

THE MAGAZINE OF MERION MERCY ACADEMY

Mater Matters

SPRING 2013



Welcome Home
ALUMNAE

From the Principal



I vividly remember seeing Michelangelo's Pietà during the World's Fair held in New York City in 1964. Although I was young, the sweeping, elegant lines caught my attention as we slowly glided past this magnificent masterpiece. How well the artist used his medium to convey the raw emotion of a mother holding a deceased son. It left a lasting impression on me. There are certain defining moments in life, moments that change a person or people or even entire communities. As a school community, we have recently experienced our own Pietà. Jacqueline Fioravanti '12, her life and her death, will always be stamped in our memories.

The Fioravanti Family demonstrated then and since remarkable faith. Below, are some of the words that Jacqueline's mother, Sharon, wrote the week before Jacqueline passed:

Things are moving in a direction that we had all hoped they wouldn't, at least not yet. She, thank God, is relatively pain free, but time is not on her side.

We need the grace to accept God's plan, even if we don't like it. Otherwise we are like three-year-olds in the supermarket who don't get what they want, storming away from their parents because they are angry and disappointed. Jacqueline has never turned away. She is why I can go on through this ridiculously awful time. Prayer brings us peace. Knowing that she will soon be with our Heavenly Father makes it all the more important to continue to pray... I want to get there someday, too!

This is not the way it's supposed to be. Our children are supposed to take care of us, not go before us. We are given a great gift when we are blessed with children. We raise them, love them, educate them, teach them about God, and watch them grow up. Instead, Jack and I have the privilege of guiding Jacqueline to the end of her life. To love her, care for her, and prepare her to go to Heaven. After all, that's what this life is all about, getting there. It is the most important job a parent can be entrusted with. It is an honor. God has given us all the help we need, angels here on earth - all of you reading this and more.

It was so great to wake up this morning to find that Team Jacqueline was trending nation-wide thanks to the MMA class of 2012! We do feel the love!

Before she passed in February, I visited with Jacqueline and her family several times. As Jacqueline lay peacefully in her bed, I thought of Emily Dickinson's poem, "I heard a Fly buzz - when I died." Nothing is more profound than stepping over the threshold from this world to the next and yet it happens in the ordinary, when a simple fly might be buzzing about the room. As I spent time with Jacqueline and her family during her final days, I listened - not to a fly, but to her quiet breathing. In those moments, I thought about her MMA family who, although tending to the business of their "ordinary" days, were also very present to the Fioravanti family. The astonishing support provided incredible evidence of our entire school's compassion. Though transformative events don't happen every day, the Merion Mercy community's commitment to putting our values into action always makes an indelible imprint. 🍌

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sister Barbara Buckley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sister Barbara Buckley '72
Principal

PRINCIPAL

Sister Barbara Buckley '72

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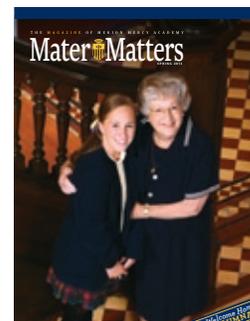
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ON THE COVER



The alumnae reunion event, Meri-union, embraced the phrase "Welcome Home Alumnae" as MMA is often referred to as alumnae's second home. The familial atmosphere isn't just in the intangibles as there are so many sibling and legacy relationships at the school. Pictured are Maire Sturm '16 and her grandmother Anne Therese Larkin Smith '48 at Meri-union 2013.

DEPARTMENTS

OPENING COMMENTS

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SCHOOL Happenings

MMA Dads

Father Daughter Dinner Dance

The 61st Father Daughter Dinner Dance was held at The Drexelbrook. The event boasted more than 550 attendees.



Nicole '15 and her dad Gregory Stefan enjoy the annual Father Daughter Dinner Dance.



Front l. to r. Proud dads Thomas Missett, James Natale, Robert Guilday, and John Healy. Back l. to r. Molly Missett '13, Kathryn Natale '14, Nicol Natale '13, Cassidy Guilday '13, and Gabrielle Healy '13.

Father/Daughter Service Project

MMA Fathers and Daughters Give Back



William and Michelle McCann '16 take a break from making meals to pose for a picture.

The annual Father/Daughter Service Project proved a huge success. A team of more than 50 dads and their daughters made, boxed, and delivered 1,520 meals to Aid for Friends. Aid for Friends is an organization that provides meals and companionship to the elderly, disabled, and destitute in the Greater Philadelphia area. Since 1974, Aid for Friends, the largest meal delivery program in the area, has served more than 14,000 people with homemade meals and outreach services. This year, the goal for the Father/Daughter Service Project was to make 1,000 meals. Far exceeding the goal, this was a record number of meals for this annual Father/Daughter event!

Ring Mass and Dinner

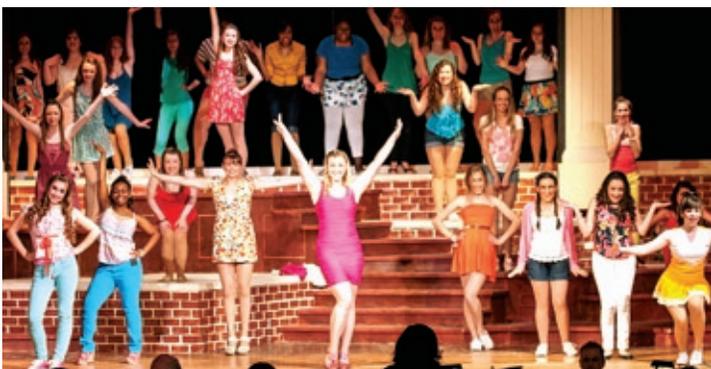
Juniors pose after receiving their rings. There is a Ring Mass in the evening in the Motherhouse Chapel with a reception and dinner at school.



L. to r. Posing with their new rings are members from the class of 2014 Marissa Abbonizio, Meghan Saldutti, Alexandra Hecht, and Erin O'Brien.



L. to r. Marissa Roney, Margaret Quigley, Mackenzie MacLaughlin, and Renee McFillin enjoy this time-honored tradition.



Alum Shares Artistry

MMA Art Department welcomed Frances McLaughlin Maguire '53 as an instructor for a unique class that used clay as a medium. Mrs. Maguire is an accomplished sculptor. Her work is showcased at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Saint Joseph's University. Mrs. Maguire and her classmate and friend Elizabeth Joyce Bracken '53 enjoyed their day on campus.



