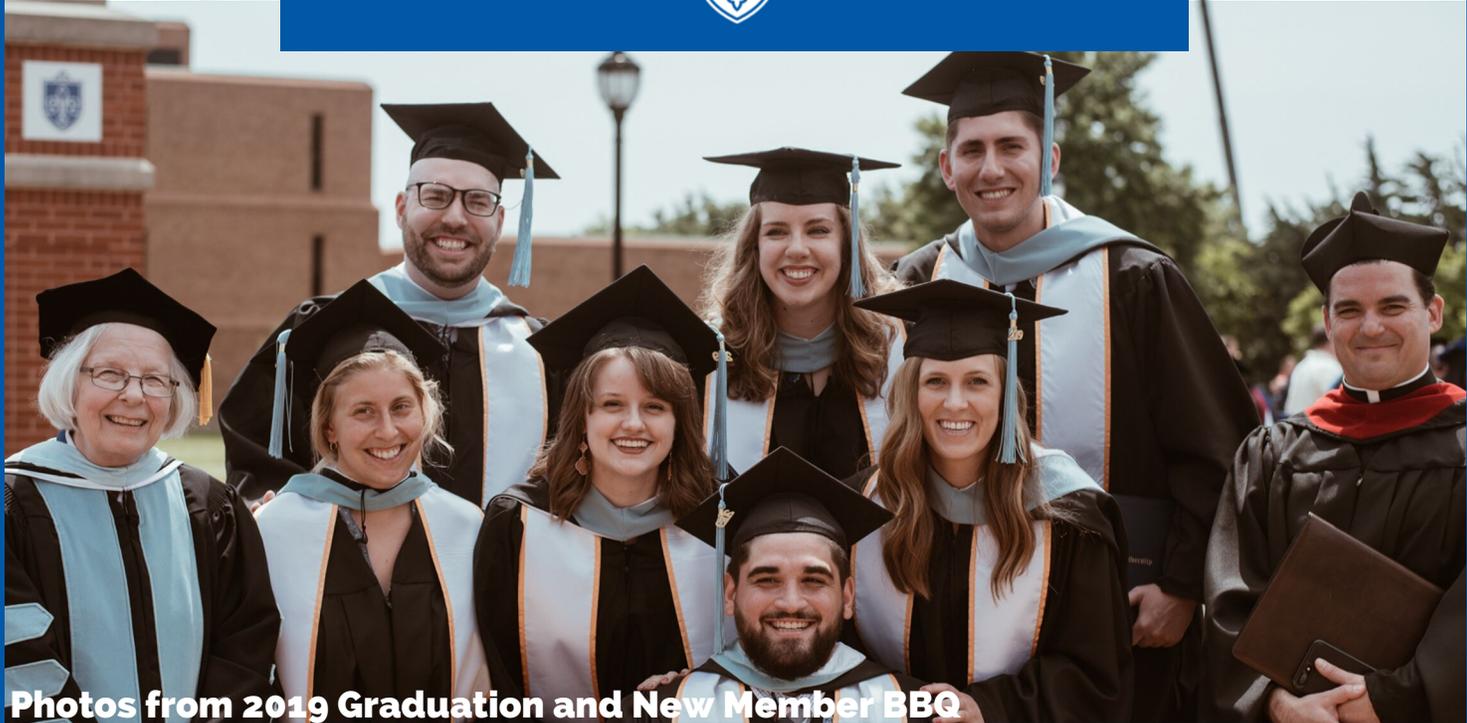
ISSUE 3, SUMMER 2019



Teach me.

—
BILLIKEN TEACHER CORPS

SAINT LOUIS  UNIVERSITY.



Photos from 2019 Graduation and New Member BBQ

Teach me.

BILLIKEN TEACHER CORPS



Dear Friends,

What is the mission of the Billiken Teacher Corps? Just as this newsletter is going to print, Pope Francis is visiting small island communities in the Indian Ocean. There, in his homily in Port Louis, the Pope—a former high school chemistry teacher—described our vocation as Catholic educators:

Our young people are our foremost mission! We must invite them to find their happiness in Jesus—not by speaking to them in an aloof or distant way, but by learning how to make room for them, learning their language, listening to their stories, spending time with them and making them feel that they, too, are blessed by God.

