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**FEBRUARY 16**

**Omaha Marriott Downtown at the Capitol District**  
**222 North 10th St. ★ Omaha**

# *The Mercian*



## **In this issue:**

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Mercy Day 2018  
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Family Ties

### *Advancement News:*

Year in Review

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

# The Momentum Continues



Mercy welcomed 112 new freshmen this fall with girls from every residential ZIP code and from varying socio-economic levels and ethnicities. We are proud that our student body is reflective of the landscape of Omaha. In fact, our 28 percent diversity rate is the highest of all of Omaha's Catholic high schools. With this increased diversity, especially in the Latina community, the school has hired an English as a Second Language (ESL) Specialist. The ESL Specialist strategically works with students, teachers, and parents to ensure student's success for the future.

Our students were also greeted with renovated science laboratories. Over the summer, our biology, chemistry and physics laboratories were updated, and new science equipment was purchased thanks to generous donors. (see related story, page 8). This type of investment in our girls' futures provides exposure and access to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) curriculum. Careers in these fields are booming, especially for women. I am also very proud that our updating of the HVAC system during the summer of 2017 was also completely paid for by donors.

We are focused on ensuring each student's success. To that end, we also hired two new Guidance Counselors. They have been working hard to help our students navigate the college preparation process. In addition, they are supporting our standardized testing preparation. Mercy is the only school in Omaha to ensure every student has access to the comprehensive standardized testing and ACT preparation curriculum offered through OnToCollege with John Baylor.

We are also literally flying flags of Mercy pride. Our new branding efforts continue and recently flags with the Mercy seal and our new tagline, "Faith in her future," were installed at the front of the building. That, along with new marketing and recruitment materials, enhanced publicity, and aggressive advancement efforts, have led to increased momentum of support and recognition for Mercy High School.

In that spirit, we are also going to change the frequency of *The Mercian*. The publication will be longer, with more stories and will be distributed in late December and in the summer each year. This will allow us to provide more space to feature our alumnae and supporters, share more news about the school, and spotlight interesting stories.

Mercy's momentum is palpable. We look forward to sharing with you updates and milestones as they are reached as we focus on our students reaching their full potential.

May the blessings of the Lord be with you,

Sr. Delores Hannon, RSM  
President

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FIESTA 2019: Destined to Shine

## The Mercian

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Stay in touch with us and keep up-to-date on Mercy information on our website at [mercyhigh.org](http://mercyhigh.org).

Also follow us on social media:

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## MERCY NEWS

# Mercy Day 2018

Mercy Day is a beloved tradition that honors the day when the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, Mother Catherine McAuley, opened the first House of Mercy in Dublin.



Students, parents, and many alumnae gathered at the school to attend Mass and a program by seniors educating other students about McAuley's life.

This year's play began with Catherine on her deathbed with her fellow Sisters of Mercy gathered around her. She flashed back to important life events. A highlight of the program was the unveiling of the seniors who portray McAuley. This is considered one of the biggest honors students can receive and is voted on by the Senior Class.

This year's two Catherine McAuleys were Anne Laferla who served as the narrator of the play and Shacty Alvarez-Hurtado who portrayed Catherine on stage.

representative her junior year. Her favorite classes are Guitar and English, and she plans to study photojournalism in college.

"I hope I live up to the honor my classmates have given me in portraying Catherine," Anne said.

One of the reasons Shacty decided to attend Mercy was because it was a school "that let me experience my faith throughout the school day."

President of Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), a member of the Pastoral Council and Pro-Life Club, Shacty was a Nocturne Princess sophomore year, a May Court member freshmen year, and Class Secretary sophomore and junior year. She is on the Tennis Team and hopes to be part of

the Stage Crew for the spring play. Her current college plans include majoring in theology or public administration.

"When I found out I was named Catherine, I was really surprised. I hope I can represent Catherine for what she was: a great example of the Mercy mission in action," she said.

Mercy Day was also a special day for alumnae and members of the Mercy community. The school reached out to former students who played Mother McAuley to share reflections on what the honor meant to them. See related story on page 6 with excerpts from their reflections.

At the same time, alumnae throughout the country shared pictures and comments on social media using the hashtag #OMercyDay2018. A Facebook Live of the play was watched by thousands.

At the end of the play, seniors showed a video of several Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Volunteer Corps members talking about the impact Catherine McAuley has had on their lives.

Photography:

*Above top:* Members of the Senior Class who worked on this year's Mercy Day play.

# Mother McAuleys from the Past



## Photography:

One of the most beloved traditions of the school and a memorable honor for seniors is the person chosen to play Catherine McAuley in the annual Mercy Day play. Here are some images of Mother McAuleys in the past.

## McAuley Reflections

Every September the worldwide Mercy community celebrates Mother Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, on Mercy Day. That tradition has been celebrated at our high school for more than 60 years. In honor of the graduates who have portrayed Catherine through the years, we asked past recipients to reflect on this honor.

### Mary Jo Pitzl '75

"Being selected Mother McAuley was, of course, a great honor from my classmates. I am hopeful that I have exemplified Catherine McAuley's spirit of giving in my life (perhaps to a fault: I keep a sign at my desk that says, "Stop me before I volunteer again!"). And I have striven to be kind to people, even when my profession as a journalist calls for me to ask the tough questions and take the impertinent stand. You can be a 'nice person' and still do the tough work. Why, often it's more effective that way."

### Sheila Greave '82

"I was very surprised when my classmates 'kidnapped' me to tell me about it. The vote took place while I was at debate camp, so everyone knew but me! It meant the world to me. It meant that in my years at Mercy I not only grew, I blossomed into the woman of Mercy I was striving to be. What a blessing it was to have a school that fostered that in me."

### Jackie Lee '02

"Being named Mother McAuley meant I was able to honor a woman who embodied much of what I wanted to become in the world. Mother McAuley was

an inspiration to me because she was able to accomplish so much, which was especially remarkable when you considered that a majority of women during her era were not afforded the opportunity to be a leader. As a high schooler I felt that if she could do it, why not me? Her life demonstrated that we can each cause positive changes in the world, and it is our duty to strive towards this in ways both big and minuscule. She trusted in her community and inspires me to do the same."

### Coley Mixan '08

"Being named Catherine McAuley offered me an opportunity to frame the focus of my life's work from the beginning of my young adulthood. I had to ask myself (and as I continually ask myself now), how does the legacy of Catherine McAuley's work (lovingly giving alms and attention to the most vulnerable in our society) show up in the way I treat others in my day-to-day interactions?"

### Monica Keenan '12

"Behind every strong woman is a strong woman, is a strong woman, is a strong woman.' These words hung upon my wall as I completed my second year of service as a Jesuit Volunteer in the Northwest, and they have stuck with me here in graduate school as a Trinity Fellow at Marquette University. I was reminded daily of the strength, beauty, and power that comes with being a woman. Catherine knew this and dedicated her life to building up strong women in order to change the world, and change it she did. Use your life



in a good way to build up others like Catherine did."

### Jamie Jacobsen '14

"My time at Mercy High School sewed the seed of service in my heart. Catherine McAuley inspired me to become a social worker. Being named Catherine McAuley was one of my proudest moments. To me, that meant that those around me recognized my commitment to pursuing Catherine's mission in my life."

### Abi Jones '18

"Being chosen to represent Mother Catherine McAuley was the biggest honor I have ever received...If it were not for Mother Catherine listening to the Lord's call to her heart, we would not have been celebrating Mercy Day at all. Her life is such a beautiful example of listening to the Lord and living in His love. Because of Mother Catherine's yes, we get to come together every year and celebrate the foundation of our beautiful Mercy community in that little house on Baggot Street."

MERCY NEWS

# McKernan Inspires HDR Gift for STEAM Labs

The late Mary Tracy McKernan '82 never let obstacles get in her way despite being born without her left hand and later dealing with life-threatening cancer.

McKernan had a successful 18-year career at HDR, Inc. most recently serving as a Federal Contracts Manager. She was an active alumna and advocate for Mercy. As one fellow graduate said of her, "Mary was passionate about all things: family, friends, work, and sports."

To honor Mary's spirit, tenacity, and determination and in loving memory of a beloved colleague, HDR and its employees donated more than \$47,000 to renovate the school's labs to support its STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) curriculum.

"Mary had an indomitable spirit and was a priceless asset to this firm. We called her a jack-of-all-trades. She knew everyone and everyone knew her. She often talked about how Mercy helped to nurture her passion for life, and we wanted to do something for the school in her memory," said

Douglas McAneny, President of HDR's Federal Group.

McKernan's personal challenges never seemed to get in the way. While at Mercy she was a debater, cheerleader and on the Track Team. As one teacher put it, "Mary never treated her disability as a disability."

After graduating, she continued to keep in close contact with her classmates and took the lead whenever there was a need for a class reunion or gathering.

