

# the Mercian

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## FIESTA 2016



# FIESTA 2016: A Home Run

This year's FIESTA was certainly in a "league of its own." The night featured a sports theme and the nostalgic feel of the 1992 women's baseball film, *A League of Their Own*. The film is about women assuming leadership roles and developing despite obstacles in their way and was the theme chosen because of the message of courage, fortitude and determination--much like the mission of Mercy High School. The event garnered more than 525 attendees. Many wore their favorite sport team's colors and apparel and centerpieces featured baseballs, popcorn, and Mercy pennants.

The school's annual fundraiser raised more than \$288,000 to support the Negotiated Tuition Program, an individualized tuition plan for each student tailored to the student's family's financial ability.

It also was a night of firsts. It was the first time Mercy used bidding via Bidpal on smartphones and personal devices, the first time at a new venue, Embassy Suites, La Vista Convention Center, and the first time for external audiences to see Mercy's new brand video, *Full Steam Ahead*. But what really made the night a home run was the energy and excitement in the ballroom where bidding occurred, the animated conversations between alumnae, family, and friends, and the spirit and commitment of the hundreds of volunteers that made the night successful.

FIESTA Chairs Mary Lou and Pat Parr's game plan included parent volunteers orchestrating all event details and Mercy High School students greeting participants, helping with smartphone bidding, selling gift boxes, and delivering acquired auction items to participants. Local businesses and individual supporters underwrote costs, sponsored tables, and purchased catalog advertising.



FIESTA centerpieces reflected the theme of *A League of Their Own*.



Parent volunteers register FIESTA attendees.

## Did You Know

- Students raised more than \$14,000 during Mission Week to support education in Zambia, the highest total ever.
- Mercy students received state recognition in the arts, musical contests, sports, and theatre competitions.
- 20 Mercy students made it to the state finals in the History Day competition.
- The speech team consistently received superior and excellent ratings in their rounds this year.
- The spring play is *Stage Door* and will be April 15-17 at 7 p.m. in Franey Hall.
- Mercy freshman, Elyse Schweikert was chosen as one of 40 participants, from over 205 applicants, to attend UNO's "CodeCrush," an information technology immersion program for 8th and 9th grade girls.
- More than \$62,000 in placement scholarships was awarded to 22 eighth graders.
- 23 percent of our current seniors self-selected to be Eucharistic Ministers.

### Cover photos:

Top row, L. to R.: Mercy students Emma Weis and Kate Tietjen help Dr. Richard (Rich) Cupich, father of Leah Cupich '07 make a bid on his smartphone. Sisters Jessica Brannen Ryan '04 and Rachel Brannen '10 enjoy FIESTA. Bottom row, L. to R.: Pete Heim and Rebecca (Becky) Heim Waszgis '88 buy auction boxes from Clair Wulff-Morgan and Katherine Wurtz. Mercy students served as greeters at FIESTA.

# From Mercy to the White House

She has one of the most unusual jobs in the world and the opportunity to hobnob with some of the world's most influential leaders. Katie Bradley Waldo '03 serves as senior associate director and trip manager in the White House Office of Scheduling an Advance. During this interview, she was planning President Obama's historic trip to Cuba, the first visit from a sitting president since 1928. Yet she credits Mercy High School with being her guiding force, her North Star.

Katie may have been a shy and quiet kid in grade school, but at Mercy she says, "I learned to fly." She met young women who challenged her and remain some of her closest friends today. She remembers delivering turkeys for Operation Others, learning to lead as president of Student Council, translating "Kung Fu Fighting" into Spanish for Foreign Language Day, performing in *Godspell* and *Clue: The Musical*, serving dinner at a local shelter with Sr. Jeanne O'Rourke, RSM, competing in speech tournaments all over Nebraska, portraying Mother Catherine McAuley on Mercy Day, and traveling to the Pine Ridge Reservation, which was a powerful service learning trip for her.

"During my first visit to Mercy, I was impressed by the focus on service to others. I learned about 'Day of Sharing' and the various volunteer opportunities offered. It felt like service was a part of the overall curriculum, not just an after-school activity," she said.

Social justice became an important calling at Creighton University, where she graduated with a journalism major and a minor in justice and peace studies in 2007. Capping her college career, she studied in the Dominican Republic during her final semester. She also became interested in the presidential campaign of Barack Obama and joined it in the summer of 2007.