L. to r. (center) Elizabeth Joyce Bracken '53 joins her classmate Frances McLaughlin Maguire '53 on campus after Mrs. Maguire's time with the art students. They pose with student ambassadors Christina O'Shea '13 and Julianne D'Orazio '13.



Frances McLaughlin Maguire '53 with Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter at the unveiling of the bust she created in his likeness.

BRAVO!

Merion Mercy Music Theater (MMMT) produced another phenomenal show, *Legally Blonde*. Congratulations to the cast, crew, moderators, orchestra, and volunteers! Faculty member and MMT Director Ms. Kimberly Baxter will hang up her Director's hat after working with MMT since 1991 and directing since 2001.



Sip 'n Bid
2013



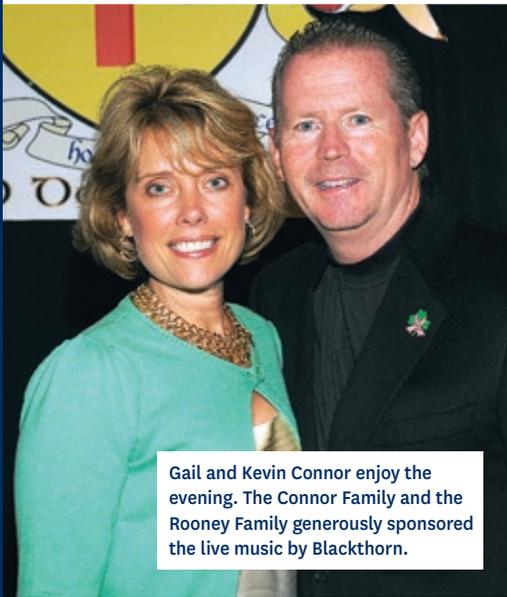
MMA's
36th Sip 'n Bid

On Saturday, March 16th, Merion Mercy hosted its 36th annual Sip 'n Bid, featuring Philadelphia's premier Irish band, Blackthorn!



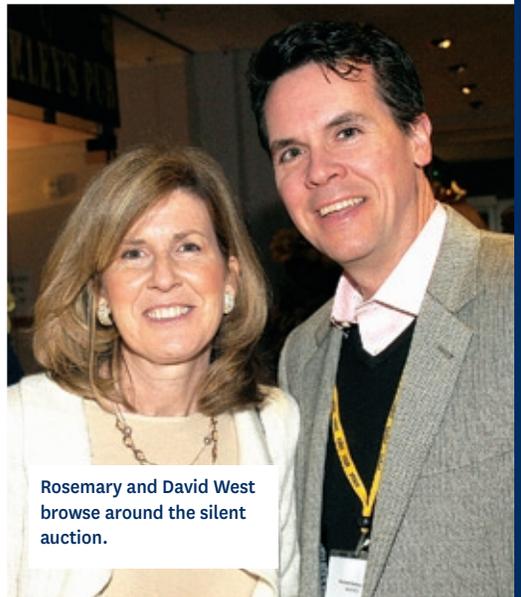


L. to r. Sip 'n Bid 2013 event chairs Bruce and Karin LaMonaca and Colette and Samuel Gabriel pose with Principal Sister Barbara Buckley (center).



Gail and Kevin Connor enjoy the evening. The Connor Family and the Rooney Family generously sponsored the live music by Blackthorn.


With the exciting addition of live entertainment to this year's fundraiser, the evening was filled with delicious Irish fare, music, dancing, and, of course, lots of bidding!



Rosemary and David West browse around the silent auction.



Lisa Brinkman and Megan Schriber show their blue and gold pride and bid on Merion Mercy spirit wear.

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FIELD TRIP DAY

April 19, 2013 brought Field Trip Day to MMA. Annually, all students head out of the building on the same day for an enriching outing, ranging from community service to the arts.

“This year the itineraries on Field Trip Day aimed to push the girls outside of their comfort zones and, in doing so, to foster individual growth and group bonding. From the wooded campgrounds to the crowds of Broadway, from the neighborhood temples to nursing homes, the students (with the committed faculty and parent chaperones right alongside) got moving, thinking, collaborating, and learning in the best ways possible,” said Director of Activities, Mr. Seth Pidot.

Freshmen traveled to Camp Edge in Alloway, New Jersey for an exciting experience that corresponds with and supplements the school’s mission to offer a holistic education. Camp Edge is an outdoor life-skills center where, in small groups, the freshmen engaged in a series of low ropes courses and team-building activities. Meeting challenges that are physical, intellectual, and social in nature, the students had opportunities for bonding and building self-confidence, trust, and

effective communication, all of which are co-curricular goals of the freshman-year experience. A professional staff of counselors facilitated the students’ visit to Camp Edge, coaching and prompting them through the ropes course and games. The activities are designed for all ages, sizes, and ability levels. This excursion intrinsically promoted bonding as a large group and working together as a unified class.

Traveling by bus, the sophomores journeyed together on an ecumenical

Freshmen participate in low ropes activities to encourage trust, ambition, and class unity.



tour of area houses of worship. Connecting directly and dynamically with their curriculum in Theology class, students challenged themselves to learn more about the unique faith-dimensions, cultural backgrounds, and historical perspectives of neighbors of different religious beliefs. Importantly, our hope is for the sophomores to appreciate even better the common elements that transcend these faith traditions. They explored Hinduism at Iskon of Philadelphia, the Radha Krishna Temple; Protestantism, fellowship, and a soul food lunch at Enon Baptist Church; and Judaism at Main Line Reform Temple Beth Elohim.

The juniors performed outreach work in small groups. This year, they provided support to the following: New Visions, St. Anthony's Parish, Brother Jerry's Garden, and Francis House in Camden, New Jersey; St. Ignatius Nursing Home, Mercy Neighborhood Ministries, Holy Innocents School and Parish, St. Lucy Day School for the Visually Impaired, Community Center at Visitation, and Gesu School in Philadelphia; Peter's Place in Radnor; Drexel Neumann Academy in Chester; and St. Edmonds Home in Bryn Mawr. Theology teacher, Mr. Frederick Pratt, passed along the many thank you notes that came in after the site visits. Unilaterally praising the students for their hard work, generosity, and Mercy spirit, one site coordinator summed it up, "The MMA student volunteers were unbelievable. I cannot say enough about what impressive young women they are. The students were remarkably mature and insightful, not to mention kind, intelligent, and compassionate!"