She attended many Mercy alumnae events and was a fan at sporting activities in Omaha including Creighton baseball and basketball games, the College World Series, and UNO hockey.

McKernan passed away on September 30, 2016. As HDR's Federal Contracts Manager she was responsible for overseeing the award and use of HDR contracts with the federal government. She led the development of contract labor rates, ensured contract proposals complied with the Federal Acquisition Regulation, monitored the use of contracts and provided information to the other senior leaders in the Federal Program. McKernan also taught HDR's Federal Project



Management course and developed and taught HDR's Federal Contract Management course. She was part of the team that won the Crystal Pathfinder Award in 2001 for the Asarco Omaha Project. She previously worked for the Omaha District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Colleagues decided to donate a small memorial in her name to Mercy but after McAneny visited Mercy, he and others saw the potential to do more in Mary's honor while having a lasting impact on the school.

"Mercy is doing it right giving all girls who want it the opportunity to go to this outstanding school and be successful. We were particularly impressed with the early preparation to get girls interested in STEAM careers, which is a critical need in our world today," he said.



Photography:

Left: Members of the McKernan family gather together at the science labs dedication.

## MERCY NEWS

# Mercy's Renovated Labs Dedicated

On October 23, Mercy honored donors and dedicated two renovated science laboratories. More than 150 supporters generously donated over \$800,000 to this project.



Lead donors included the Mammel Family Foundation, Dr. C. C. and Mabel Criss Memorial Foundation, and The Lozier Foundation. In addition, Mercy received a \$40,000 federal grant to purchase science equipment.

The renovated labs are designed to facilitate interactive experimentation and collaboration. They are packed with technology to best complement the transfer of information.

Specific enhancements include updated workspace islands, integrated projection systems, upgraded gas, water and electrical infrastructure, digital analysis enhancements, and improved lighting and ventilation.

These labs are critical to the delivery of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) curriculum. As part of its Strategic Plan, Mercy continues to embrace and enhance its STEAM programming to integrate these areas of study, leverage the school's educational expertise, instill critical thinking through the practical application of knowledge, and raise awareness of career choices in these fields.

Mercy offers a variety of science, chemistry, and physics courses including Biology, Honors and AP Biology, Chemistry, Honors and AP Chemistry, Human Anatomy and Physiology, Physics, and Foundations of STEAM in the renovated spaces.

Mercy has embraced the commitment to STEAM and its principles, reinforcing to its students the job opportunities that are available to women in these fast-growing fields. Although women fill close to half of all jobs in the U.S. economy, they hold less than 25 percent of STEAM-related jobs.

**“These donors understand how their generous investments in these laboratories will help our students reach their full potential, helping us build leaders that make a difference in our community,” said Delores Hannon, RSM, President, Mercy High School.**

Photography:

During the science labs dedication, Senior Jojo Fett shows the audience an explosive experiment.



ALUMNAE NEWS

# A Mercy Softball Legacy

They say the family that plays together stays together. For the Neuberger family, sports, especially softball, were a passion that the sisters, who are all Mercy graduates, shared.

You might say it is in the genes. They passed their passion down to their daughters who attend Mercy now and play on the softball team.

It is not surprising that all four Neuberger sisters attended Mercy and played sports. Their mother **Patti Lyman Neuberger '62**, loved the school and encouraged them to attend. But the biggest sports influence was their dad, Joe, or "Papp," as he is affectionately called. He was an All-American at the University of Nebraska Omaha and a coach

at Omaha South and Archbishop Ryan High Schools. He even had a tryout with the San Francisco Giants baseball team.

**"I think Dad did not know what else to do with four girls, other than share his love for sports with us," said Sarah.**

**Sarah Neuberger Coniglio '96** played softball, basketball, soccer and ran track while at Mercy. She played catcher and third base and still holds the



record at Mercy for the most stolen bases in a season. She also was involved in National Honor Society and Campus Ministry and is very appreciative of her years at the school. She was on the state championship softball team her freshman year.

"At Mercy I was part of a small community where students

receive individual attention from caring teachers," she said.

After she graduated, she went on to attend Quincy University where she also played softball. She earned a Bachelor's in Psychology in 2000 and received her Master's in Social Work in 2001 from UNO. She currently is the supervisor of the Right Turn Program at Lutheran Family Services.

Sarah's daughter Clare is a freshman and plays left field. She is a member of Golden Girls, Mercy's Spirit Club, and hopes to play basketball this fall.

Sarah's older sister, **Meg Neuberger Lee '93**, played soccer, basketball and volleyball while at Mercy. Meg was a pitcher on the Mercy team that took the state championship in 1993. She was an All-State Captain that year. She went on to study Exercise Science and play softball at Wayne State College. She currently teaches Pilates in Omaha.

"Mercy teaches you structure and discipline, which is especially important as you transition from high school and embark on the rigors of college," she said.

Her daughter, Rena, is a sophomore and is following in her mother's footsteps as a pitcher. She is a Student Ambassador, a class officer and is active in theatre.

**Jenny Neuberger Sims '90**, played basketball, soccer, and softball as a club sport. It did not become a sanctioned sport at Mercy until 1992.

"I remember being nervous about my preconceived notions of a Catholic school. What I

found at Mercy was a tightness, sisterhood and comraderie with my classmates that remains today," said Jenny.

After graduation, Jenny played college softball at a junior college and then went on to play at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois. She was a pitcher and outfielder and earned a degree in Education. Currently she is a self-employed stylist.

Her daughter, Hannah, is a freshman and a catcher. She is a member of Golden Girls and hopes to play basketball.

"I like the team aspect of playing softball. You not only have fun, but you are working

towards a common goal," said Hannah.

All three Neuberger alumnae agree that Mercy had a profound effect on their lives.

**"Mercy is doing something right, and we knew we wanted our daughters to go here. The entire faculty and staff are invested in the girls, making sure they reach their full potential," said Sarah.**

Editor's Note: Sister **Molly Neuberger Fearday '97** also attended Mercy. She lives in Effingham, Illinois with her husband and five children.

Photography:

*Main picture, pictured left to right:* Jenny Neuberger Sims '90, her daughter Hannah, Sara Neuberger Coniglio '96, her daughter Clare, Meg Neuberger Lee '93 and her daughter Rena.

*Below and left:* Pictures from Mercy yearbooks of the Neuberger sisters.



MERCY NEWS



# St. Gerald's Mercy Connection

Walking the hallways of St. Gerald Catholic Grade School, you get a feeling that the Mercy spirit is alive and well.

This is not surprising when you realize that five Mercy alumnae serve as administrators, teachers and staff at the school. For them, Mercy provided the academic background to excel in education as well as teaching them that women can be confident leaders.

**Principal Christy Gohr Keenan '93** was introduced to Mercy by a friend. She was a cheerleader, ran track and was active in journalism while at Mercy. After graduation she went to the University of Nebraska—Lincoln and studied

Elementary Education and Early Childhood Development. She graduated in 1997 and taught in Omaha Public Schools for a few years while she earned her Master's at the University of Nebraska Omaha(UNO). She came to St. Gerald in 2001, teaching fourth grade and kindergarten before becoming an assistant principal and then principal two years later.

"Women (students, staff and faculty) are in leadership roles at Mercy. While there you learn you can take charge and take on

anything. You learn confidence and a can-do attitude," she said.

Those skills have been invaluable in providing leadership to the school.

Although **Hailey McGargill '12**, fourth grade teacher, has only taught at St. Gerald three years, she credits the excellence and commitment of Mercy teachers for providing role models for her career.

"Teachers at Mercy build relationships with the students, and empower them

to reach their full potential in a community supported by faith and academic excellence,” she said.

Many of Hailey’s friends from elementary school went to Mercy and when she shadowed there, she loved the community atmosphere. She was involved in volleyball, cheerleading and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). Also, during high school, she worked at a day care and knew that working with children was something she wanted to do long term. After graduation she went to Wayne State College and earned her Elementary Education degree.

Her Mercy connection also helped her confirm that her first job should be at St. Gerald.

“I had posted on Facebook that I was looking at St. Gerald and a Mercy graduate commented that the school produced excellent students with a strong faith-based education,” she added. That Mercy graduate was **Maria Moragues Parvanehgo ’11** who teaches first grade.

“I was a shy girl when I first came to Mercy. The school helped me find my confidence. I think the all-girl atmosphere supports that. And the Catholic environment where you can share your faith was really important to me,” she said.

Maria was a member of Pastoral Council, Art Club, and National Honor Society. After graduation she went to UNO and received a degree in Speech-Language

Pathology in 2015. She also obtained a Master of Arts in Teaching in 2017 and has been a full-time teacher at St. Gerald for three years.

**Linda Cerveny Baker ’87** had no choice but to go to Mercy. Her dad insisted on it but she is glad he did.

“Mercy gave me a strong foundation in academics coupled with a faith-filled education that has been critical to my career,” she said.