The mission of the Billiken Teacher Corps is to invite young people to find their happiness in Jesus. We do this by identifying, recruiting, training, and supporting recent college graduates as they teach and bear witness of the Kingdom of God in Catholic schools.

Clearly, handing on our faith in the current context demands a fresh approach. Catholics of previous generations may have been able to recite the Baltimore Catechism word for word. Today our faith is still taught, but it is also caught. Our faith takes hold in the hearts of students as BTC teachers model themselves after Jesus the Teacher—speaking, listening, and pointing out how Jesus walks with us on the journey of life.

You are receiving this newsletter because you too are part of this mission. Also joining us in this project is Angela Moret, the first assistant director of the BTC. Angela brings a wealth of experience in the areas of teacher formation, Ignatian spirituality, Catholic schools and Jesuit education in the urban setting, and school administration. Please enjoy reading her interview!

Let us pray for one another, that the Lord who first placed these holy desires in our hearts may give us the grace to bring them to completion.

Thank you for your support.

A.M.D.G.,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronny O'Dwyer, SJ".

Ronny O'Dwyer, SJ
Director, Billiken Teacher Corps

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SAINT LOUIS
UNIVERSITY

Interview with Angela Moret

Assistant Director of the Billiken Teacher Corps

What drew you to the BTC at Saint Louis University?

I had heard so many great things about the Jesuit education at Saint Louis University, and when I saw the job opening to work with the Billiken Teacher Corps it seemed like a great fit. I could continue my work supporting new teachers in urban Catholic schools, all in the context of Jesuit education. I researched the BTC and was inspired by the Corps Members' passion, energy, and faith. I am thrilled to be here!

Tell us about your experience working in Catholic Schools.

For the past fourteen years, I have worked in Catholic elementary and high schools – both as a teacher and as an administrator. I have directed programs, mentored teachers, and taught students in low income minority neighborhoods in Chicago, Illinois. My journey began as a volunteer in the Inner-City Teaching Corps, a program similar to the Billiken Teacher Corps, where I taught 5th through 8th grade language arts, coached track, and started a poetry club while working towards my Masters of Science in Education at Northwestern University. After the program, I moved to working in high schools where I taught English to freshmen and sophomores at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School and directed the Corporate Work Study Program at Christ the King Jesuit College Prep. These were formative years for me as I wove Ignatian Spirituality into my work. For the past two years, I worked as Assistant and Interim Principal at an under-resourced Catholic elementary school on the southwest side of Chicago. I have loved working in Catholic schools – for all the hope, diversity, and equity they provide communities.

What are your hopes for the BTC?

My hope is that the BTC Fellows and alumni feel supported and inspired in their work as Catholic school educators. They are making an impact at their schools each and every day, even though some days it might not feel that way. I hope that they form life-long friendships within their community, and continue their careers in education, if that is their calling.



What is your favorite part of Ignatian Spirituality?

I love the many layers of Ignatian Spirituality, but especially found a home and challenge with the Examen. As a cross country coach at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, I prayed the Examen with our team after meets. On the bus ride home, we quieted ourselves and reflected on the consolation and desolation of the morning on the cross country course. Standing at the front of the bus, watching the students enter into prayer and a relationship with Jesus was more than I could have asked for as a sports coach. On the last race of the season at the Girls' Sectional meet, I knew the team also grew to love the Examen. The race was over, parents were surrounding the runners, and everyone was ready to head home. One of the senior students piped up and said, "Can we do one last Examen?" And there, in the middle of the cafeteria of Lisle High School, surrounded by the post-race bustle, the team I coached found God in their sport.

What do you like most about St. Louis?

The people. Everyone I have met since re-locating to St. Louis from Chicago this summer has been very welcoming and friendly. My sweet tooth also enjoys a slice of gooey butter cake every once in a while.

What do you do in your free time?

I love reading and spending time with my husband and our one year old son. As a family, we enjoy running, hiking, and traveling to the National Parks.

Billiken Teacher Corps - Cohort 4

Kristen Abbarno is from Austin, Texas, and is returning to her position as a 2nd grade teacher at St. Cecilia Catholic School. Fun fact: She is in an episode of Friday Night Lights... clear eyes, full hearts, can't lose: Texas forever! Kristen reflects saying, "After my first week of teaching, I felt, in one word, overwhelmed: with the amount of support, love, and joy that surrounds me and fills me within my school and my community."