The seniors spent the day in New York City. Apart from opportunities to



L. to r. Seniors in NYC Natalie Trerotola, Lucia McGettigan, Megan Brennan, Christina Burgese, Cierra Williams, Ciera Reynolds, and Brianna Nelson-Williams.

"The MMA student volunteers were unbelievable. I cannot say enough about what impressive young women they are. The students were remarkably mature and insightful, not to mention kind, intelligent, and compassionate!"

sight-see, to shop, and to dine together over an Italian meal, the traditional highlight of the senior trip is a Broadway musical. This year the production of *Mamma Mia!* and dinner at Carmine's Restaurant capped off the memorable

trip. "It's one of my favorite days from the past four years. It's not every day you get to spend such a beautiful day in such a beautiful city with your best friends, and I'm so happy that it happened," shared Stephanie Thomas '13. 🍀



Juniors and moderators gather after a day of outreach, fully aware that "from Baggot Street to Broad Street... the proof of love is deed."



Basketball is Booming

Merion Mercy basketball enjoyed a strong season, playing its first league playoff game in more than a decade, finishing in second place in a talented PIAA District One, and appearing in its first PIAA State tournament since 1995.

After the program's first trip to the league playoffs in eleven years, the team showed incredibly strong post season play. Merion Mercy plays in the Athletic Association of Catholic Academies (AACA), arguably the top girls' basketball conference in District One, and they had to beat perennial, championship teams to claim its spot.

Although the team did not win their league championship, impressive league play earned them a trip to the PIAA District tournament. The first round of District play proved exciting for the entire school community. With a total team effort, tenth seeded Merion Mercy easily knocked off second seeded Radnor, 50-30. "It doesn't matter what the records are in our league, because every game seems to be a battle," Merion Mercy coach Rob Baxter said. "You never feel like you get an easy game in the (AACA). So, that's a big advantage (as you move into



Valez Jackson '15

post season). We played with a ton of confidence."

That confidence was supported by MMA's spirited fans, which one reporter noted that "they took over the Radnor gymnasium... (the enthusiasm) was like nothing Radnor had experienced before."

After a third District win, upsetting a third seed, the team ultimately placed second in their District, which secured their spot in the PIAA State tournament. As this was the school basketball team's first appearance in State play in 18 years, the school held a pep rally. Students, especially team members, enjoyed MMA's exciting version of "March Madness."

The team had the best run MMA basketball has seen in years, although they did not secure any of the titles that they came so close to winning. Yet, team member Christina DiGiacomo '14 may have summed it up best, "This was an exceptional year for us. We never expected this at the beginning of the season, and it was a great feeling to get MMA basketball to our league playoffs, Districts, and States. Overall, it was a terrific season and we're looking forward to see where we can take the team next year." 🍌



The pep rally for the basketball team brought out Golden Bear fans in full force. L. to r. Seniors Christina Pawlish, Elena Conway, Madalaina D'Angelo, Joanna Nawn, Olivia Gallagher-Kowitz, Alexandra Fanto, MMA Golden Bear, Mary Klatt, Sarah Maminski, Krista Rossi, Emily Parker, Ciara Tucker, and Julianne Kerwood.

2013 Signings

Merion Mercy Athletic Department proudly reported that **14 MMA SENIOR STUDENT-ATHLETES** will play a sport in college in the fall. Out of the 13 schools these 14 seniors selected, nine are Division 1/Division 1 Ivy League. “These student-athletes from the class of 2013 are among a select group. They have accomplished many things in their respective sports, and they bring great pride to MMA,” said Athletic Director Ms. Barbara Clarke.



Student athletes at the fall signing l. to r. Julianne D’Orazio, Alison Kane, Abigail Fondren, Stephanie Thomas, and Nicol Natale.



Student athletes pose l. to r. Amanda Keppel and Elena Conway.



The second signing event was held in the spring for additional student athletes who finalized plans to play collegiate sports. Front l. to r. Courtney Devine and Elizabeth Sack. Back l. to r. Maggie DeVliieger, Erica DiPascale, Caitlin Farrell, and Giovanna Crozier-Fitzgerald.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SENIOR STUDENT-ATHLETES



Elena Conway
TENNIS for
Cabrini College



Courtney Devine
FIELD HOCKEY for
Villanova University



Giovanna Crozier-Fitzgerald
CREW for
Columbia University



Maggie DeVliieger
CREW for
Columbia University

Erica DiPascale
FIELD HOCKEY for
University of Delaware



Julianne D’Orazio
LACROSSE for
Lehigh University



Alison Kane
CREW for
Dukes University



Caitlin Farrell
FIELD HOCKEY for
Dickinson College



Amanda Keppel
VOLLEYBALL for
University of Southern Maine



Nicol Natale
SOCCER for
Fordham University



Elizabeth Sack
FIELD HOCKEY for
Syracuse University



Abigail Fondren
CREW for
West Virginia University



Regan Marriner
BASKETBALL for
Philadelphia University



Stephanie Thomas
CREW for
Drexel University

COMPASSION & SERVICE

SUDANce MERithON

Merion Mercy's Student Council hosted an incredibly successful event called SUDANce MERithON.

The SUDANce MERithON was a dancing marathon held to raise money to benefit children of South Sudan. This evening was filled with hours of dancing, games, entertainment, fun, and food.

In collaboration with ten Mercy schools throughout the United States and Guam, Merion Mercy has set a goal to raise \$25,000 to build a school for the children in Nuba, South Sudan. The success of SUDANce MERithON exceeded organizers' expectations and will cover more than half of the entire group goal, raising \$13,700 and counting. Merion Mercy students and moderators' enthusiasm and care in planning the event encouraged far-reaching generosity and interest.

This type of project is not new to the MMA community. For the past few years, MMA has been involved in The Mercy



Some of the student organizers l. to r. Seniors Lauren Soper, Maggie DeVlieger, Emma Campbell, Deanna Javage, Alexandra Fanto, and Maura Dougherty.



Dancing for a cause l. to r. Sophomores Maria Paniagua Martinez-Verdu, Deirdre Grady, Sofia Sena, and Kristina Leuzzi.



Juniors get into the spirit front l. to r. Jane Burke, Taylor McElwee, Renee McFillin, and Erin Russell. Back l. to r. Marguerite Gorman and Mary Burke.

Girl Effect, a project that combines the efforts of Mercy schools across the nation. Together with other Mercy schools, MMA collaborates to address great need throughout the world. With a focus on girls' education in the third world, The Mercy Girl Effect allows young women around the world opportunities they would not have otherwise had, and all from the dedication and service of their peers.

