



## SHS played key role in Keel's success

As Travis County sheriff, **Terry Keel '70** has the hometown advantage.

The Austin native is one of six children of Thomas and Patty Keel. Five of the Keel children attended Sacred Heart School.

Talking with Keel, it wouldn't take you long to realize that he has always considered his years at Sacred Heart School to be a key factor in his personal success.

His ten years of professional experience in local law enforcement and trial work, including youth-related issues such as child abuse, have made him appreciate those years even more.

### Importance of school, family

"I believe that a child's school experience has the most important impact on any youth today, second only to the influence of family," Keel said. "The family and school experiences are the pivotal determinations on what direction a youth will take in society."

"At Sacred Heart, I had the opportunity to interact with families of strong values. I formed close relationships with my fellow students, their parents, and my teachers, not to mention the excellent guidance which was provided by the Dominican Sisters and parish priests.

### A positive Sacred Heart experience

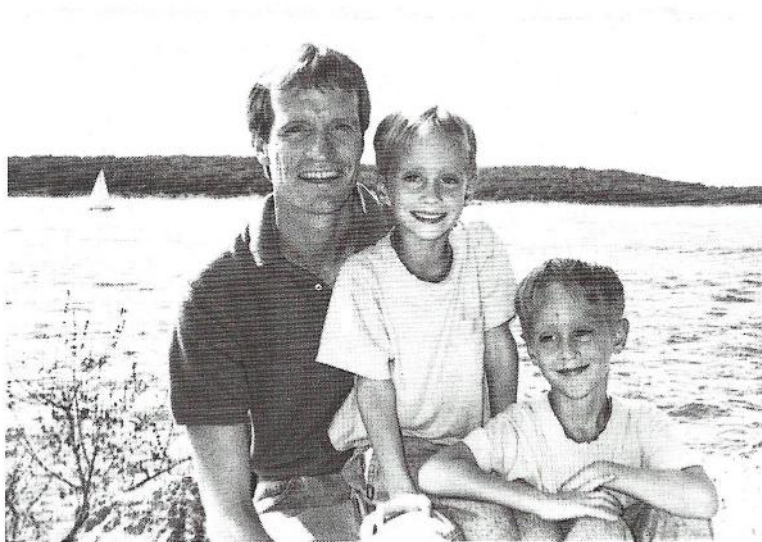
"My parents chose Sacred Heart School for me and my brothers and sister because it was the best opportunity they could provide us to obtain a Catholic education. In the end, it gave us much more."

The spirit of community surrounding a school, as exists at Sacred Heart, can work to deter the influence of negative peer pressure for young students, he said.

"By the fifth grade, peer pressure has already firmly taken a hold of children," said Keel. "Starting early in teaching self-respect, self-discipline, and self-motivation is becoming increasingly important."

Keel's law enforcement experience has proven to him that positive adult role models, like the ones he had at Sacred Heart, can have a tremendous positive impact on young students. He cites the Sheriff's department's D.A.R.E. program on drug awareness in the schools as one example.

Keel believes the positive impact of both public and private schools on youth can be further strengthened by bringing outside adult role models into the classroom. "I still remember two Austin police officers coming to my first grade class at Sacred Heart and addressing the students," he smiled. "That made a real, lasting impact on me."



Terry and twin sons Sean and Travis, age 6

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# Terry Keel...

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"Austin's children, and children everywhere, are reaching out to us. By taking an interest in a child—even one that is not your own—you will impact that child, probably, for the rest of his life," he added.

He applauds Sacred Heart parents and parishioners for their continued involvement in the school and its programs.

"Everyone, from parents to community leaders, has an obligation to put something into the education system and not just leave educational matters up to the teachers and administrators," Keel said.

## **Giving back to Austin**

Terry Keel knows a lot about getting involved. When he was elected sheriff, Keel left a very successful ten-year career in trial work as a felony prosecutor to more directly serve the community in which he grew up.

The work since his election a year ago has been demanding. Keel admits he has sometimes found it difficult to balance his professional responsibilities with another, equally important job—as a father to his own twin sons.

Still, he finds many rewards in making contributions that result in positive changes in his hometown.

"A career on the front lines of law enforcement is really where my heart lies," he explained.

"As a police officer, I do not just make legal decisions, but rather, I am frequently placed in the position of being a counselor, medical provider, public relations specialist, educator, role model, and mediator, to name just a few."