

WHERE TO

A resource dedicated to student-athletes and their Life after Notre Dame.



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NEW BEGINNINGS: THEY CONTAIN MULTITUDES

By Rachel Creighton, ND '10



Sometimes the transition to life after sports follows a straight line, while other times, it comes full circle. One definition of coming full circle is to return to an original position or state after going through a series or cycle.

This sums up my experience since 2010, when I graduated from Notre Dame after an exhilarating four years as a student-athlete, including winning the Big East Conference championship with my lacrosse teammates. From that point, I moved away from involvement with sports, then came back again, before starting a family and a photography business that reflects my undergraduate study.

My full circle is woven with a thread that ties each of these experiences together – a dedication to service and community that was instilled in me at Notre Dame. Today, I'm creating a space within my studio that offers women support and connection. Arriving at this place, however, came after one of the most excruciating experiences a woman can endure.

COMMUNITY BORN FROM CRISIS

Three years ago, shortly after the birth of my twins, I went through a severe postpartum depression. I had struggled with seasonal depression and was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder my junior year at Notre Dame, and was fortunate to have the support of my coaching team and the resources of the university to aid in my recovery.

This latest bout with postpartum depression consumed every part of my being. I became a shell of myself, but put forward a brave face until my condition grew too serious, and my life became too dark. As I emerged from depths lower than I knew were possible, I learned that this wasn't my fault, that I was having a medical crisis, and that I wasn't alone – one in five mothers suffers from postpartum depression.



I took a leave of absence from my photography business to focus on my health, and when I reached the other side of my crisis, I knew my business capturing images of newborns, women, and families needed to offer something more. I was determined to help other women find themselves again, as I did.

That's how the Wildflower Collective came to be. When I'm not shooting photos, my studio becomes a space for women to come together, be together, and grow together. The name comes from the Tom Petty song that was playing in the background when my first child was born. One lyric truly resonates: "Far away from your troubles and worry. You belong somewhere you feel free."

At the Wildflower Collective, women can take time for themselves to read a book, catch up with friends, collaborate with others, Zoom with their therapist, or just take a nap. I'm also developing expert-led workshops here, focused on mental health awareness and education to help women transition through the stages of pregnancy, motherhood, and womanhood.

This latest endeavor reminds me of being in the community of women who were my teammates at Notre Dame. We came together to achieve something bigger than ourselves, both on and off the field, through our commitment to excellence in sports and in service to others.

IN SERVICE TO OTHERS, FINDING OURSELVES

When I arrived at Notre Dame, I quickly took to the girls and the coaching staff. They were warm and welcoming, helping me feel at home when Long Island was a 12-hour drive away. Notre Dame is unique in its ability to recreate the close-knit family dynamic for its student-athletes. Through the bus rides, the late nights, the 6 a.m. workouts, as well as through our community service projects, we were always in it together.

I didn't realize how much the emphasis on service had taken root in me until a representative from Teach for America visited one of my classes. I felt a connection to their description of the program's mission and was compelled to join the organization.

This first job, coupled with living in Philadelphia, was so exciting – I was 22 and outside the bubble of a college campus and a lacrosse locker room, feeling liberated to do whatever I wanted. But I sometimes struggled with this new life. Who am I without sports? For years, I had been known simply as "Guerrera" to my teammates and coaches. Now I was introducing myself to people who didn't know (or even seem to care) much about my former life as an athlete.

I missed the world of sports, and after completing my two-year commitment with Teach for America, I joined Drexel University, first as an academic advisor to student-athletes and later as assistant director of student-athlete development. I soon thrived, as I was able to apply the leadership skills I developed at Notre Dame and see them grow within the Drexel student-athletes I was guiding through networking opportunities and community service projects.

In addition to my day job at Drexel, I picked up a camera and started teaching myself the art of photography. This led to another turn in the road for me, reviving the creativity I had tucked away since my college days majoring in Arts, American Studies/Film, Theater, and Television. It also sparked my ambitious side – a feeling many Notre Dame student-athletes know well. Now I was tapping into parts of myself that hadn't been fully realized and I became intrigued by where this might take me.

The answer is full circle – to my photography business and the Wildflower Collective, with a foundation in service and community.

Both underscore my role as a Class Rep for Project LAND, too. My hope is that former student-athletes, managers, and trainers who connect with LAND's offerings and supportive Notre Dame alumni network can find reassurance in my story; that the path after sports is often twisty. But along the way, you find a deeper understanding of yourself and more certainty around your choices.

Don't wait to reach out to LAND. Through it, you have a built-in and accessible community of Notre Dame alumni who are always willing to connect with you – it's never a bother. They're your people, and they understand that you may be inclined as a former student-athlete to put on a brave face. Put that aside and share your doubts and struggles to get the personalized help you need. You'll find, like I did as a student-athlete with anxiety and depression, that you become so much stronger from a caring community.

For Rachel (Guerrera) Creighton, ND '10, sports was a huge part of growing up in Wantagh, Long Island, New York. She "liked every sport imaginable," but settled on soccer in the fall and lacrosse in the spring. She added track in high school, winning three letters in that sport to complement her four in soccer and lacrosse. A natural leader, Rachel captained all three teams in her senior year and played for the New York 1 team in the U.S. Lacrosse National Championships. Lacrosse was still a growing sport when she was recruited to Notre Dame, and through her outstanding defensive play, Rachel helped cement its place on the university roster when she and her teammates won the Big East Championship her junior year. The team was an NCAA tournament fixture three of Rachel's four years of play, and by the end of her senior year, she was team captain as well as a three-time Monogram winner and two-time All-Big East team selection as a defender. An award-winning journalist and gifted teacher, Rachel earned her bachelor's degree in Arts, American Studies/Film, Theater, and Television, and master's degree in Secondary Education from Chestnut Hill College. In 2020, Rachel and fellow alumna Jane Adler, ND '13, launched **New and Gold**, on social media, based on their theory that other new mothers like them must have questions and would welcome advice and resources. They were right, and the unofficial Notre Dame alumni group of more than 2,000 members has become a beloved community. Rachel's creativity shines through in her business, **Rachel Roshani Photography + Lifestyle**, established in 2018 and specializing in images of newborns, women, and families. Rachel is expanding her business's scope to include the Wildflower Collective as she and husband Mike Creighton, ND '10, raise their five-year-old son and three-year-old twins in Havertown, PA.