Everyone who participated in SUDANce MERithON — dancers, families, guests and sponsors — all commit to sharing in the Mercy Core Values, as well as living mercy and seeking justice. 🍌

Peace Corps Volunteer

By: Kerri Smyth '07



Kerri Smyth '07

As I rock in my hammock on the penka-roofed porch avoiding the blistering midday Panamanian sun, I take in my tranquil surroundings. Chickens run loose in the yard, butterflies alight on the pink and yellow

blossoms, men take refreshment from their hard labors by drinking water from coconuts. Birds and insects sing as thunder rolls in the distance and I wish for it to bring a storm and cooling rain as the sky remains a blazing bright blue. Soon I will rise from my relaxing pose, perhaps after enjoying a delicious mango from the neighbors, and continue my house visits to introduce myself and get to know the community where I will live and work for the next two years. "Hi, my name is Kerri and I'm the new Peace Corps Volunteer. Nice to meet you."

It certainly was a surprise to me on Site Announcement Day during training that I would go to the Darien Province, only opened up for settlement by the expansion of the Interamerican Highway and cheap land prices offered by the government about 40 years ago. The community's very first inhabitants tell me about moving here from the interior provinces of Panama, clearing the wilderness to have their own land and make a better life for themselves. Their journey certainly has not been easy. Already much has changed here, especially with the recent construction of a road to the community, but more improvements are still desired, which is why they requested a Peace Corps Volunteer.

I am the third Environmental Health volunteer to live in my community. Environmental Health volunteers in Panama work

primarily with water and sanitation in rural areas. Having studied civil engineering and the Spanish language, I was excited to be placed in this program. I do not yet know specifically on what project the community and I will work during my service; that we will figure out through a community analysis during these first few months, as I work on integrating into life here.

The tranquility of the Panamanian countryside has allowed me much time for reflection, and I cannot help but think about how I got here and how different my life would be had I chosen any other job. I know this is where I want to be and that, among other influences, my Mercy education played a significant role in that resolve. Volunteering for the Peace Corps will certainly provide me with unique job and education advantages in the future, but that motivation would not nearly be enough to validate the many challenges inherent to the position. The main driving factor in my decision to volunteer for the Peace Corps was my desire to make a positive difference. My upbringing and my time at Merion instilled in me a desire to give back. God has blessed my life in so many ways, and I do not know what better way there is to utilize His gifts than for the benefit of others who may not have the same opportunities as I do. My desire to know more of the world, another reason I chose this path, also took shape at Merion. Studying Spanish and participating in the international opportunities offered fed my desire to be a citizen of the world.

Two years is only a drop in the bucket of the painfully slow process that is sustainable development, but I still hope that after my service I leave behind more than just an empty house and a few stories about when the gringa fell in the mud. I know that it will not be much, but more than anything else, I hope that the seeds my volunteer predecessors and I plant here continue to grow when there is no longer a Peace Corps presence. I wish the best for this community that has welcomed me with open arms and hope that I can earn the kindness already shown to me. The next couple years will be filled with new experiences and will certainly not be easy, but I am excited to take it on. As they would say in Panama, "Dale pues." Let's go.



2013 Faith in Action Award

Chair of the school's Board of Trustees, **Mrs. Marianne Grace**, received the 2013 Faith in Action Award from the Society of the Holy Child Jesus at their annual awards dinner for her "spirit of joy, active love, generosity, and courage." Mrs. Grace has served on MMA's Board of Trustees since 2007 and boasts a lifelong association with the Mercy philosophy and values. Her daughter, Kelly Grace, graduated in 2004.

MERI UNION

Meri-union 2013 brought more than 300 alumnae/current and former faculty and staff to campus May 4. The inaugural Golden Circle Luncheon for the classes of '33, '38, '43, '48, '53, and '58 and Mass in the Motherhouse Chapel preceded the reception for all and reunion dinner for the classes of 1963–2008, celebrating a five-year anniversary.



Members of the Class of 1963 *(this year's Golden Circle alumnae)*

Front l. to r. Madeleine Torello Howe, Joanna DiPasquale Dougherty, Cynthia Kane Horgan, Miriam Catenacci, Sister Frances Boyle, RSM, Helen Chain Godonis, Louise Pavoni Ceccarelli, and Linda Kilker Sparks. Back l. to r. Marguerite

Dougherty MacDonald, Rita McGann Burkhardt, Jane O'Connell Welsh, Jane Hutchinson Brown, Rody Ryan McCarty, Barbara Pompizzi Needham, Barbara McCormick Atkins, Cathy Cameron Schilling, and Jean Sullivan Mulcahy.



Golden Circle Luncheon

Former MMA Vice Principal Sister Maria del Carmen and Virginia Bohem McCarty '33 catch up at the Golden Circle Luncheon. Virginia's classmate Margarette Dougherty Connor '33 could not make the event, but sent in a lovely note to share with her friend of more than 80 years!



Carolyn Reaph Ounan '75 enjoys Meri-union with her mother Jeanne McCaffrey Reaph '48.



This duo from the class of 1983 Nancy Panaccio Hercer and MMA Trustee Kathleen Oldfield happily point out their class' graduation photo.



Members of the class of '98 gather at the reception. Front l. to r. Kate Duffy Pecoraro, Ellen Hand Favazza, Janine LaBletta, Maribeth Wechsler, Jennifer DeMarco Raibley, Monica Luongo Miller, and Marisa Moore Hughes. Back l. to r. Sarah Weston Johnston, Courtney Wooten Gliwa, Nicole Graham Brooks, Jennifer Dolores, Gabriella Albater, Ellen Press, and Melissa Snarski Cyrus.



Current students "welcome home" Melissa Browne '08.

SAVE THE DATE MERI-UNION APRIL 5, 2014

Classes ending in **4** and **9**
2014 is your reunion year!

Come celebrate with classmates
at the Alumnae Luncheon, Mass,
Reception, and Reunion Dinner on
April 5, 2014.

*All alumnae and current and former
faculty are invited to the Mass
and Reception.*

“Girls *Will Be* Girls, *but* Merion Girls *Will Be...*”

By: Katherine Riga '13

Anne-Marie Barcia de Leiva '72 wears many hats. Not only is she an entrepreneur now managing a successful consulting firm, but she is also a proud mother and a loyal Merion Mercy alumna.