While at Mercy she was on the honor roll, in choir and participated in many of the theatre productions. She attended the College of St. Mary’s and received her Elementary Education and Early Childhood degree, as well as Middle School Science and Social Studies endorsements.

She teaches science on the 6th, 7th and 8th grade level and is in her 18th year at St. Gerald.

**Chris Franco Zadina ’71** is part of a legacy at Mercy. Her mother **Louise Battaglia Franco SM ’50** and sisters, **Mary Franco Levy ’70**, **Ann Franco Laughlin ’72**, **Theresa Franco ’74** and **Catherine Franco Van Haute ’81** also attended Mercy.

During her years at Mercy, she was involved in many clubs including Language, Sodality, and Speech and played volleyball. She went to Creighton University where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Education with endorsements in Elementary Education and Special Education

in 1975. She received her Master’s of Science in Special Education/ Learning Disabilities in 1979.

**“Mercy gave me a strong foundation in academics coupled with a faith-filled education that has been critical to my career.”**

She worked in special education at Blumfield Elementary for five years. When her youngest son entered kindergarten, she was hired as a second grade teacher there. She taught second grade for 12 years and became a Resource Teacher for grades K-8th for the last 18 years.

“Mercy led me to believe in myself and to know that I was just as capable and confident as any person, man or woman. They helped me realize my academic potential that allowed me to go to Creighton on scholarship and graduate with honors. Mercy had no glass ceiling for us to shatter because we were never really held back by anything and always encouraged to soar to unimaginable heights,” she added.

#### Photography:

Pictured left to right are Mercy graduates who work at St. Gerald Catholic School: Hailey McGargill ’12, Maria Moragues Parvanehgo ’11, Principal Christy Gohr Keenan ’93, Linda Cerveny Baker ’87, and Chris Franco Zadina ’71.

ALUMNAE NEWS

# Three Women of Mercy Work on Play



**As three Women of Mercy they learned empowerment, the importance of teamwork and the value of collaboration.**

At the same time, they discovered if you have a great idea, you can make it happen. Shayne Kennedy, playwright, **Amy Harmon Lane '86**, Creighton Coordinator of Theatre & Dance and **Vivian (Viv) Parr '16**, Creighton theatre student saw the fruits of their efforts appear on stage when the play, *Handled*, premiered October 31 -November 4, at Creighton.

How the three came together on this production is an interesting story of Mercy connections.

Shayne Kennedy, playwright, Mother McAuley of Chicago graduate and Mercy associate had an idea for a play dealing with mother-daughter

relationships, depression, and the pressure of social media.

"I am a mother and know first-hand the stigma of mental illness and the inclination of a parent to try to take matters in their own hands," she said.

The play tells the story of a mother who tries to create a social media profile for her daughter after the daughter's stint at a rehab center. The story includes six strong women characters.

During the development process, Shayne reached out to her Creighton classmate, Amy Harmon Lane '86, to see if the university could host a workshop on the play. That took place in 2017 and the

production was enhanced to make it available to the public.

"I thought the strong female characters and the relevance of social media and mental health issues made it a perfect option for this year's fall production. We were also able to get a grant to have Shayne as an advisor during the run of the play," said Amy.

Amy's love of theatre was cultivated at Mercy High School where she was active in drama, music, speech, and band. She also felt the all-girls community made her a confident person.

**"At Mercy you learned it was about letting everyone be great. It wasn't competitive, it was about everyone succeeding," she added.**

Amy received her Bachelor's in Fine Arts (BFA) in Theatre from Creighton, a Master's of Fine Arts in Directing from the University of Memphis, and a Ph.D. from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

Her days at Mercy also gave her a unique perspective of the play.

"At Mercy we were women working together and talking about current issues. The women in this play are doing the same thing—dealing with important issues of mental illness and social media," she said.

The final Mercy connection was Creighton student Viv Parr '16. She served as student director and Dramaturg, which entails providing research in the many issues surrounding the play. She even created a Twitter dictionary of terms to help actors and audience with common phrases and acronyms that may be unfamiliar. Viv is currently working toward her BFA in Theater Performance and a Bachelor's in Music with a minor in Women and Gender Studies at the university.

She is inspired by Amy and Shayne because they approach their art with "sensitivity and wisdom."

Viv sees her Mercy years adding perspective to her approach to directing.

"It is always important to approach themes of plays from an honest place. The issues of mental illness and the negative impacts of social media will be very real to most of our audience. Mercy taught me to always have empathy for other people. I try to look at this play through an empathetic lens and remember that the story onstage is a truth for many people," she said.

Viv was also active in theatre and music at Mercy. She was the Secretary of Student Council and President of Mercy's Theatre Troupe.

**"I graduated from Mercy confident in my ability to be a leader."**

"In college I now feel prepared to hold a leadership role and do so in an effective and positive way. I use the leadership skills Mercy cultivated in me every time I am given an opportunity to work in groups of people," she said.

A play brought them all together. These women symbolize what being a Woman of Mercy truly means.

Photography:

*Pictured left to right: Amy Harmon Lane '86, Vivian (Viv) Parr '16, and Shayne Kennedy.*

## Alice In Wonderland

It has become one of the most famous children's books of all time, that appeals to children as well as adults. That is one of the reasons why Mercy's Theatre Director Joshua von Kampen chose a play based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* as this fall's play. The play, *Alice in Wonderland*, tells what happens to a girl named Alice who finds herself passing through the mirror in her sitting room, transforming everything into a fantasy world populated by peculiar imaginary creatures and objects that come alive and have a personality, like talking playing cards.



The show featuring 40 Mercy girls, five young men from Creighton Prep and a large tech crew, ran from October 26-28.

"With this year's production, I wanted to explore all-ages entertainment through fairy tales, folk tales and children's literature while also digging deeper. The plot is magical, absurd, and enthralling but is full of underlying messages that leave lasting impressions," Josh added.

Numerous students from all classes tried out for the play. Working with student designers, the show featured colorful, mobile set pieces that had strong artistic value and costumes that drew inspiration from original source material.



ALUMNAE FEATURE

# From Omaha to the World

**Mary Lou Johnson-Pizarro '74 has traveled extensively throughout her career and feels Mercy was very influential in shaping who she is and the career path she chose.**

As a Public Diplomacy Foreign Service Officer, she works with embassies in the Middle East and North Africa to ensure that U.S. policies, programs, and values are shared with people in those countries.

Mary Lou was a member of St. Thomas More Parish and joined one of her best friends (**Laurie Kowal Straw '74**) in attending Mercy High School. She remembers the teachers

being passionate about their commitment to education and teaching students how to be intelligent and capable Catholic women.

"My classmates were fun and at times even a bit mischievous, but smart, curious and good-hearted. I particularly enjoyed Debate Club and our ability to talk with teachers about the issues of the day. I made lifetime friends and just this past week spent time

with **Robin Allen**, another Mercy '74 graduate," she said.

During her high school years, she also developed an interest in social justice and is now chairperson of her local parish's Social Action Committee that rewards funds to organizations in need.

"At Mercy, I had many long conversations with fellow classmate **Kate Dodson Sommers**, and later Kate would be instrumental in founding the Komen Race for the Cure in Omaha. I credit Kate with helping me find my passion in this topic," she added.

After Mary Lou graduated from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in August of 1978 with a Bachelor's in Arts with double-majors in History and Sociology, she joined the Peace Corps and was assigned to Jamaica for two years. She eventually moved to Washington, D.C. where she worked for a few years, mostly with non-profits. She went to Harvard's Graduate School of Education, graduated in 1988, and stayed in the Boston area where she worked in international development, specializing in education issues.

She first joined the U.S. Agency of International Development and then moved to the U.S. Department of State in 1999, where she continues to work today. Along the way, she married and had one daughter, who recently graduated from the College of William and Mary and now works in Washington, D.C.

**“As a Foreign Service Officer, I have traveled extensively and have represented the U.S. in long-term tours in South Africa, Nigeria, and Venezuela.”**

“I have chosen to work primarily in the Americas and Africa because these are nations that always fascinated me. All these journeys have provided me and my family rich and memorable experiences I treasure,” she said.

Mary Lou is currently posted to Washington, D.C. where she supports U.S. embassies in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and the Libya External Office, which is in Tunis, Tunisia on public diplomacy issues.

“Being so far away it's hard to be involved with Mercy, but I try to support the school. I believe in Mercy's mission to educate young women to contribute to Omaha and beyond, as it was the key in helping me find my spiritual pathway, but also fundamental in spurring an intellectual curiosity that allowed me to succeed in my professional career,” she added.