Shannon McFall is from Dallas, Texas, and is returning to teach middle school math and science at Our Lady of Guadalupe. She would love to one day incorporate therapy dogs into her classroom. "Discovering the little ways God reveals His love to us, from being greeted by students to grading, is what pushes me to do better each day. I am so thankful for the amount of support and love I received as a first-year teacher. I cannot imagine a better community."



Elizabeth Doherty is from St. Louis. Last year she taught 2nd grade at St. Louis Catholic Academy, and she will be continuing in this position this fall. She has a rabbit in her classroom that her students love to read to! While reflecting on her very first weeks of teaching, she says, I am beyond grateful for the daily opportunity to learn and grow with my 2nd grade students, who reveal Christ's heart in a way I have never experienced before."



Madison Miller is from Champaign, Illinois. Last year, she taught 2nd grade at Most Holy Trinity School and Academy; this fall, she will begin teaching 1st grade at Holy Cross Academy. Madison is a certified elementary and special education teacher. After completing her first week of teaching last year, she spent time reflecting on this quote: "When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it is our job to share our calm, not to join the chaos."



Grace Hartbenbach is from St. Louis and is once again teaching biology at Rosati-Kain High School. She thinks many movies would be better if they started and ended with singing and dancing! "As I reflect on my first couple weeks of teaching, I'm grateful for all the love and support from both my BTC community and my Rosati-Kain community. I truly feel I am where God wanted me to be all along, and I could not feel more blessed!"



Beth Moeller moved to St. Louis from Maria Stein, Ohio. Last year during the fall semester, Beth taught religion at Loyola Academy. In the spring, she moved to Bishop DuBourg High School to be a campus minister and religion teacher; she returns to her position at Bishop DuBourg this fall. Beth enjoys cooking dairy and gluten free recipes and highlights them on her Foodstagram. "I have never felt more supported as I do now. It seems that every aspect of my life is covered. I am fully set up to grow as a person and as a teacher."



Billiken Teacher Corps - Cohort 5

Mallory Kummer is from Highlands Ranch, Colorado, and she loves to bake! She'll be teaching PE and religion

at Loyola Academy in the fall. Mallory found the BTC after conversations with a friend and prayerful discernment; she's excited for a special opportunity to earn a Master's degree, grow deeper in her journey of faith, and lead her students on their faith journeys as well. She looks forward to living in community with the other BTC members!



Heather Sasser is from San Antonio, Texas, and avocados are her favorite food. She will begin teaching



middle school Spanish, Language Arts, and religion at Holy Cross Academy. Heather has always had a passion for helping children and is ready to serve the St. Louis community and to change lives as a teacher. She's excited about the new adventures the Billiken Teacher Corps will bring her as she jumps into this next season of her life!

Anna Martin is a St. Louis native, and she has a pet rabbit named Marshmallow (who's trained to use a litter box!).



Anna will be teaching 4th and 5th grade math, Language Arts, and religion at Sacred Heart School in Valley Park. She is excited to teach in the BTC alongside a community of students who share her core values and who stand together behind a desire to impact the next generation of students.

impact the next generation of students.

Steph Wissing hails from Brookfield, Wisconsin. Her favorite musical is Hamilton, and she and her friend drove

from Milwaukee to Chicago in -40° degree weather just to see the show! Steph believes that the BTC is the best way for her to share her gifts as she pursues a career in education, especially while serving at Catholic schools under the motto "serve, learn, grow." She's ready to explore a new city with her community members and to refine her teaching skills.



Abbey Sarnowski is originally from San Diego, California. Abbey will assume a 3rd grade teaching position at St.

Frances Cabrini Academy in the fall. Abbey has never in her whole life eaten a Poptart. She's looking forward to teaching in the BTC because of the opportunity it presents for her to grow academically, spiritually, and professionally as she answers a vocational call to teach. She's excited to be sharpened into a better person and educator by her professors, community members, and students too!