Anne-Marie's journey began in the familiar halls of Merion, where mentoring teachers and supportive classmates gave her the courage and confidence to one day strike out on her own. Anne-Marie was deeply influenced by the qualities of the young women around her at Merion. She recalls the ambition, self-confidence, and values of her classmates, and

how growing up in that environment made her simultaneously competitive and compassionate. Anne-Marie attributes much of her success to the foundation laid by her teachers at Merion. They widened her world view and taught her what it means to be a Catholic in the modern day. “They will know we are Christians by our love,” she recalls from the song. They also gave her the vital ability to discern what she did, and did not, want to pursue professionally. She remembers Mrs. Zager, who

taught biology, gave her a recommendation that enabled her to take an extended summer program run by the National Science Foundation at Hahnemann Hospital, back in the days when she was fully confident in her ambitions to become a doctor. After the experience, she possessed the self-assurance and knowledge to decide that she no longer had medical ambitions, and learned to keep her mind open to different opportunities that might come her way.

And come they did. After graduating from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in 1976, she was hired by Chase Manhattan Bank and worked there for ten years. “I fell into my career,” she laughs as she remembers her only concrete ambition upon graduating as “a desire to live in New York City.” After successfully completing the training program, Anne-Marie's first assignment brought her to Hong Kong where she worked for four years — three of them covering clients in South Asia. From there she traveled to London (where she still lives), gaining experience and contacts as she worked in credit, marketing and analytic roles in the corporate banking and financial advisory groups.

Anne-Marie launched her own business, Corporate Consulting Resources, in 1987. This first stage of the fledgling company posed difficulties for Anne-Marie. She says she sometimes would “sit in a room the size of a stamp” and feel very overwhelmed. She elaborates on how reaching out to high-up contacts and trying to establish a new business can be very difficult at times, and failures are very personal. However, she did gain something from these difficult times: “I learned to be uncomfortable,” she says. With her Merion-fostered self-confidence, Anne-Marie possessed the courage to go into intimidating situations with her head held high, kindly demanding respect and results.

Her philosophy of discomfort paid off. She put herself and her company on the radar of big companies like Fitch Ratings, to whom she eventually sold her business in 2002. She became a joint-manager, helping it become one of the largest global providers of credit and corporate finance training for bankers and investors.

Meanwhile, during this time of extensive travel and work building her fledgling company into a true powerhouse in the industry, she somehow found time to marry and have a family. She worked right through her pregnancies, and never missed her children’s activities when they got older. However, Anne-Marie has no complaints about her every day juggling act. “I love to teach,” she says, “and that’s basically what my job

Anne-Marie attributes much of her success to the foundation laid by her teachers at Merion. They widened her world view and taught her what it means to be a Catholic in the modern day.



comes down to.” While balancing her passion for her job and her family may be a struggle, to Anne-Marie, it is well worth it.

Anne-Marie is a role model to the young women here at Merion. As a businesswoman, visionary, and mother, she has managed to create a successful and fulfilling life for herself with a bit of self-confidence and a willing embrace of the uncomfortable. Though she wears many hats, she wears them all very well. 🍷



★★ MMA *in* DC ★★

Calling all alumnae who live and/or work in DC/MD/VA.

Our next off-campus event will be in the DC area. If your MMA mail does not go to your current address, please contact Patti McAleer at pmcaleer@merion-mercy.com with your current address and email. We would like to make sure all who wish to be included in this event receive all the specifics. Please also join the Merion Mercy Alumnae Group on LinkedIn. Event information will be posted there also!

Interested in helping to plan the event? Please contact Patti McAleer at pmcaleer@merion-mercy.com.

★ HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL IN DC! ★

class notes



Share Your News!

Merion Mercy Academy encourages all alumnae to share news in the Class Notes section of *Mater Matters*. To contribute, send your news to kcawley@merion-mercy.com or write to: Kristina Stanton Cawley '90, Alumnae News, 511 Montgomery Ave., Merion Station, PA 19066.

(Class Notes may be edited for length, grammar, and content.)

The Fifties

Joan Keller Tibbetts '51 is living in Tucson, Arizona. She wrote, "I would love to receive information from Merion Mercy – I have been out of touch for many years since I have lived either in California or Arizona since the 1970s. I have three grown children living in Santa Barbara, California, Portland, Oregon, and Cairns, Australia."

The Sixties

Fran McElroy '64 shared, "I was thrilled to read the great piece in the winter *Mater Matters* about MMA's focus on the arts."

Reading that Mrs. Maria Miele Boyd '72 and the students were represented at the MET conference is truly impressive. It's an honor to have been associated with Merion's art program. I experience its influence every day in my life and work. Best wishes for continued success to (MMA) and the students!"

Rhonda Kuckuck Poli '65 shared, "Can't wait to see our 'big sisters' from the class of '63 at this year's reunion!"

Kathleen Stiles Fimple '69 wrote, "Enjoying retirement! Still see lots of classmates on a regular basis. Can't believe next year will be 45 years for the class of 1969."

The Seventies

Katie McGinty '71 is a career coach and social expert. She recently started as an adjunct professor at Montclair State University, where she teaches college seniors effective job search techniques to land their first job!

Helen Centofanti Peatross '72 wrote, "(My twin sister) **Marie (Centofanti Haas '72)** and I just came home from an amazing challenge! We were whitewater rafting down the Colorado River – 88 miles in one week! Both of us were in rafts that flipped on different days but we lived to tell; then we climbed out of the Grand Canyon South rim at Bright Angel trail, 2760 feet high, 10 miles up from the river. It took all day, from 7:00 a.m. until about 5:00 p.m. We finally made it up to the top... whoever would have thought we could do such a thing when we were physically struggling so much back in MMA? We've come a long way, pushing 60 and living large!"

Career and Mentoring



L. to r. Maureen Brogan Roberts '00, Lauren Berenato '05, Sharon Kelly Hake '74, and Tricia Kelly Anderko '77 "lean in" at the Career and Mentoring Event. Alumnae can look forward to future gatherings and should join LinkedIn to learn more about the Merion Mercy Alumnae Group and to network with other alums.

Sharon Kelly Hake '74, President of Great Dames, Inc., was the guest speaker at the recent Career and Mentoring Event at McCloskey's in Ardmore. She also has taken the time to meet with the Career and Mentoring committee members to share her expertise. After the most recent event, she said, "I really enjoyed connecting with MMA alums, sharing ideas, and seeing some powerful networking in action... You have so much to offer one another, and you are acting on it! You are already creating your legacy."