Photography:

*Left: Mary Lou Johnson-Pizzaro with Venezuelan born actor Edgar Ramirez who she met while posted to Caracas, Venezuela.*



**Dear alumnae, parents, and friends,**

I am profoundly grateful to everyone who has been so generous to Mercy High School this fiscal year. Your contributions during this year and in the past have directly benefitted our students. Your generosity allows us to continue our mission of educating young women of faith, knowledge, and compassionate service.

I am also thankful to those who have helped ensure Mercy has a bright, sustainable future. By including us in your will, trust, annuities, and IRA distributions, Mercy is able to plan ahead as we look to continue to evolve.

The students of Mercy need you. Thank you for remembering Mercy High School in your philanthropic planning.

Sincerely,

Nate Driml  
VP of Advancement

## This past year has been one for Mercy’s storied history

as we completed a major HVAC overhaul, increased recruitment efforts which yielded one of the largest freshman classes in recent history, redesigned and dedicated two science labs, and hired new personnel in the areas of college counseling, ESL, and advancement. And in this short time, these new hires coupled with our experienced and outstanding faculty and staff have moved the needle in a positive direction.

When it comes to the annual operating costs for Mercy, we depend on the support of our donors to fund initiatives such as the Annual Fund, FIESTA, GolfFest, and our Negotiated Tuition Program to cover the gap between tuition and the true cost of a Mercy education. These initiatives last year provided \$1.8 million in much-needed financial support to over 82 percent of our students.

The momentum in and around the halls at Mercy High School is palpable and we thank you, our alumnae, friends, family, and donors for your continued support of your time, talent and treasure. Without you, we would not be able to live out our mission of providing academic excellence and inspiring young girls to become confident women of Mercy who embody faith, knowledge and compassionate service. Thank you for all that you do and God bless!

Sr. Delores Hannon, RSM  
Mercy High School President

## 2017-2018 Unrestricted General Operating Budget

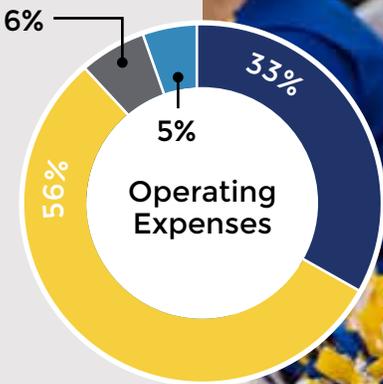
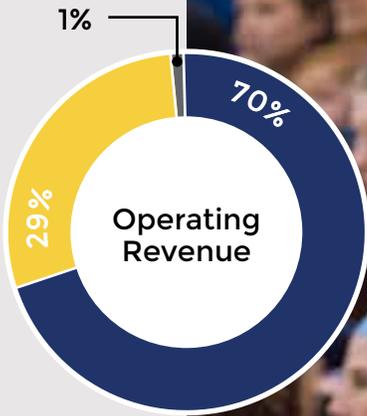
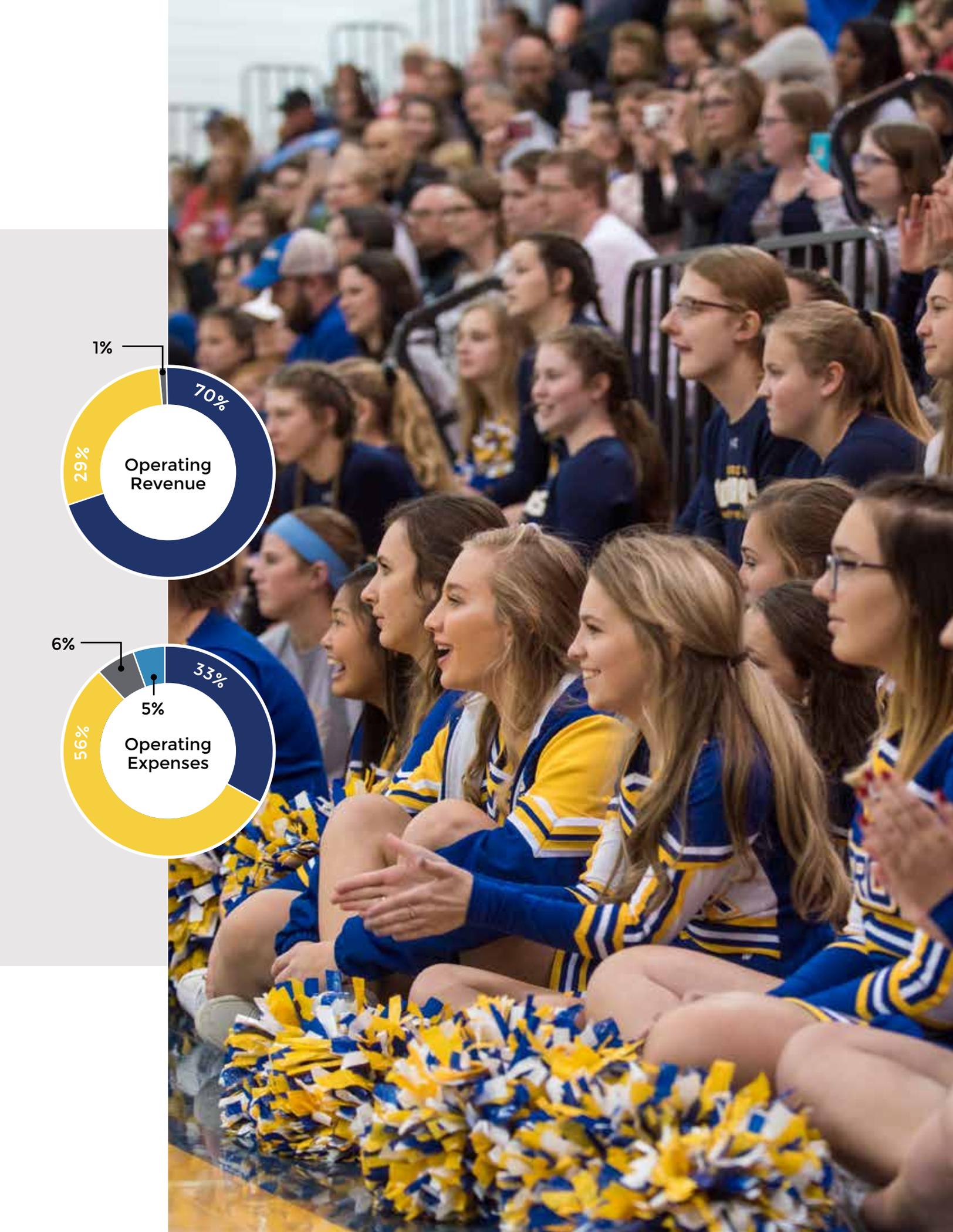
### Operating Revenue

Tuition & Fees	\$3,982,841	70%
Gift & Endowment	\$1,626,955	29%
Other Income	\$40,147	1%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$5,649,943</b>	

### Operating Expenses

Financial Assistance	\$1,839,675	33%
Instructional Program	\$3,098,022	56%
General Administration	\$335,262	6%
Building	\$280,069	5%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,553,028</b>	

**Note: Fiscal Year July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018**



# Year in Review



## Photography:

*Top left to right:* OnToCollege with John Baylor ACT prep, HVAC Systems Replaced  
*Middle left to right:* Class B Girls State Soccer Sportsmanship Award, Counselors Support College Selection  
*Bottom left to right:* Science/STEAM Labs Renovated, Alumnae Network at Newly Inaugurated Sports Gatherings.



Photography:

- Main top:* New Brand Marketing Builds Momentum,
- Top right:* Most Money Raised Ever Mission Week for Cameroon
- Above middle:* McAuley Scholars Program Provides Scholarships to Deserving Students
- Above:* Innovative Technology Like Heart Monitors
- Left:* Kristi Walters Wessling '88 Named Principal

## Thank You for Supporting Mercy

There are many ways to support Mercy High School. Please consider using the enclosed envelope to make a gift to this special place! If you need additional information on supporting Mercy, please contact **Nate Driml** at **402-553-9424** or **drimln@mercyhigh.org**. Thank you for making Mercy possible!

### Ways to Give

- Wills
- Past Parent Annual Fund
- Operating Scholarships
- Stocks
- Alumnae Annual Fund
- Endowed Scholarships
- Matching gifts
- MX-12
- Property
- Memorials
- Trusts/annuities
- FIESTA
- IRAs
- McAuley Scholars Program
- Golf Fest
- Phone-a-thon



### Do You Have a Match?

You may be able to double or even triple the impact of your gift to Mercy High School if you or your spouse works for a matching gift company.

Many corporations match the gifts their employees give to non-profit and charitable organizations in an effort to extend the reach of corporate giving and to encourage employees to be actively involved in supporting their communities.

Please check with your employer's human resources office for details on its matching gift program. Be sure to include your company's matching gift form with your donation.