During this time she worked in operations in several states and escorted senior staff on Inauguration Day from the Capitol to the White House. She has had several jobs at the White House, starting at the bottom and working her way up. She spent five years in the White House Photo Office and helped to select unique behind-the-scenes photos of the presidency to share with the world.

In her current position, she coordinates everything from summits around the world to the impromptu presidential visits to the local Chipotle down the street. She has seen the Northern Lights from Air Force One, toured

Stonehenge, the Panama Canal and marched with the First Family in Selma, Alabama. And recently she did an advance trip for President Obama when he visited Omaha.

"When I came back to Omaha I was impressed to see some of my classmates back as staff and faculty at Mercy. This is a true testament to how graduates feel about their time spent between Pine and Woolworth," she said.

Katie may have traveled all over the world, but she knows her foundation came from Mercy.

"Simply put—Mercy gives young women the wings they need to make their dreams possible," Katie said.



Katie Bradley Waldo '03 visited with Mercy students during her advance trip for President Obama's visit to Omaha.

## Applying Mercy Lessons Every Day

"The Sisters of Mercy instilled in me a sense of social justice and desire for equality. I bring a bit of Mercy to my work every day," said Shannon McClure '95, Director of Research at the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce.

In her role, she provides data and analysis for businesses in a nine-county area. She also helps to recruit businesses from outside the market to choose Greater Omaha as a location to do business or to move headquarters.

"I want Omaha to be a great place to live for all people, not just some people. The research and analysis can help the Chamber be more selective in what businesses we recruit to the region, making sure that we create job and wage growth that provides the opportunity of economic prosperity for all," she added.

It's not surprising that this graduate is applying her Mercy education both professionally and personally.

She attended a lock-in as an 8th grader and from that night on she was hooked on the school. While at Mercy, she participated in anything involved with music, from choral ensembles to school musicals. She was in several clubs, a member of the National Honor Society, and a Eucharistic Minister.

She recalls fondly the impact teachers had on her formation as a person, her life's journey, and compassion for others.

"Two years of English classes with Ms. Sherri Hoffman (now Mrs. Sherri Hoye) instilled in me a great love of Willa Cather, Thoreau, and Whitman and the ability never to end sentences with a preposition. Any 90's girls remember the preposition song?" she asked.

However, her love of the arts and especially music led to her degree at the University of Tulsa studying voice and the violin. After graduation she went into arts administration

and spent fifteen years in marketing for opera companies in cities throughout the country, including Washington, D.C., Santa Fe, New Mexico, Columbus and Dayton, Ohio, and Atlanta, Georgia. She also earned an MBA from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and moved back to Omaha in 2014.

"My Mercy drama and speech teacher, Hersh Rodasky, not only taught me about the basics of theatre but also about being part of a team, working incrementally toward a big goal and about expecting more of myself than I ever thought I could do. My music teacher Roy Stubbs showed me so much support and encouragement and always did his best to help me learn," she said.

She puts her skills and talents to use in the community by serving as a volunteer with Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Nebraska Community Blood Bank, as a marketing advisor for Opera Omaha, and a grant reviewer for the Nebraska Arts Council.

Her volunteerism also extends to Mercy. In 2015 she taught a short voice master class to help students preparing for competition. She has also provided insight and research in community engagement to the Advancement team.

"Alumnae may not have the financial resources to donate back to Mercy, but they can give back their gifts and talents to the school and support its mission," she said.

Shannon McClure '95 pictured left visiting the Baggott Street location in Dublin, Ireland.



## Year-End Appeal Tops \$100,000

This year's end-of-the-year challenge focused on Mercy's 60th anniversary celebration and raised more than \$100,000 for tuition assistance—a banner year in the school's history and 40% over the total from last year. We want to thank everyone who participated.

Recipients took a trip down memory lane in the appeal, which featured historic and current photos of students and a challenge to donors to raise their donations in multiples of 60.

Some highlights of the appeal's success include:

- 81% of our donors gave more than last year
- 21% stepped up and gave \$60
- 332 individual donations were given.

The appeal letter also reminded readers of the success of Mercy Women around the world and their many

professions from mothers, to business leaders, health care workers, entrepreneurs, scientists, attorneys and more.

During the last month of the challenge, a generous donor also offered a matching gift of \$20,000 to incentivize additional donations.

### Free Money for Mercy

- Many companies will match your donations to Mercy.
- Last year, over \$39,000 of your donations were eligible to be matched.
- Only \$18,000 of these match requests were actually submitted.
- The match doesn't happen unless you request it.
- Call Jim Pogge at 402.553.9424 with any questions on the process.