Charlie Wood is originally from Kildeer, Illinois, and swam competitively for 8 years before entering the Billiken



Teacher Corps. He will begin teaching secondary math at Trinity Catholic High School in the fall. Looking forward to living in a supportive community and instilling crucial values of faith in his students. Charlie is ready to go head first into teaching and can't

wait to have his own classroom!

2019 Graduate Reflects on Her Time in the BTC

Maria Ahern - Cohort 3

I truly know the meaning of bittersweet when thinking about my time teaching at Trinity Catholic High school. I began my teaching career directly after my graduation from Washington University in St. Louis. I was excited to be part of the Billiken Teacher Corps at Saint Louis University. As part of the Billiken Teacher Corps, I would live in community with other teachers, take classes to receive my Master's in Arts of Teaching from St. Louis University, and work in a St. Louis Archdiocese school.

I am so privileged to have been a teacher, mentor, confidant, spiritual partner, and friend to the students of Trinity.

I am incredibly blessed that I was placed at Trinity Catholic High School. While at Trinity, I've had the pleasure of teaching Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, and Spanish 2. The greatest learning in my two years at Trinity did not come from the classes I taught, but instead from the relationships I built with students, teachers, and staff. Most Sundays I could look to Monday with a smile on my face thinking of the students who had stories about their weekends, my teacher friends, and the new content I would be teaching that day (especially on Trigonometry days because I knew the content would elicit some groans).

Maria and the Ahern family on Cohort 3's graduation day



I am so grateful for the students I taught and those who still got to know me even though I didn't teach them. I love hearing a student walk up and say, "Ms. Ahern let me tell you..." then they would launch into a story about their weekend, home life, friends, or another class. I am so privileged to have been a teacher, mentor, confidant, spiritual partner, and friend to the students of Trinity. I leave this community with a heavy heart knowing that I'll be missing the graduation of the freshman class I started with but hoping that they'll continue to grow in knowledge, faith, and moral rectitude.

Next year I'll be moving to Santiago, Chile to join Notre Dame's 18-month post-graduate teaching experience in Santiago, Chile called CHACE. As part of the program, I'll be working with Chilean students at Saint George's College on their English, spending time in a month-long Spanish language intensive course, leading service trips, and traveling around South America.

I am so excited to continue growing through living in a new country, teaching a new subject, and practicing my Spanish. That being said, it is with a heavy heart that I say goodbye to the Trinity students and staff who have helped form me into the teacher I am today. Thank you Trinity community, and I wish you luck and all of God's Grace as you continue to grow and change.

Maria, member of Billiken Teacher Corps Cohort 3, on her graduation day



University of Notre Dame Adelante Conference

Kristen Abbarno & Shannon McFall Cohort 4

We had the opportunity to attend Adelante, a three day conference at the University of Notre Dame that focused on culturally responsive teaching and school environment strategies for Catholic school educators and administrators working to more effectively engage Latino families in our Catholic schools. This conference is hosted by Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education Catholic School Advantage campaign that promotes the value and accessibility of quality Catholic education throughout the nation.

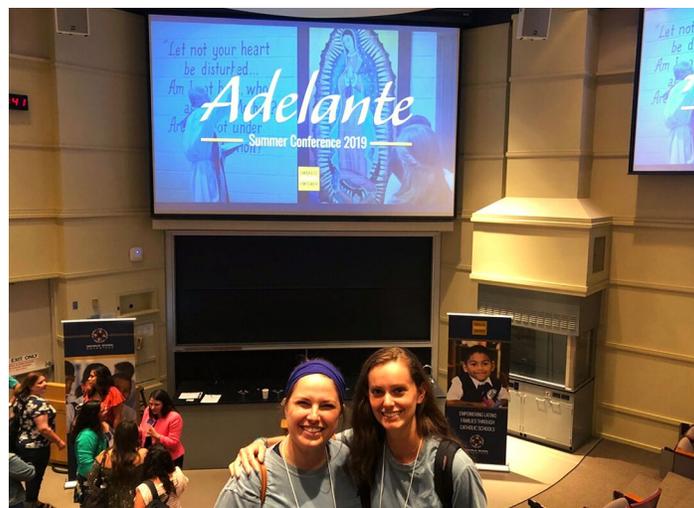
There were three core goals that were the focus of our time at Notre Dame: Embrace, Educate, and Empower (o en español- Enlazar, Educar, y Empoderar). Throughout our time, we attended a total of 10 sessions, five keynote speakers and five breakout sessions of our choice, each pertaining to different topics about supporting and cultivating our Latino communities. Each keynote speaker focused on matters from accompaniment to immigration to living the Gospel in modern times, while the breakout sessions provided practical application of meeting and empowering our Latino students and communities, both inside the classroom and in our parishes.