## Support Mercy High School

<b>Venmo</b>	Mercy is on Venmo and we're accepting donations! Find us at @MercyHighSchoolOmaha to make your annual gift today.
<b>MX-12 Program</b>	Make a monthly gift and join our MX-12 Program. Your regularly scheduled gift ensures our sustainable future. Visit <a href="http://mercyhigh.org/giving">mercyhigh.org/giving</a> to learn more.
<b>Mercy is on Amazon Smile!</b>	With every Amazon purchase, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of your purchase price to Mercy. Begin at <a href="http://smile.amazon.com">smile.amazon.com</a> and then start shopping.
<b>Together a Greater Good (TAGG)</b>	When you TAGG your purchase at any of the participating businesses, a portion of your purchase price will be donated to Mercy. You can support your favorite high school without spending an extra dime! Just download the app and start shopping!

MERCY NEWS

# Golf Raises \$73,000

\$73,000 was raised at Mercy High School's 27th Annual Driving for Excellence Golf Fest on September 10.



The event supports the school's Negotiated Tuition Program, which provides tuition assistance to students based on each family's unique needs and income. More than 82 percent of families benefit from this program and \$1.8 million in financial assistance is distributed annually.

With 184 golfers playing, the tournament featured a four-person scramble with a noon shotgun start. To offset costs for the event, 39 generous sponsors and patrons provided support. J. Skinner Baking Company sponsored the annual golf outing. Other premiere sponsors were Heider Family Foundation, O'Keefe Elevator Company Inc., PI Midwest, and TD Ameritrade.

To see photos from this year's tournament check out <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmsgUTdV>.

Photography:

*Above:* Mercy students help carry golf clubs at the annual Golf Fest.  
*Right:* Many foursomes enjoyed the annual event.



First place finishers in women's, mixed, and men's teams were:

**Women's:**

Emily Gonderinger '09,  
Christine Gonderinger '12,  
Jesse Gonderinger  
Sullivan '05, and Jackie  
Roseland.

**Mixed:**

Patrick Bresnahan, Kathy  
Burnham, Bobby Knowles,  
and Annie Messersmith.

**Men's:**

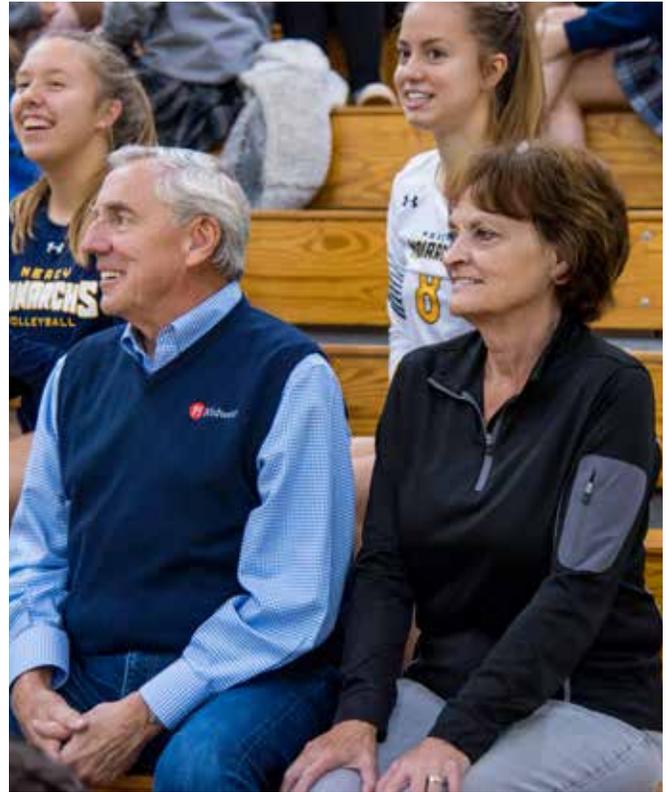
Bob Tatten, Nick Vondrak,  
Bob Gonderinger, and  
Morgan Strattan.

**golf Fest**  
Mercy High School

ALUMNAE NEWS

# Taking Risks, Part of Good's DNA

Larry Good is a risk-taker, a family man, a savvy business executive, a sports enthusiast, a Board Member and a passionate Mercy High School supporter. His entrepreneurial spirit has been the driving force behind a 40-year career that had many interesting twists and turns.



An Omaha native, Larry attended St. Bernard's Catholic School where he was taught by the Sisters of Mercy before heading to Creighton Prep. He graduated in 1969 and went to Creighton University where he received a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in Finance.

Thinking a career in banking was his destiny, he joined Norwest Bank as a credit analyst and commercial loan officer. He was hired by Joe Borghoff, the husband of **Ingrid Kalinowski Borghoff '65** who used to lead Mercy's Alumnae and Advancement activities. It was also at the bank where he met his wife Shirley. They married in 1980 and have two children.

At the same time, Larry knew he needed to change careers. Thanks to mentor Ed Brodkey, he had the courage to move on.

"Ed took me to lunch one day and said I should run my own business. That was quite the revelation for someone that had studied finance all his life and had no managerial experience. He told me not to be afraid of taking risks and to not turn 65 and look back and have regrets," Larry said.

So, he took a leap of faith and bought the Ranch Bowl with Matt Markel in 1976. The business thrived and was a very popular spot in Omaha night life with live music, a restaurant, FM radio station, sand volleyball, national talent booking agency and bowling. Employee turnover and economic challenges, however, were taking their toll.

"Matt and I looked around for some help with our personnel problems and discovered a managerial support system

that helped leaders understand employees' personalities and what jobs they were best suited for in the company. The program was a revelation and I knew immediately that all organizational leaders could be helped by this tool," he added. So, Larry took another leap of faith. Some thought he was a bit crazy, but like always, Shirley stood behind him. "She was a rock for me during that transition! I started the business at a time when our second child was born and Shirley had decided to be a stay-at-home mom. There was a lot of pressure but she was always positive and kept telling me I was doing the right thing!" He bought a Predictive Index System franchise and started PI Midwest, in 1987. He now has 16 employees and offices in nine states and is one of the largest distributors of the

system in the country working with more than 450 businesses.

As time passed, he got a call from Ingrid. After a short conversation, her passion for Mercy convinced him it was a cause they needed to support. "I told Ingrid I really don't volunteer but when I met Sr. Johanna, the president, I was blown away. I was impressed with what a savvy business woman she was. I also liked the mission of the school and felt like it was a little jewel, a quiet secret that more people needed to know about," he said.

A long-time supporter and volunteer for Mercy, he currently serves on the Board of Trustees, previously served on the Board for nine years and has been a member of the school's annual Golf Fest Committee for several years. Good was also recently named Alumnus of the Year at Creighton Prep and is a member of the Council of Regents at Prep, and on the Board at St. Augustine School. Both he and Shirley were recently inducted into the Creighton Prep Athletic Hall of Fame for their support of Prep's Legion Baseball program.

He also is a Mercy Donor of Distinction, the highest level of donation designation at the school, and recently made a gift to purchase all new sports uniforms for the school.

"We have always loved sports. We believe if you dress for success, it helps a team with self-confidence. We noticed the wear and tear on the school's athletic uniforms and thought investing in new



uniforms would help morale as well as performance," Larry said.

The new uniforms include the school's colors and new logo.

"Mercy is a very special place and we are happy to invest in its mission. I believe donors, like us, know that their investments will be put to good use at the school. You can't argue with a mission

where each girl has an opportunity to reach her full potential," he added.

Photography:

*Left main:* Larry Good and his wife Shirley enjoy a Mercy volleyball match.

*Above top:* Larry Good and his wife Shirley pose with members of Mercy's Volleyball Team in their new uniforms.

*Above:* Larry Good with a member of Mercy's Golf Fest Committee, Deb Peterson, at this year's Golf Fest.



ALUMNAE NEWS

## Family Ties

Many people often describe Mercy High School as a family: a community of students, faculty and staff committed to educational excellence. But love of the school is also passed down through generations of family members.

Many of our students are legacies, as their relatives are also graduates. **Emma Weis '19** is a member of such a legacy.

Emma, a senior, is a Student Ambassador, Senior Class Officer, member of Mock Trial, National Honor Society (NHS), Yearbook, Math Club, Baking Club, and the Soccer Team. She was also a Student Council Representative

her freshman year. Her older sister, Lauren, went to Marian, but Emma's parents gave her the choice of Catholic schools to attend. She chose Mercy.

"What I love about Mercy is the sense of community. I came to the school knowing no one and in two weeks I was voted to be a Student Council Representative," Emma said.

Emma's choice was not surprising. Her mom, the **Hon. Francie Riedmann Weis '81**, attended the school as well as four of Emma's aunts. Francie was active in the yearbook and newspaper, and was a member of NHS, Concert Choir, and the Speech Team. She was also Senior Class President and was named Outstanding Senior. Francie is currently a judge on Nebraska's Court of Appeals and helps coach the Mock Trial Team.