## Faith, Service Outside the Classroom

“We want Mercy Girls to develop into Women of Mercy. We strive to help them understand that they are part of the global community and have the power to positively impact it,” said Ashley Shrader Miller ’04, Campus Ministry Director, who has been at the school for seven years.

Mercy prides itself on teaching its students the meaning of community and a compassionate view of life. For years the campus ministry director has managed faith-based and service related activities for the school that range from Mass, retreats, prayer services, visiting the Sisters of Mercy Villa, service projects for Omaha organizations and immersion trips. She also documents students’ service hours. Last year students provided more than 12,000 hours of service.

“We receive hundreds of requests from Omaha organizations to have Mercy students provide service assistance. These groups want our Mercy Girls because they know they will get quality volunteers who know the importance of giving to others,” she said.

Ashley is supported by Pastoral Council, a student club that helps to plan Masses and prayer services. Student Council also holds an annual Poverty Awareness and Mission Week to raise funds to support educational activities chosen by Sisters of Mercy sponsored schools throughout the country.

This spring is especially busy with events. The freshmen and sophomore retreats were in February and seniors helped plan these retreats. A newer tradition that takes place during the freshmen retreat includes the selection of a class saint to serve as an exemplar for the class throughout their four years at Mercy. Junior and senior retreats were in the fall. The retreats are centered around the themes of welcoming, love and friendship within relationships, loving, service, and being a Mercy-full woman.

Kairos is a unique retreat offered to Mercy students and not available at any other Omaha area Catholic High School. This offsite event, which loosely translated means “God’s time,” is based on Saint Ignatius teaching and includes a four-day experience where students “focus on their personal understanding of faith.”

Also taking place during spring break was this year’s service immersion trip to the Dominican Republic. Twelve students spent March 5-13 living with and learning from the campesinos in the rural areas.



During Catholic Schools Week alumnae spoke to students. L. to R.: Claudia W. Brock ’12, Amy Roseland McClellan ’91, and Louise Battaglia Franco, SM ’50.



Show Choir received many awards including a Gold Trophy at the Nebraska Choral Directors Show Choir Competition.



# Alumnae News (Available pictures follow the items)

## 1950s

**Barbara Konon SM '53** turned 80 recently. She is retired and volunteers at the library as an English teacher. She is grateful for her Mercy education, and she remembers Sister Daniel's literature class discussing Europe and how she told the girls they should travel the world. Barbara did travel to Europe, Asia and the Americas. She provided the picture with her family below.



The **FIRST** Mercy High School graduation class—the **Class of '56**—will be celebrating their 60th Reunion this summer. Classmates will gather for a Girls' Night Out on Sunday, September 11, 2016, at Cascio's Steakhouse. The gathering will be from 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. For questions please call Virginia Kuzelka Budka at 402.551.5909 or Donna Bock Duke at 402.346.3572 or 402.672.1888.

The **Class of 1959** meets for dinner once a month and has been doing this for about thirty years. Anyone from the class is welcome to join the fun. Just email **Connie Orsi Crouch** at [conniec59@cox.net](mailto:conniec59@cox.net). Pictured below standing, L to R: Mary Heine Fitzpatrick, Sara Cottone Dietrich, Colleen "Terri" Heenan Eickelman, Vi Hennes Ramaekers, Monica Heck Barry, Sr. Jeanne Ward, RSM, Mary Ann Mayhan Kathol, Connie Orsi Crouch, Ann Gallagher Dunn, and Mary Kearney Jackson. Seated, L. to R.: Marilynn Fryzek Blankman, Mary Alice Buscher McKernan, Georgeann Kriegler Stevens, and Lucille Palermo Mickells.



## 1960's

Caring has always been part of the Mercy tradition and **Susan Smith Morello '64** expressed her care by authoring chapter 14, "Skin and Wound Care for the Bariatric Population" in the new *Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society® Core Curriculum: Wound Management*.

Also sharing her travel stories was **Marilyn Merrill Olivier '67** who spent five days on a houseboat on Lake Powell in Colorado. She and her husband also visited the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas.



## 1970's

**Patricia C. Tolliver '73** wants everyone to know about the joy of pet adoption. She and her husband Dan adopted a five-year-old American Staffordshire Terrier, Puddin, from the Nebraska Humane Society.

