

# THE NEWS-ITEM

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Thursday, March 22, 2018

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## **Lourdes winning on, off court; good luck in Hershey**

*| March 21, 2018*

**Our Lady of Lourdes Regional School is headed back to Hershey!**

**The Red Raiders boys basketball team will play Kennedy Catholic at 2 p.m. Thursday at Giant Center for the PIAA Class A state title.**

**It was just two years ago Monday that the Lourdes girls were in Hershey, where they came away with a silver medal but completed an outstanding season in reaching the state finals. They bowed out to Cardinal Wuerl North Catholic.**

**The 2016 visit to Hershey was the girls third appearance in the state final, the others coming back-to-back in 1993 and 1994, the first a loss and the latter a win — both to the same team. And they were just two wins away from making this year's championship tilt, too.**

**Meanwhile, this is the first trip to the state championship game for the boys since the state title-winning team of 1990.**

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**As alluded to above, Lourdes has had consistently good athletic programs throughout the decades. But what makes the recent state title game appearances even more special is that Lourdes as an institution and local education choice has been strengthened in recent years.**

**This past fall, the Coal Township Catholic school celebrated a "million-dollar day" in honoring alumnus Tony Varano for spearheading a Education Income Tax Credit drive that since 2012 has generated more than \$1 million to help more children attend Lourdes.**

**The EITC program and other efforts reversed a trend in enrollment. After a long span of declining numbers, Lourdes' student population grew from approximately 350 to 530 students from 2012 to the start of this school year.**

**Lourdes has also invested in facilities, completing upgrades to its structural and academic infrastructure that will serve future students for years to come.**

**And it's gained some national attention through teacher Kelly McCarthy, who is spending a year as an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellow for the National Science Foundation, an honor that, among other things, has taken her to Antarctica. That experience, as well as her study of the icecaps in the Arctic in 2016 with NASA's Operation IceBridge program, will translate into valuable hands-on learning for her students at Lourdes.**

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**No matter the outcome of Thursday's game, Lourdes will remain a powerhouse, not only in boys or girls basketball, but as an educational institution that the lower anthracite region is fortunate to call its own. It provides solid academic and athletic opportunities and, of course, a spiritual base that is desperately lacking among youth today.**

**Good luck, boys. Bring home the gold!**