Emma's aunt, **Jayne Riedmann Mollner '70** also attended Mercy, where she was a member of Sodality, Student Government and the Mother McAuley Clubs. She recently retired from Blue

Cross Blue Shield where she worked in customer service.

Jayne said traditions are an important part of the school, even though they have changed over time.

“However, when you hear the terms “PA” or “Mercy Day” or “loddies” you immediately recall those good times,” she added. Jayne said, “Mercy lets you be you, and I have kept ties to my classmates over the years. I still have lunch with four of my classmates each month.”

Her daughters, **Katie Mollner Baumker, '94** and **Anne Mollner Stanley, '05**, a Spanish teacher at Mercy, also graduated from the school. Her granddaughter **Jessica**

**Baumker '22** is a freshman this year. She and Emma compared notes before Emma enrolled.

The other Riedmann girls who attended the high school include **Kathleen Riedmann Kemler '78**, **Mary Pat Riedmann Greene '73**, and **Margie Riedmann Sobczyk '67**. Their aunt, **Margie Farrell Nicola '52**, is also a graduate. In addition, Francie married into a family of Women of Mercy. Her mother-in-law **Rita Ostblom Weis SJ '54** and her mother **Mary Caito Ostblom SJ '29**, also attended the school.

In all, more than 12 of Emma's grandmothers, mothers, aunts, cousins, sisters and in-law family members went or are going to Mercy.



“Mercy is a tie that binds us all,” said Francie.

Photography:

*Left main:* Back row left to right is Jayne and Mary Pat. Front row left to right is Margie, Francine and Kathleen.

*Above:* Senior Emma Weis.

## Spirit Week Fun



From western wear, to togas, to Rosie the Riveter, to beach attire, to class dances, Nocturne, and over 9,000 cans of food for Operation Others, Mercy students had a fun-filled Spirit Week!



ALUMNAE NEWS

# A Long Way from Home

She sometimes has to pinch herself when she thinks about her career and how far it is, literally and figuratively, from Omaha, Nebraska.

**Christine Hladik '98** is an Assistant Professor of Geography at Georgia Southern University. Not only does she teach on a university level, but she has become an expert on research in the coastal wetlands. She is grateful for her days at Mercy for giving her confidence, a love of teaching, and the knowledge that she can accomplish anything she sets her mind to doing.

Ironically the decision to attend Mercy was not entirely hers. Her mother, **Margaret Stewart Hladik '66**, her aunts and her sister **Jennifer S. Hladik '96** were Mercy graduates. Attending Mercy was a “family tradition.”

During her high school years, Christine was a cheerleader, a member of National Honor Society, voted on to the May Court, and Student Ambassador.

“There was a real sense of community at Mercy. Students were empowered to speak up and we gained a great deal of confidence from that. It was also like a family there. I even met my life-long friend **Pamela A. Gerace '98** and we carpooled from the St. Wenceslaus area together almost daily,” she said.

“I try to emulate Mercy teachers in my own teaching. They invest themselves in their students and really take the time to

make you feel that they care about you,” she added.

One of her favorites was Ms. Heather Newville, Biology. “She had a wonderful rapport with students. She knew her stuff, but she also made the class interesting and fun,” she said.

She also fondly recalls the interest and care displayed by Mrs. Julie Vankat and **Mrs. Kristi Walters Wessling '88**.

“Sr. Jeanne O'Rourke was also so kind, and it was easy to talk with her,” she added.

After graduation from Mercy, Christine decided to pursue her love of science and thought she would major in biology.

“I found that the Environmental Science degree at Creighton University was more comprehensive than biology alone,” she said.

She earned her Environmental Science undergraduate degree in 2002. She received a Clare Booth Luce Fellowship to obtain her Master's in Atmospheric and Environmental Science at Creighton in 2004. As part of that program, her Master's advisor brought her to southeastern U.S. estuaries to monitor water quality using remote sensing techniques. That led to her first job at Florida A&M University as a geospatial analyst making maps of coastal environments.

At the same time, she started looking for doctoral programs and found one at the University of Georgia.



Christine earned her Ph.D. in 2012 and accepted her current faculty position at Georgia Southern University in 2013. She loves teaching Remote Sensing and Introduction to Geographic Information Systems, and especially enjoys involving students in her research, using the the learning by doing model. Her current research still includes the remote sensing and mapping of marsh plants, as well as predictions of future habitat distributions with sea level rise and climate change.

“I have been extremely fortunate how one research project and/or relationship, has opened the door to another throughout my career. I would never have thought growing up in Omaha that I would have been doing this as my life's work,” she said.

Photography:

*Above:* Christine Hladik '98 does research in coastal wetlands.

## MERCY NEWS

# Mercy Student and Mom Write Book

Many children have experienced the fear of the dark, imagined monsters under the bed, and had thoughts of boogie men.

For Robyn Rimington and her husband Doug, those imaginings became a pervasive family problem when her daughter Emily would not go to sleep at night because she was afraid of the dark. The only solution was to lie down with her until she fell asleep. The disruption to the household was almost unbearable until Robyn, a psychology major from Creighton, came up with a creative solution. She told her daughter they should start meeting on the moon in their dreams to play. It worked, and Emily began sleeping through the night.

Several months passed and Emily's grandfather grew ill and passed away. Emily saw that her mother was very sad, so she suggested her mom invite grandpa to the moon with them. Robyn agreed, and she dreamed of dancing with her father on the moon that very night. It helped her cope with the loss.

"My mom and I decided why not turn our experiences, which I know many other families have had to deal with, into a creative

work of art and write a children's book," Emily said.

Emily, a freshman at Mercy, has always loved to write. She would craft short stories and even won local poetry and essay contests.

The duo began the labor of love in 2015. It took about a year to complete the manuscript. They worked with Mascot Books to publish the book. Emily even chose the illustrator who was an artist from Italy.

"We had three goals in mind when we began this project. We wanted to do something as a mother and daughter, we wanted to publish a children's book and we wanted to help others. The journey was an amazing, creative and bonding experience for us both," said Robyn.

Although they haven't focused a great deal of attention on marketing the book, *Meet Me on the Moon*, is available on amazon.com and at Barnes and Noble. They are working on plans to let more people know about it.



"We hope that this book can help other children and their parents. It is an innocent, story-telling approach with whimsical illustrations that families can read and enjoy together," said Robyn.

The mother/daughter team is not finished. Even though Emily is a busy Mercy freshman who plays piano, sings with the Mercy High Singers and Show Choir and performed in *Alice In Wonderland*, she wants to make time to write more.

"We hope to do a series of educational children's books on famous people. We are gathering input and right now Albert Einstein is leading the suggestions," Emily added.

Photography:

*Above top:* Emily and Robyn Rimington pictured with the book they wrote.



MERCY NEWS

# Guidance Counselors Make Fast Start

Two new guidance counselors join the Mercy faculty this year and have been busy supporting seniors in their quest for college.

Here is just a short list of activities undertaken by **Josah Driml Powers '98** and Laura Powers.

- College Planning Night in the fall for the seniors and their parents. A junior night is planned for February.
- Financial Aid Night presented by EducationQuest for seniors and their parents
- From August - October Mercy hosted over 30 individual colleges and college representatives to meet with any interested juniors and seniors; the school will have hosted nearly 40 before the end of November
- At the Catholic College Fair, 18 different colleges were represented
- More than 20 seniors participated in Apply2College
- During Day of Discovery, 23 students toured both Creighton and UNO for campus visits
- All students participated in test preparations and/or college exploration workshops for six weeks throughout September/October
- Freshmen – OnTo College with John Baylor Aspire for Early High School Prep
- Sophomores – OnTo College with John Baylor ACT Fundamentals
- Juniors – PSAT prep in fall; five live ACT prep sessions in spring
- Seniors – ACT prep or
  - Personal statements
  - Resumes with Naviance
  - Naviance for College/Career Search
  - Personal statement review
  - Scholarship opportunities/ Financial Aid and College Application assistance
- *College Planning News*, a new electronic publication, is sent out to seniors and their families weekly
- *College Planning News* for juniors is sent out monthly
- Promotion of various college fairs to attend in Omaha
- Scholarship database available to students/families via *The Flutter* and on Mercy's website. The database is updated on an on-going basis
- Introducing students to how to navigate Naviance starting with the freshmen class
- In the spring, there will be a series conducted for sophomores about leadership, personal growth, and basic career exploration. The counselors will also be working with the seniors on "life skills" lessons
- Reestablishing Mercy's presence and meeting with other Metro Catholic Counselors
- Introduction of career exploration resources (happening in spring)

Photography:

*Above:* Guidance Counselor Laura Powers helps Senior Makayla Townsend with college planning.