Kristen stops to pray at the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes on Notre Dame's campus



As English Language Learners are among the fastest growing population in American schools, we not only developed a framework and insight into language acquisition and learning but also gained effective tools and applicable strategies to use daily inside our own classrooms.

We are so thankful to have been afforded the opportunity to attend this conference because it affirmed many things that we are doing in our Catholic schools in St. Louis as well as gave us insight and an evolved perspective on how we can refine our teaching practices to meet our Latino students more effectively. Fr. Joe Corpora said it best: "our Catholic schools are an investment in eternity," and we are "in business with God for [our] children." So, we as young Catholic educators need to be "maniacs on a mission"!



Shannon and Kristen prepare to listen to a lecture at Adelante Summer Conference



Where are they now?

100% of BTC Alumni are currently working in education in some capacity.

BTC Alumni

Maria Ahern

Cohort 3
ACE
Santiago, Chile

Juan Barzallo

Cohort 3
Bishop Dunne High School
Dallas, TX

Jenny Bruns

Cohort 1
St. Mary's High School, STL
Physical Science

Owen Dabek

Cohort 2
All Saints Academy, STL
Middle School Language Arts

Darrin DeChane

Cohort 2
Academy of the Sacred Heart
Spanish, STL
Ph.D candidate at SLU
Higher Education

Andrew Diemer

Cohort 3
Ph.D candidate at SLU
Education Policy

Elise Earley

Cohort 1
St. Cecilia School and Academy, STL
Middle School Math and Science

Michelle Ehrhard

Cohort 1
Most Holy Trinity School and
Academy, STL
5th grade

Erin Emeric

Cohort 3
Christ Light of the Nations, STL
Music Grades K - 8

Catharine Gilmore

Cohort 2
The St. Austin School, STL
3rd Grade

Molly Keeven

Cohort 2
Ursuline Academy, STL
Theology

Mitch McCurren

Cohort 1
St. Mary's High School, STL
Theology and Science

Sarah Staten

Cohort 1
Saint Joseph School
Imperial, MO
Middle School

Julie Gates

Cohort 2
St. Louis Catholic Academy
1st grade

Kelsey Gordon

Cohort 3
Saint Agnes School
Louisville, KY
8th grade

Kelsey Kerr

Cohort 1
St. Frances Cabrini Academy, STL
Math Grades 5 - 8
5th Grade Reading/English
Language Arts

Katharine Siemer

Cohort 3
Bishop DuBourg High School, STL
Math

Kristi Walsh

Cohort 2
Bishop DuBourg High School, STL
English

UCCE Conference at University of Portland

Elizabeth Doherty, Madison Miller, Grace Hartenbach, Beth Moeller Cohort 4

On July 11, 2019, Cohort 4 of the Billiken Teacher Corps jumped on a plane and headed West. The destination was Portland, Oregon for the University Consortium of Catholic Education (UCCE) annual conference. The UCCE "establishes and supports a collaborative cadre of Catholic colleges and universities as they design and implement graduate level teaching service programs for the purpose of supporting PK-12 Catholic education in the United States."

When we arrived, we checked into The University of Portland's beautiful campus, as the Pilots were hosting this year's conference. Anxious to explore what Portland had to offer, we quickly hopped in an Uber, as the conference's activities were not starting until the next day. The six of us scurried around downtown stopping at Powell's bookstore (the largest privately owned bookstore, taking up a whole city block!), McMenamins Kennedy School (an elementary school turned restaurant), and Salt and Straw ice cream shop.

The next two days were spent on campus attending workshops and speakers centered around the verse, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The main speaker, Chris Strong, a local youth minister, emphasized the unique opportunity that teachers have to bring Christ to their students. He encouraged us to ask the Holy Spirit to use our gifts, talents, and presence to spread the Gospel and love of Christ. We learned that we cannot fix every problem, but with the grace of God we may just be the right puzzle piece in someone's life.