SCAN THIS CODE now with your mobile phone's QR reader to visit Merion Mercy's homepage. Links to the school's LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter groups are at the bottom of the page.

The Eighties

Marita Fitzpatrick '81 shared, "(After receiving) *Mater Matters* and reading the piece on the Art department, I thought I'd tell what I am doing...I presently teach ceramics, crafts and art at Bodine High School for International Affairs, one of the top ranked Philadelphia Schools. I started at Bodine in September 2011. I've received several DonorsChoose.org Grants to help fund my program. I fondly remember the days in Sister Ethel's art room! She is such a great role model for me as a high school art teacher."

The Nineties

Leslie Blatteau '93 shared an update after her wedding. She married Jim Van Campden on April 13, 2013 at her family's home in Merion Station. "Jim

To Honor and Celebrate the Life of Elizabeth Alexandra Lloyd Tocci '81



Elizabeth (Ella) Lloyd Tocci lived each day with gratitude, courage, and serenity. Sadly, on January 11, 2012 she succumbed to a long battle with cancer. Her extraordinary life and passionate legacy live on through her husband, Gary, and their children, Alexandra, Kate, and John. Committed to family, career, and others, Elizabeth filled each day with compassion and courage.

Elizabeth grew up in West Philadelphia on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania, then later moved to Merion Station and attended MMA for high school. Many summers were spent at her parents' home in Vermont, with acres of rolling green hills, pastures, and a pond. There, her love for the outdoors and animals flourished and has since been passed to her children.

Both of Elizabeth's parents were university professors. After graduating from MMA, Elizabeth went on to study at the University of Pennsylvania, where her father taught, and later she attended Temple Law, where she met her beloved husband. Shortly after graduating in 1988, she began practicing law with the prominent Philadelphia firm, Obermayer, Rebmann, Maxwell & Hippel. In 1999, Elizabeth joined the litigation boutique firm, Rubin, Fortunato & Harbison where she became a Shareholder. Elizabeth advised business owners and management teams within the securities industry on the litigation risks involved when hiring professionals from the competition. She also handled sophisticated litigation relating to non-compete agreements. Elizabeth transitioned into legal consulting when she began undergoing treatment. At Special Counsel, a legal recruiting firm, she consulted with private firms in executive level placements and corporate legal departments regarding project management for discovery and review.

In Elizabeth's professional life, she brought integrity, intelligence, and passion. In her family life, Elizabeth was, and continues to be, a beacon of strength and love. Facing cancer with grace, she kept things as normal as possible for her family and fought with great vigor. She also showed an ease that helped those around her remain peaceful and happy too. Throughout, Elizabeth's daughters noted in her eulogy, "that process revealed an even more profound inner beauty, which deepened, not lessened the love." And so, "The 'most beautiful woman' will be so forever."

and I are back from our honeymoon in Amsterdam! We had a great time getting to know such an international city... lots of museums, bike rides, tulips, and relaxing. Our wedding on April 13 was beautiful. Friends and family celebrated with us at my parents' house, what a day to remember! Merion alumnae in attendance were my sister **Jennifer Blatteau '90** and lifelong friends **Elizabeth Rissover '93** and **Nell Bateman Muldoon '94**. Jim and I are excited to continue our life together; committed to each other and committed to our neighborhood and community in New Haven, Connecticut."



● **Leslie Blatteau '93 and Jim Van Campden**

Ayeshia Smith '97 was inducted into the Hall of Fame at Cowley County Junior College in Kansas. During high school she was a two-time All-American and helped Merion Mercy win a state title as a sophomore. She had such a stellar high school career that she remains the school's all-time leading scorer. In her first season at Cowley she helped the team to a school-record 32-win season and a conference title. She averaged 15.8 points per game as a freshman and her 538 points scored still rank as the eighth most points scored in a single season in the history of their program. Smith's 996 career points are the fourth most points scored in a career. Smith went on to sign with the University of Southern California (USC) and was a starter there before breaking her finger five games into her first season with the team. She received



● **Meghan Broly Long '90 and Kevin Long**



● **Daniel Miles and Amy Maria Vanni '92**

a degree in Sociology from USC. She has since earned a master's degree in Psychology from the University of Phoenix and is currently in the doctoral program at Grand Canyon University. She is employed as a mental health supervisor for the Devereux Foundation in Malvern. She has two daughters, Aniya, age 4, and London, age 3, and is engaged to Tyrone Freeman.

Stacey LoRe Stein '96 works for InVentiv Health Clinical as a senior manager in Clinical Research. She shared, "I have been working in clinical and pre-clinical research for over 12 years and in the field of oncology research for over five years. I have worked on clinical trials for indications for patients with melanoma and breast cancer." She married Jason Stein in 2007 and has a daughter, Alexandra Marie, who celebrated her second birthday in April.

Zeina Ghayad Wehbe '99 and her husband, Anthony Wehbe, proudly announce the birth of their first child, Joseph Anthony Wehbe. He arrived on January 21, 2013. Zeina shared, "We are all doing well!"

The 00s

Donata Cucinotta '00 married Dr. Justin Rasner on May 18, 2013. Donata is a graduate of Ithaca College and Mannes College of Music and is a professional opera singer. Dr. Rasner is a graduate of the University of Kentucky and is a physician with the Harvard Medical Group in Boston. The couple lives in Boston.

Lisa von dem Hagen '00 is living in London with her husband and two children. She shared this update, "Both Gabriele (Ella) Marie Havens (born December 4, 2012) and Finnian (Finn) Tux Havens (born July 6, 2011) were born here in London. It is an amazing city to start a family. We have been very fortunate for our connection to the Embassy during so many wonderful London events and visits. Our assignment is sadly coming to an end in January 2014 when we will return to Washington DC. I have been checking Merion's website for news in addition to getting news from my dad who still coaches softball at MMA."



● **Baby Ella has met many politicians in her first six months as her dad works as a US/UK Liaison for the Department of Defense. She is photographed here with her mom, Lisa von dem Hagen '00, and U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry.**

Michelle Noreski '01 shared, "I married John Cassidy on December 7, 2012 at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in South Philadelphia and our reception was at Vie in Center City Philadelphia. We honeymooned in the Greek Islands. Also, I will be graduating from my Family Medicine Residency program at Aria Health in Langhorne this June and was recently accepted into my number one sports medicine fellowship program at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

It is a one-year program, and I will be working alongside Rothman Institute physicians and covering Phillies games."