## MERCY NEWS

# Fall Sports Recap

## Softball

Softball finished with a record of 7-19 on the season. The softball team, made up of 19 girls, was led by three seniors, Haley Gann, Emilee Baker, and Mary Winkelmann. Junior Amanda Placzek led the team in batting average, hits, runs, doubles, and homeruns during the season and as a result was voted first team All-Conference by River Cities Conference coaches. Haley Gann received All-Conference Honorable Mention.

## Golf

Golf saw 12 Mercy girls compete for the Mercy-Ralston Golf Cooperative this season. Grace Gonka, Clare Gonka, Lilee Surdell-Eichten, and Rachel Weberg represented the team at Districts. In August through all the rain, the Golf Team won the Lincoln Invitational with the team consisting of Grace Gonka, Clare Gonka, Lilee Surdell-Eichten, and Clara Jones. The golf team also had multiple top three finishes in other tournaments.

## Cross Country

Cross Country had 30 members who ran for Coach Austin and Coach Beran this fall. In the conference meet, every single Mercy runner set a season and personal best. The Varsity team came up short in their bid for a state berth, but the team of Kate Tietjen, Marissa Vargas, Simone Willson, Anou Akot, Faustina Szalewski, and Cecilia Martinez competed fiercely.

## Volleyball

Volleyball had 33 girls compete on three levels this year. The freshman team won the Conestoga Invitational and had multiple players get called up to Junior Varsity (JV). The Varsity Volleyball Team finished the regular season with a record of 11-17. Mercy was led by five seniors: Aubrey Cervantes, Emily Erlbacher, Maureen Goetz, Emma Nebel, and Catie Tangeman. Early in the season, the team won the Omaha North Volleyball Tournament and gained entry into the top 10 in Class B. The team captured a tournament title in their home tournament at the end of September by beating South Sioux City, Omaha Bryan, and Schuyler. Mercy lost its final match of the season to Gross 1-3 in Sub-District play.



# Announcements

## Alumna Joins Mercy's Advancement Team



**Rosalind O. (Roz) Parr '09** was named Mercy High School's new Alumnae and Annual Gifts Officer effective August 1. The Mercy graduate is responsible for alumnae engagement and the annual giving program reporting to Nate Driml, Vice President for Advancement.

Parr most recently served as Creighton University's Assistant Director of Annual Giving and was responsible for Creighton's recent alumni and student giving program before that. Her background also includes skills in web development and advertising.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, Public Relations and News from Creighton as well as a Master's in English Literature and Composition.

The active volunteer is the past president of the school's Alumnae Council, a Board member and Secretary of the Omaha Chamber Music Society, and Webmaster for Holy Cross Catholic Church.

**Katy Butts '03**, former Alumnae Relations Director and Events Manager is now Director of Events.

## Creighton Road Trip



On October 9th, Mercy went on a "road trip" to visit with our alumnae, parents, and friends at Creighton University. Thanks to those who joined us for coffee and conversation. If there are multiple Monarchs at your workplace, let Roz Parr at [parr@mercyhigh.org](mailto:parr@mercyhigh.org) know. We'd love to take another road trip to visit you!

## Classes of '60-'69 Gather



On November 6th, 35 alumnae who graduated from 1960 to 1969 gathered for lunch at La Casa Pizzeria. **Principal Kristi Walters Wessling '88** provided an overview of this school year and answered questions about all things Mercy.

## Memorial Mass

On November 4th, Mercy High School celebrated its annual Memorial Mass to remember those whose names are listed on our Memorial Wall in the

Our Lady of Mercy Chapel. Nearly 300 members of the Mercy community joined us for Mass and a social hour.

## Volleyball Alumnae Event



Alumnae gathered together on October 19 to network and watch the Monarchs take on Ralston. Pictured here **Principal Kristi Walters Wessling '88** talks with some of the alumnae at the event.

## 50th Anniversary of the Class of 1968



Gathering together for prayer and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Class of 1968 were alumnae at the annual Golden Guild Tea.

*Pictured left to right: Bernadette Smith, Colleen Rukas Bentley, Mary Ervin Wolcott-Breci, Judith Czarnek, and Hughleen Thorsen of the class of '68.*

## 175 Tweets to Support Mercy Principles

Mercy's Student Council took to Twitter to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Sisters of Mercy arriving in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and establishing the Mercy community in the United States. Globally, Mercy groups are taking action to support two of the principles set forth in the Sisters' Chapter 2017 Recommitment: growing in our personal practice of nonviolence and strengthening our relationships. Beginning on Monday, September 10th, Student Council representatives from all classes started tweeting for 175 days about these principles. Using the hashtag #OMercy175, topics included quotes, challenges, favorite Mercy reflections, alumnae advice, safety tips, and student-teacher relationships. Mercy students, families, alumnae, and friends were encouraged to follow and share these efforts.

## Stec Named Semifinalist by National Merit



Mercy High School senior Hanna Stec has been named a Semifinalist in the 2019 National Merit Scholarship Program.

Stec is a member of National Honor Society, Show Choir, Mercy High Singers, and the Thespian Board at school, as well as serving as a representative on the

state board. She played the Red Queen in the fall production of *Alice in Wonderland* and has had major roles in *1776 the Musical*, *Girls of the Garden Club*, *Macbeth* and *Wizard of Oz*. She also played club softball during her early years of high school and has received numerous academic and performing arts awards. Her favorite subjects are Math and Calculus, and she plans to major in aerospace engineering.

A member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, she is thrilled by this honor and is hopeful that it will help her stand out as she pursues college and her career dreams.

"We are so proud of Hanna! In addition to being extremely bright, Hanna has shared her gifts and talents with us all through her creative outlet of theatre and music," said **Kristi Walters Wessling '88**, Principal, Mercy High School.

More than 1.6 million junior students in 22,000 high schools entered the National Merit competition by taking the PSAT. Stec was among the 16,000 students that earned the semifinalist title.

## Day of Discovery Features Learning Opportunity



Mercy High School has many traditions from Mercy Day to May Crowning. One of its more unique traditions is Day of Discovery, which began about 20 years ago. On October 15, the day designed by Student Council and made possible by faculty, features activities and trips that leverage opportunities for students to learn outside of the traditional classroom setting.

The list of activities included experiences such as exploring the culinary treasures of the Old Market, traveling to Oklahoma City to experience the memorial dedicated to the lives lost in the domestic terrorist bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in 1995, visiting local farming and cheese operations, discovering Fontanelle Forest, and meeting with artists and theatre professionals.

Day of Discovery is not merely recreational; all trips have a clear learning objective.

## Food Sale

Students sold \$51,573 in frozen food to benefit the Negotiated Tuition Program this year. Annually Mercy provides \$1.8 million in tuition assistance to families to attend the school.

The ability to purchase food online was a new feature added. More than 34 percent of buyers used the new feature.

ALUMNAE ITEMS

(PHOTOS PRECEDE ARTICLE)

1950s

Dr. K. Bridget Brosnihan Simmons '59 is professor emeritus at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine and has been conducting research in the school since 1992. Prior to that, she served in a similar capacity at the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio. Her focus is now on writing manuscripts and directing a core facility specifically in the area of hypertension.

1960s



Pictured left to right: front row Judith Czarnek, Cathy Katzenberger, Carol Novotny Heng, and Joanne Blubangh McDonald. L. to R. 2nd row Kathleen Hoarty Kurowski, Debb Hastings Rezac, Mary Ervin Wolcott-Breci, Susan Bertagni Trigg, and Mary Kirby Denney. L. to R. 3rd row Hughleen Thorsen, Priscilla Connelly Quinn, Sherry Mead, Pamela Antony Luger, and Nancy Bisbee Beaver.

Mercy High's Class of 1968 celebrated all things Mercy and received their Golden Guild pins during their 50th Reunion celebration at Lo Sole Mio this past summer. The class also gathered at the LongHorn Steakhouse in Omaha to celebrate Mercy Day and enjoyed great food, conversation, fun and laughter.

1970s

Carolyn Andreasen Taylor '71 retired from Holy Cross Catholic School after teaching over 40 years.

Joanne Stewart '72 retired from the Omaha World-Herald as

assistant editor after 44 years of service. In her spare time, she volunteers as Mercy High School researching archival information as well as traveling, baking, biking, and spending time with family. Five of her sisters also graduated from Mercy, Margaret Stewart Hladik '66, Elizabeth Stewart Banset '68, Dianne Stewart Towey '75, Barbara Stewart Bidroski '78, and Susan Stewart Jacobs-Hagen '79. Joanne also is the aunt of Jennifer Hladik '96 and Christine Hladik '98.



Ann Franco Laughlin, Ph.D., RN '72 is a professor at Creighton University's College of Nursing. She

has taught all levels of students from undergraduate to graduate and has also supervised students in various clinical areas from a nursing home setting to a hospital setting. She was also recently inducted as a 2018 Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, see the story at <https://bit.ly/2KsMAvL>.