(Left to right) Grace, Shannon, Madison, and Beth in front of McMenamins Kennedy School, an elementary school repurposed into a hotel and restaurant

The conference activities were spent among other teachers from the various UCCE programs. A highlight from the trip was talking with them about their community schedules, graduate school classes, and schools they teach in. It was refreshing to learn that there are hundreds of other people around the country experiencing the same struggles and triumphs as we are in St. Louis.

The weekend was filled with laughter, memory making, new friends, and a sense of gratitude that God placed the six of us in Cohort 4 alongside each other on this journey in the Billiken Teacher Corps. We are also immensely grateful to those who support the BTC allowing for us to attend events like the UCCE Conference.

Bottom Left: Bishop Peter Smith, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Portland, speaks to teachers in UCCE programs

Below: (Left to right) Shannon, Grace, Beth, Madison, Kristen, and Elizabeth with a mosaic of Our Lady of Guadalupe



The Billiken Teacher Corps Celebrates Five Years

This article was originally published by the Saint Louis University School of Education.

Saint Louis University's Billiken Teacher Corps is celebrating five years of serving local Catholic schools.

The Billiken Teacher Corps (BTC) was developed by faculty and staff in the SLU School of Education in 2014-15 to pursue the University mission by serving local Catholic schools. The BTC is a two-year graduate program that provides an opportunity for faith-driven college graduates to pursue a teaching career in under-resourced Catholic schools in the St. Louis area. The BTC combines the service and compassion promoted by the Jesuit mission with the academic rigor and professional preparation offered by Saint Louis University's School of Education to offer a transformative teaching and learning experience for aspiring teachers. Each year, BTC places approximately six new students as teachers in local Catholic schools.

The program consists of three pillars: service learning, graduate education, and personal and spiritual formation. For BTC members, those translate to teaching in urban, Catholic schools in the St. Louis area, earning a Master of Arts in Teaching degree with full tuition remission from Saint Louis University, and living together with other BTC teachers in an intentional faith community.

Ronny O'Dwyer, S.J., the Program Director, explained that the program is designed for individuals who have discerned that they want to be a Catholic school educator and serve those in need, describing BTC teachers as, "people with a big heart, clear purpose, and the ability to laugh at themselves."

The BTC is a member of a large network of programs, the University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE), which is joined by a common mission to recruit and train teachers for Catholic schools in urban communities around the United States. All BTC members hold teaching positions in under-resourced Catholic schools in either the Archdiocese of St. Louis or the Diocese of Belleville, IL.

Since the program's conception in 2015, BTC has expanded to serve in 18 local schools.

Beyond the opportunities to serve and learn through teaching and coursework, the third facet of the BTC—the intentional faith community—is what makes the program highly unique. Both the first- and second-year BTC members live together at St. John the Baptist, a former convent in South City. Ronny O'Dwyer, S.J. explained that the community emphasizes living simply and encourages the teachers to live in solidarity with those they are serving. He also described the communal living as, "a space that allows [BTC members] to know and be known by others."

The BTC teachers share their responsibilities and experiences with one another and receive emotional and spiritual support through the various challenges that are presented to novice teachers. BTC members also gather multiple nights each week to spend intentional time with one another and to reflect on their purpose in the program.

Ronny O'Dwyer, S.J., wants the program to continue growing in depth and adding support for new teachers. In line with these goals, the BTC has added an instructional coaching feature wherein the teachers receive bi-weekly training from urban education experts, Gaileen Hoenig, Ph.D. In addition, the BTC hired its first assistant director, Angela Moret, who will focus primarily on recruitment, deepening spirituality in the program, and supporting first-year teachers.

Prior to the beginning of the new school year, both new and returning BTC teachers participated in classroom blessings, during which they traveled to each school that BTC members are placed in and bless their students. Ronny O'Dwyer, S.J., and the rest of the BTC team look forward to mentoring these new teachers as they navigate their first years in the classroom, both as teachers and graduate students. He sums up the program by saying, "we're better than our worst moments and we're the sum of all our successes," as he watches the progress of the new cohort.





BILLIKEN TEACHER CORPS CORNHOLE CLASSIC

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\$5 ENTRY

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