Caitlin Quinn '03 just completed her PhD in Chemistry at Columbia University. She wrote, "My work has focused on the study of ligand binding and protein dynamics, and has included two scientific publications. At present, I will continue this work as a post-doctoral researcher. Outside the lab, I am an active runner, including completing the New York City and Boston marathons."

Evan McClennen '03 will graduate from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) with a DO (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine) on June 2, 2013. She will start her residency at Lankenau Medical Center in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Kristy Constantino '04 was engaged on Christmas Eve to Mark Pagano. A June 2014 wedding is planned. Kristy and Mark's "first date" was to Kristy's senior prom at MMA.

Jamie Nguyen '04 wrote in with her annual fund gift, "I was very impressed by the senior student who called to remind me about the Alumnae Challenge. She was very considerate and polite on the phone. The minute I hung up, I went to grab *Mater Matters* and made sure I wouldn't forget to send my donation! I have been working the night shift as a RN at Penn and recently had a patient arrive at one or two in the morning. Remembering the lessons of hospitality at Merion, I got her a cup of tea for which she was very appreciative. I am forever grateful and appreciative for all that I learned at Merion, and am excited to see that the traditions of Mercy and service continue through generations of young women."

Christina Williams '05 was married to Thomas Van de Castle on December 29, 2012. Among the wedding party were fellow MMA alumnae from the class of 2005: maid of honor, **Kathleen Davis, Megan Quinn, Tara Lane, and Regina Toto**. Christina works in the NNICU at the Medical University of South Carolina. Thomas is a Lieutenant U.S.N. They live in Charleston, SC.

class notes



● The wedding of Thomas and Christina Williams Van de Castle '05.

Nicole Addis '07 was engaged to Ryan Tanker on a beach in Malibu in October 2012. Nicole lives in California where she works as a technical coordinator at RGH Themed Entertainment, a theme park design and development firm. A spring 2014 wedding is planned.

Laura Takakjy '07, shared "Since graduating Dickinson College summa cum laude, I moved to Austin, Texas to begin doctoral work in Classical Languages. I specialize in Latin Literature, and I thank MMA (especially **Suzanne Corey Walker '99**) for first exposing me to Latin!"

Catherine Dierkes '08 reported this news, "I graduated magna cum laude from the University of Pennsylvania last spring (2012) and gave the Commencement Address at the School of Nursing graduation. I'm currently employed as a registered nurse at CHOP in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit. I can't wait to see everyone at the reunion!"

Bonnie McShane '12 was named the Atlantic 10 Women's Lacrosse Rookie of the Week in March. As a freshman at Saint Joseph's University, Bonnie's first collegiate start included three assists and two goals, the first of which came just 3:50 into the game. SJU Head Coach Denise Roessler said, "Bonnie stepped in and came out and played as if she had been playing and starting for the entire season. It made a huge impact for us."



● Alumnae sisters smiling the day away l. to r. **Caroline McShane '08**, **Molly McShane Stefanski '05**, **Maureen McShane Chrest '01**, and **Bonnie McShane '12**.

Noel Saraceno '12 wrote in from the University of Pittsburgh, "I made the Dean's list and the freshman honor society at the end of my first semester, and I became very involved in campus life. I joined an Outdoor Adventure and Community Service (OACS) club in addition to Habitat for Humanity. In fact, I just came back from our spring break trip in Tennessee where we helped to build a total of four houses. I also took on a research project with my biology professor from last semester. A friend and I worked with Dr. Long to set up her advanced biology labs and research on her *C. elegans* to find a cure for Alzheimer's. I already look forward to next year as I was selected to be a Resident Assistant (RA) and elected Vice President of Habitat for Humanity." Noel also won the "Outstanding Freshman Leader" award, which is given to only one student each year.



● Members of the class of 2012 (from left) **Courtney Whelan**, **Jacqueline Uveges**, **Stephanie Schallenger**, **Shannon Saldutti**, **Julia Gallagher**, **Lana Sikahema Corbitt**, **Michaela Shea**, **Maira Kaiser**, **Alexandra Sullivan**, and **Laura Stephens** gather in Washington, D.C. to celebrate the wedding of **Marcus Corbitt** and **Lana Sikahema Corbitt '12**.

Arrivals

Chris and **Kimberly Nolen Condon '99**, a daughter, Addison Nolen

Larry and **Raequel Forbes Madara '99**, a daughter, Alyssa Marie

Anthony and **Zeina Ghayad Wehbe '99**, a son, Joseph Anthony

John Wick Havens and **Lisa von dem Hagen '00**, a daughter, Gabriele (Ella) Marie

Greg and **Maureen McShane Chrest '01**, a daughter, Juliette Rita



● **Juliette Rita**

Dan and **Kelly Davis Burke '02**, a son, Erik

class notes

Joe and **Monica Real Fraatz '02**, a daughter, Catherine (Casey) Theresa

Brian and **Laura Dingman, MMA faculty**, a son, Carter Louis



● Carter Louis

Weddings

Meghan Brolly '90 to Kevin Long on April 13, 2013

Amy Maria Vanni '92 to Daniel Miles on May 5, 2012

Leslie Blatteau '93 to Jim Van Campden on April 13, 2013

Donata Cucinotta '00 to Justin Rasner on May 18, 2013

Michelle Noreski '01 to John Cassidy on December 7, 2012

Molly McShane '05 to Matthew Stefanski on February 9, 2013

Christina Williams '05 to Thomas Van de Castle on December 29, 2012

Lana Sikahema '12 to Marcus Corbitt on December 20, 2012

Mary Simonis, MMA Faculty, to Steve Rush on February 9, 2013



● MMA faculty member Mary Simonis Rush (center) enjoys her wedding day with family and friends, including MMA faculty members (from left) Sister Barbara Buckley '72, Mrs. Elizabeth Ueland, Mrs. Joan Hight, Mrs. Marianne Rule, Ms. Pat Sack, and Mrs. Michele Shipe.



IN MEMORIAM

Merion Mercy Academy expresses its condolences to the family and friends of the following members of our community. Please keep their families in your prayers.