Dr. Cynthia Russell, '76 is an associate professor at the Creighton University School of Dentistry and has taught in the D1 dental anatomy lab for over 30 years. She is an instructor on the clinic floor specializing in Diagnostic Sciences and Assessment within the D3 and D4 classes and is a mentor for the freshman table clinics. Along with her professional duties, she provides service to Project Homeless and Give Kids a Smile, which both reflect the missions of Creighton University and Mercy High School.

1980s

Therese Kripal Kramer '80 retired after 34 years of teaching both 2nd and 5th grade at Montclair Elementary in the Millard School District. She plans to substitute teach whenever she can.



Jeni Jaworski Martinez '88 was recently appointed Director of the Loyola Scholars Program at Creighton

Preparatory High School. Prior to this role, she was a bilingual family support worker for the Nebraska Children's Home, served as the Director of the Bilingual Religious Ed Program at Holy Name Parish, and later was the Latino Outreach and Family Liaison Coordinator for the parish.



1990s

Kayla Thomas Haire '93 is a Media and Communications Specialist for the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) and Nebraska Medicine. She earned her degree in communications from Loyola University in Chicago in 1997 and worked in television news both as a reporter and producer in Rockford, Illinois, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Jackson, Mississippi. Kayla later returned to Omaha and spent 15 years at KMTV, most recently completing eight years as the executive producer of "The Morning Blend" talk show.

The son of Tamara Kavaliauskas-Schram '93 became a Marine in Oct 2017. Her oldest daughter is currently in graduate school at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Jessica Cannon Rempe '96 and her family received The Spirit of St. Columbkille Award for exemplifying a model of service towards others. Three years ago, her family started

“The Secret Kindness Agents” at St. Columbkille School as a family service group. They regularly meet with families to develop ideas, participate in random acts of kindness in their community, and currently have over 350 “Kindness Agents.”



**Leanne Prewitt '97** Mercy Board member and Creative Director of Ervin & Smith has been named one of the Ten Outstanding

Young Omahans (TOYO) by the Omaha Jaycees. This recognition honors individuals between the ages of 21 and 40 who show exemplary commitment to improving the Omaha community through selfless acts of kindness while excelling in their professional careers.



**The Class of 1998** met recently in Omaha to celebrate.

**Amanda Peterson Baker '98** is a partner at Kinetic Valuation Group—formerly Lea & Company—since November 2011. Her principal practice areas include low-income housing tax credits (LIHTCs), USDA, Section 8, and conventional developments. Additionally, she specializes in U.S. Department (HUD) Rent Comparability Studies, HUD Multifamily Accelerated Processing (MAP) program as well as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac valuation services. Amanda holds an MAI designation from the Appraisal Institute and is a Certified General Real Estate Appraiser in Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, Arizona, California, Washington, and Nevada.

## 2000s



**Emily Dietzschold Jacobs '03** recently became the Library Media Coach and Technology Integration Specialist at Lincoln Public

Schools. She previously worked at Lincoln Southeast High School as a Social Studies teacher, then at Pyrtle Elementary as a school librarian. Her experiences in both levels provided a balanced view of the needs of children in K-12 schools. Emily supports the 60 librarians in Lincoln Public Schools through individual coaching and professional development, and she maintains each school library's website.

**Ellie Cusic '06** is an associate professor of occupational therapy at the College of St. Mary's in Omaha. She received her occupational therapy degree (O.T.D.) from Creighton University.

**Theresa Cusic '08** is an attorney with Legal Aid of Nebraska where she and her colleagues provide quality legal assistance in representing parents and children in abuse/neglect, delinquency, and status offense cases filed in the Juvenile Court of Lancaster County, Nebraska.

## 2010s

**Tiffany Anzalone '11** is a Human Resource Specialist working for the City of Omaha.



**Felicia Ariza '14** placed third at NATS (the National Association for Teachers of Singing) competition. During the competition, she sang three pieces in the

classical genre: one Italian aria, one English art song, and one German art song. For the finals, she performed the German piece, *Verborgenheit*, by Wolf.

**Amber Johnson '14** was awarded a prestigious Chinese Government Scholarship to study abroad at Qingdao University in Qingdao, China. This scholarship enables her to further engage actively with the global community, and by receiving this national award, she advances one of the fundamental goals of College of Public Affairs and Community Service and the University of Nebraska Omaha as she prepares for global citizenship and leadership.

**Kaleena Rains '14** recently earned her Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology from the University of Nebraska Omaha. Last summer, Rains interned at Merck Health and was recently offered a full-time position there working in research and development as a scientist developing vaccines, specifically biologics, for companion animals such as dogs and cats. She works with a team that develops monoclonal antibodies which are often used to treat cancers, autoimmune diseases, allergies, and many other things in humans and animals.



*Sara Ruff '15 left attends event with friends.*

**Sarah Ruff '15** is currently studying Journalism/Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and hopes to work on a newspaper writing about politics upon graduation. She suffers from epilepsy and she and her family are currently raising money for a service dog to help her keep safe and cope with the challenges posed by the disease. Her younger sister, Therese Ruff, is a senior at Mercy.

ALUMNAE ITEMS

(PHOTOS PRECEDE ARTICLE)

**Weddings/Anniversaries**

**Debb Haftings Rezac '68** and her husband Michael recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.



**Sheila Mullen Juricek '07** married Shawn Juricek on September 2, 2018.



**Stephanie Nelson Eberly '09** married Evan Eberly on May 12, 2018 at Holy Cross Church in Omaha, Nebraska. Stephanie and Evan are currently living in Nashville, Tennessee where she is the Business Manager at the Center for Women's Health at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

**Megan O'Hara '09** married Mike Hayes on August 25, 2018.

**Kesandra Jaime Tyler '10** married Kyle Tyler on August 18, 2018.

**Elizabeth Meisinger Smith '10** married Brent Smith on August 4, 2018.

**Emily Wessling Leahy '10** married Patrick Leahy on September 22, 2018 in Omaha at St. James Catholic Church.

**Madison Hoge Roman '11** married Jacob Roman on September 8, 2018



**Abigail Rider Kemp '13** married Jeremy Kemp on June 2, 2018.

**Births**



**Megan Siebrandt '04** and Christopher Morris welcomed Dejah Rose Morris on September 6, 2018.



**Elizabeth Slater Perez '06** and her husband Derek welcomed their second daughter, Aliyah Joan, into their family on September 7, 2018.

**Emily Gentleman Crowe '06** and her husband Brody welcomed Maximilian William into their family on April 18, 2018.

**Abbey Engstrom Jackson '06** and her husband Anthony Jackson welcomed Charles Anthony on November 2, 2018.

**Erica Sampson Ketter '09** and her husband Jared welcomed their son Sampson on May 23, 2018.

**Michelle Blanker Keebler '10** and her husband Ryan welcomed a son, Dean Edward, on March 2, 2018. Keebler graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in art history.



**Annette Gulgowski-Moulton Stillinger '13** and her husband welcomed their son Lucas into their family this past July 12, 2018 in the RAF Lakenheath Hospital in England.

## **In Memoriam**

We extend sympathy to the families and friends of those alumnae whose deaths were communicated to the Advancement Office from July 1, 2018-October 31, 2018. We try to make this list as accurate as possible. **Please inform Naomi Chambers at [chambersn@mercyhigh.org](mailto:chambersn@mercyhigh.org) if anyone was missed.**

*Sr. Margaret Mary Sutton, RSM SJ '36*  
*Carmella Giordano SJ '43*  
*Maryann Schneiderwind Morris SM '45*  
*Sr. Marian T. Camel, RSM SM '47*  
*Josephine S. Russo SJ '48*  
*Mary Jane Torrey Wachter SM '48*  
*Delores Skudlarek Kirchofer SJ '49*  
*Sally Calvert McAvin SJ '49*  
*Jeanne Tucker Burns SM '50*  
*Catherine Forman McLaughlin SM '50*  
*Maureen Doran Kees SM '52*  
*Marian Traynor Maschka SM '52*  
*Winifred McCafferty Sage SM '52*  
*Betty Hanson Stevens SM '52*  
*Carol Ann Cooney Pitzer SM '53*  
*Arlene Schram Staab SJ '54*  
*Joyce Watson Vondrasek SM '54*  
*Jean Ward Nekola SM '55*  
*Patricia Esser Scherrman SM '55*  
*Kathryn Keating Spring '58*  
*Gloria Perry Dubas '59*  
*Judith Enis Hall '61*  
*Sr. Kathleen O'Brien, RSM '62*  
*Jane Stultz McKernan '63*  
*Mary Grace Herek '65*  
*Mary E. Langenegger '68*  
*Patricia Variano Burson '72*  
*Kristine Smith Littrell '74*  
*Michelle Bruccini Nique '74*  
*Theresa "Teri" Giblin '75*

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Photography:

*Right:* One of the stained glass windows in the school's chapel.