Several members of the **class of 1974** gathered in Omaha in September 2015. Pictured seated, L. to R.: Janet Perdue Olechoski, Melinda Smith Brown, Mary F. Lincoln. Standing, L. to R.: Lisa Tosone, Mary Jane Monico Herron, Mimi Fenton, Mary Jo Cumberland Markey. Also attending, but not pictured, Julie Butler Baker.



## 1990's

**Stephanie Cross Cleary '98** had an article published in Nebraskaland Magazine at <http://mag.outdoornebraska.gov/i/604047-nebraskaland-december-2015>.

## 2010's

**Claudia Brock '12** will be moving to New York City in August to spend a year with the Mercy Volunteer Corps., working at the Mercy Center in the South Bronx.



Earning Mid-American Collegiate Athletic Association All-Conference 3rd team honors for women's soccer was **Bridget Blessie '13**. As a forward for Missouri Western she broke three school records this season including the most game-winning goals.



**Abby Culp '13** is studying at the U. S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. She shared she has found the spirit of Mercy at the Academy with classmates who attended Mercy schools elsewhere.

## *In Celebration*

### *Weddings*

**Mary Kraft Bartek '09** wed Nicholas Bartek on May 23, 2015. Four of her five bridesmaids are Mercy graduates. Pictured L. to R., Michaela Kraft '07, Danielle Kraft '16, Mary Kraft Bartek '09, Abby Lingo Hiebner '09, and Jamie Garcia '09.



### *Births*

**Lindsey Martin O'Brien '99** and her husband Patrick announce the birth of Peter Christian on October 19, 2015.



## *In Memoriam*

We extend sympathy to the families and friends of those alumnae who have died between September 1, 2015-February 29, 2016. We try to make this list as accurate as possible. Please inform Naomi Chambers at [chambersn@mercyhigh.org](mailto:chambersn@mercyhigh.org) if we missed anyone.

Virginia Stolinski Dikmen, SJ '39  
 Regina Kimball Schnitker, SJ '39  
 Ruth Spellman Eastman, SJ '41  
 Mary Moore Kirkland, SJ '42  
 Mary Ann Cunningham Filippi, SM '42  
 Mary Ann Moylan Zeman, SM '42  
 Clare "Tupper" O'Hearn Cunningham, SJ '43  
 Betty Villadsen Quinn, SJ '44  
 Jean Sledge Knutson, SM '47  
 Ann Kubat Dethlefs, SJ '48  
 Maxine Tvrdik Hilger, SJ '48  
 Marianne Schweetripp, SJ '48  
 Alice Moser Smisek, SM '49  
 Mary Ann Skalla Castongia, SJ '50  
 Katherine Gilroy Burke, SM '50  
 Patricia Wagner Jones, SM '50  
 Therese Bizal Pavlik, SJ '51  
 Jane Gregg Harwood, SJ '52  
 Mary Miloni Hurst, SJ '53  
 Rita Potter Thramer, SJ '53  
 Mary Ann Mickells Willuhn, SM '53  
 Mary Lou Bosiljevac, SJ '54  
 Rita Smith Carbonell, SM '54  
 Mary Ann Cusick Sklenar, SM '54  
 Margaret Hopkins Macaitis '56  
 Beverly Stahurski White '56  
 Judith L. Krell '57  
 Mary Beth Petersen Coate '59  
 Barbara Coniglio Herold '61  
 Patricia A. Schweiger '64  
 Kathleen R. Cuva '65  
 Jane M. Keller '66  
 Lorry D. Smith '67  
 Olga Marchio Goodbout '69  
 Rosemary Wessling Lubbers '71  
 Akuel M. Majouk '12

Alumnae News is the most read section of *The Mercian*. We want to hear from you. Please share your story with other alumnae.

Contact Deborah Daley at [daleyd@mercyhigh.org](mailto:daleyd@mercyhigh.org) or call her at 402.553.9424

## Mark Your Calendars for these upcoming Alumnae Events

### **Cheers with Your Peers, April 28, 2016**

7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. \$35

Share a wine and painting social with your Mercy friends.  
RSVP to Naomi Chambers at [chambersn@mercyhigh.org](mailto:chambersn@mercyhigh.org)

### **All-School Reunion, June 5, 2016**

Celebrate reunion weekend at the school.

### **Mercy Golf Fest, July 18, 2016**

Tee it Up for Mercy this summer.

This is only a small sampling of the stories about Mercy High School. To read more follow us on social media.



#### Mercian

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