Helen Boles, mother of **Alison Boles Casey '78** and **Andrea Boles Haase '80**

Joseph T. Braun Jr., grandfather of **Sheila Dunne '07** and **Erin Dunne '12**

Giuseppe Bucciarelli, grandfather of **Samantha Abbonizio '09** and **Marissa Abbonizio '14**

Mary T. Byrnes, grandmother of **Alora McDonnell '12** and **Dan Byrnes, MMA Faculty**

Raymond Cleary, husband of **Lucie Slattery Cleary '67**

Philip DiNunno, Jr., uncle of **Maria Miele Boyd '72**, **Linda Miele Benton '75**, and **Martha Miele Davis '85**

Andrew J. Dougherty, Jr., son of **Jane Callan Dougherty '55**, brother of **Mary Frances Dougherty Ficco '87**, and brother-in-law of **Melissa Light Dougherty '94**

Catherine Driscoll, grandmother of **Monica Real Fraatz '02**

Helen Ewing, grandmother of **Jennifer Corbett '99**

Jacqueline Fioravanti '12

Linda Smith Hagan '65

Anna James, grandmother of **Gabriella Albater '98** and **Ariana Albater '00**

Charlotte M. LaBarth, grandmother of **Sarah LaBarth '10**

Ann (Nancy) Keller Lewe '49, sister of **Joan Keller Tibbetts '51**

John F. Mack, uncle of **Catherine DiSipio Avitabile '99**, **Kristin DiSipio '02**, **Monica DiSipio '04**, and **Mary Theresa DiSipio '07**

Susan Whitehead Martinez '89

John Francis McKelvey, brother of **Kelly McKelvey '04** and **Katie McKelvey '06**

Joan C. O'Connor, grandmother of **Maura Burns '04** and **Cara Burns '07**

Alice O'Neill, grandmother of **Caroline Reilly '07** and **Margaret Reilly '08**

Evangeline (Van) Harding Poore '54, sister of **Diana Harding Dooley '58** and **Cynthia Harding '61**

Mary Querida (M.Q.) Wolfington Mita Reimel, mother of **Maripeg Mita Bruder '74**, grandmother of **Julia Mita Hartman '02** and **Molly Mita '07**, and sister of **Martha (Martie) Wolfington Gillin '55**

H. Nancy Rovito, mother of **Laura-Jane Rovito Pasternak '67**

Anthony Rocca, grandfather of **Lisa Savarese '05**

Theresa Saraceno, grandmother of **Noel Saraceno '12**

Jane Shoemaker, mother of **Sally Shoemaker Abbruzzi '60**

Kathleen (Kay) Slattery-Mulqueen, mother of **Denise Brennan Mattia '62**, **Lucie Slattery Cleary '67**, and **Eileen Slattery '85**

Mary Ann Ayers Smith '63, sister of **Margaret Ayers Briggs '75** and **Deborah Ayers Rafferty '79**

Elaine Myers Stefaniw '50

Elizabeth A. Lloyd Tocci '81

Joyce J. Tomasso, mother of **Stephanie Tomasso Oscarson '84**

Margherita B. Vaughan, mother of **Adriana Vaughan '69 RIP**, **Valerie Vaughan Featherson '68**, **Alexia Vaughan Sinton '71**, **Paula Vaughan Butler '73**, **Kayne Vaughan Thompson '77**, **Christine Vaughan Thomas '82**, and **Margherita Vaughan Ryan '86**

Edward J. Werner, husband of **Dorothy Lehman Werner '55**

Harry Wolfington, brother of **Martha (Martie) Wolfington Gillin '55**

James Frank Young, husband of **Jane Dagit Young '55**, father of **Janet Young Spillane '84**

Can We Wear Our Green and Pink?

BY: MOIRA PANNEPACKER '12

What is the appropriate response for a teenage girl who has never experienced loss, who has never been close to anyone who died? I have friends who had never been to a viewing or funeral before this winter. In preparing for the service at hand, they did not know what to wear. My immediate reaction to such a quandry was to ask, “You’ve never known anyone that has died?” Quietly thinking to myself, “Wow, you are really lucky.”

Both sets of my grandparents are with God along with my older sister, Molly. They will always be a part of my life. That’s the rub. Losing someone close to you is so difficult and so sad, yet the joy and privilege of knowing and learning from them is cause to celebrate. The stories shared, the memories evoked, and the pictures saved of those who have been called to God are ways that I am able to see the face of God and better understand what love is. Yet, the grief remains.

There are many in the Merion Mercy community who are grieving from the loss of a loved one. The class of 2012 experienced a profound loss this year. She forever is our classmate, our sister by choice, and our friend, **Jacqueline Kay Fioravanti '12**. What a beautiful name for such a beautiful girl. How does one individual change a class of 118 girls and influence an entire school community?

Jacqueline was happy living in the moment. She connected with so many and at the same time put life into perspective for each of us. She did not do this with words



or self-pity, but with a smile. That smile and countless meaningful actions gently pulled us toward her, calling us to see ourselves in a new light, discovering and re-discovering our inner beauty and potential. Jacqueline faced an inconceivable crossroad with unimaginable serenity and focus well beyond her years. As a school community, especially as a class, we were inspired by Jacqueline on a daily basis as we journeyed with her through four amazing years, wherein we infused the Merion blue and gold with some new colors — green and pink (the colors of “Team Jacqueline”).

And not even Graduation could stop our Mercy bond... it simply saw the spirit of Jacqueline spread across the country from Philadelphia to California down to New Orleans and back to Vermont. And while most of the Class of 2012 was unable to participate in the Parkway Run with “Team Jacqueline” in September 2012, we posed in our green and pink shirts on our respective college campuses holding up words of encouragement and support and flooded Jacqueline’s Facebook page with the pictures the morning of the race. Nothing could stop the bond of the blue and gold coupled with the green and pink!

Sadly, nothing could prepare our class for the tragic news of Jacqueline’s passing. It was with bittersweet emotions that many of us came together at her funeral Mass, which was not only a celebration of our faith in God but also a celebration of a young life lived in trust and love. Now, love mixes with grief for us all, and as Catherine McAuley said, “We shall all meet in heaven. Oh what joy to think of it.” 🍂

A L U M N A E

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TEAM UP with our Alumnae Challenge donors. This year, for the first time, every new and increased gift to the MMAAnnual Fund will be matched.

If you are a new donor—or have not given in recent years—this year's gift will be doubled as new. If you increase your gift, the amount of increase will be matched.

Team up. We all win.



MMAAnnual Fund

Please use the enclosed gift envelope or give online at www.merion-mercy.com, click Supporting MMA.

For more information, contact Agnes Shields Finigan '72,
Director of the Annual Fund, 610-664-6655, ext. 126.