

# BT's Notable Alumni



Brittany Bowe

The Winter Olympics this past February featured a unique set of athletes. Five members of the U.S. team were from Florida, including three from Ocala. But of that group, we at Blessed Trinity were proudest of speed skater Brittany Bowe, who is after all, one of us. Brittany attended and graduated from both Blessed Trinity School and Trinity Catholic High School.

In April Brittany was recognized as BT School's newest Distinguished Alumni, a list that features leaders in government, business and civic life, in addition to a two-time Olympian and former world-record holder.

BT School first opened in January 1927 as Trinity Academy in a two-story building on East Fort King Street. It moved to its current location in 1961. Over that 91-year history, BT School has turned out hundreds of graduates ready and willing to serve God and their communities. We are limited in how many notable alumni we could mention. But as a sample we include:



Judge Thomas Sawaya

State District Judge Thomas Sawaya, who serves on the 5th District Court of Appeal. Judge Sawaya was first elected as a Marion County judge in 1986. He was later elected circuit judge in 1990 and subsequently appointed to the appellate bench by Gov. Jeb Bush in 2000.



Judge Victor Musleh

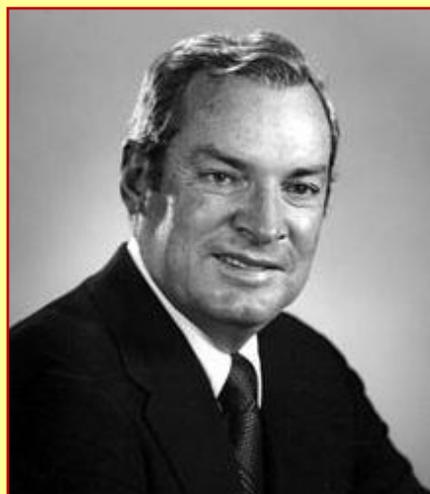
Retired Circuit Judge Victor Musleh spent 37 years on the bench before retiring at the end of 2006. During his tenure, Musleh served as the chief judge for the 5th Judicial Circuit, which includes Marion, Citrus, Hernando, Lake and Sumter counties, and continued to preside as a

senior judge after his retirement.

Other BT School alumni have had an impact in politics, both locally and nationally.

For instance, Ocala developer Mike Finn served for 16 years as an Ocala city councilman.

The late Jim Williams was a rancher and citrus grower before he entered politics in 1968, winning election as a Florida state senator. He served six years before Gov. Reubin Askew picked Williams to be his running mate in the 1974 governor's race. He ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1978 but was selected by President Jimmy Carter's administration to serve as deputy secretary of agriculture from 1979 to 1981. He passed away in 2016.



Jim Williams



David Ellspermann

Another alumni, David Ellspermann, has served as Marion County's Clerk of the Circuit Court since 1996. He first worked as an Ocala police officer and as a director for both the state attorney's office and the public defender's office before being elected. "Blessed Trinity Parish and the school have always been about enriching the faith community and school community," he says. "Having the opportunity to attend both church and school at BT helped create a solid personal foundation for me."

In 1998 Pope John Paul II said, "The mission of the Catholic school is the integral formation of students, so that they may be true to their condition as Christ's disciples and as such work effectively for the evangelization of culture and for the common good of society." Not every graduate of BT School over the past 91 years has been in the public eye as some of our better-known alumni who have been mentioned here. But because of their lived-out Catholic faith, thousands and thousands of them have achieved the goal of life – Saints in Heaven! The school, through its commitment to faith formation, education and service, has instilled in each of its students the need to fulfill the mission St. Pope John Paul II has spelled out.