



## Vice President's wife speaks to Salve Regina grads

By Felice J. Freyer, Journal Staff Writer

JILL BIDEN, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, joins the procession at the 61<sup>st</sup> commencement at Salve Regina University in Newport, with fellow honorary degree recipient William Michael Vareika, left, and Board of Trustee member, Norman Beretta. Biden, a life-long educator, told graduates, "each of you has the power to inspire a future generation of business leaders, artists, statesmen and scientists. . . ."

NEWPORT — Jill Biden, a lifelong educator and wife of Vice President Joe Biden, told students graduating from Salve Regina University that she teaches because students inspire her.

"Tales are often told of teachers inspiring students," Biden said at Salve's 61st commencement Sunday morning, "but I find more often it is the other way around: my students have inspired me, each and every day."

Still, the importance of educators was evident when the first graduate who came to the stage for her degree, Ph.D. recipient Rosamaria Carozzi, joyfully threw her arms around Salve Regina President Jane Gerety.

The university conferred 678 degrees, including 441 baccalaureates, 212 masters, 18 certificates of advanced graduate studies and 7 doctorates. Despite predictions of bad weather, for much of the ceremony a hazy sun lit the historic bayside campus.

Biden, who teaches full-time at a community college in northern Virginia, elicited loud cheers from the crowd under a huge white tent when she called out a few of Salve's most inspiring graduates: Courtney Richards, cadet company commander and one of three ROTC graduates; Kelsey Fitzgibbons, Evan Gallo and Megan Welsh, who raised \$21,000 to rebuild a primary school in Haiti; and Dan Royce, a basketball player who worked multiple jobs to pay for his education and still found time to volunteer for the Special Olympics.

"And I am proud to say that Dan is a future teacher," Biden added.

Although the vast majority of the graduates will not become teachers, Biden said, they can still teach by sharing their love for what they do. "I have no doubt," she said, "[that] each of

you has the power to inspire a future generation of business leaders, artists, statesmen and scientists ...

"You can change lives doing many things. You have that potential, each and every one of you, doing whatever it is you do best."

Biden is a close friend of Nuala Pell, wife of the late Sen. Claiborne Pell and a Salve trustee. Pell introduced Biden as a "master teacher"; the university awarded her an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

Biden recalled an anecdote about the late senator — how he showed up for a jog wearing "an Oxford button-down shirt, Bermuda shorts, black socks and black leather shoes."

"On a more serious note," Biden continued, "... all across this nation, and in cities and towns thousands of miles away from here, families are saying a word of thanks to a senator they never knew or met because of a Pell Grant that helped open the door to college."

In her role as the vice president's wife, Biden has drawn attention to the importance of community colleges, worked to support military families (her son served in Iraq), founded a program to encourage reading among low-income children and advocated for early detection of breast cancer.

The other honorary doctorate recipient was William Vareika, philanthropist owner of the Newport art gallery William Vareika Fine Arts. Vareika helped bring 13 John LaFarge stained-glass windows to Salve Regina, where they were installed in the newly built Our Lady of Mercy Chapel.

Salve is a Catholic, coeducational university founded in 1947 by the Sisters of Mercy.