



AMSSA Report

The AMSSA Student Conference which will be held in Sydney from September 24 – 28 is in its final stages of preparation. So far 49 students have registered for the Conference leaving only 20 more places to be filled. If you have not already registered your students (names are not required at this stage), please do so as numbers are limited and the venue can only take a maximum of 70 students.

Thank you to the great organising committee led by the two Mercy 5 Coordinators, Caitlin Pfafflin and Gabby Scanlon who have organised a strong, engaging and uplifting program for our young students to grow and deepen their understanding of Mercy in our contemporary world.

Preparations are now underway for the planning of the next AMSSA Staff Conference which will be held in Melbourne and organised by the Victorian Mercy principals. As we finalise dates and venue, the information will become available on our website.

Thank you to the great majority of you for being so prompt in paying your subscription to AMSSA in 2016. One of the Executive's main commitments is to subsidise the Student Conference to allow students across the broad spectrum of Mercy schools to attend.

I trust you enjoy reading the newsletter which highlights what is happening in a number of our schools across Australia and New Zealand. Please share the newsletter with your colleagues and continue to send me articles and photos to include in future newsletters.

Kitty Guerin

AMSSA Executive Officer

ALL HALLOWS SCHOOL

Kitty's Room is one of the All Hallows' Mercy Action Groups and it took its inspiration from the affectionate name used by family for Catherine McAuley, Kitty. The group began in 2009 in the basement of the Convent in what was formerly the luggage room as the old suitcase racks provided ideal storage space for collected items.



Originally the purpose of the group was to collect good quality second hand household items to assemble packs for Micah Projects to assist people moving back into housing after a period of being homeless. Over the years, with the support of some funding, the group has expanded its capacity to provide hundreds of household packs each year to support a number of ministries including Murri Ministry, The Romero Centre, Micah Projects, Catholic Prisons Ministry and the Combined South East Queensland Shelters which assists women in need of emergency housing as a result of domestic violence.



The group has relocated a number of times and is now in a space which allows for easy delivery of goods and pick up by the ministries. We are grateful for the grants from Catholic Religious Australia, Queensland and the funding support from the All Hallows' P & F fundraisers, which allows us to source new items especially pillows and electrical items such as toasters, and jugs. School drives for the other goods request new or good quality second hand sheets, towels, cutlery, frypans and crockery and we are always appreciative of the generous school community response.

This group allows for the participation of staff, students and parents who are involved in the purchasing and the assembling of the packs. Our feedback from the ministries commends the quality of the items as well as the care and attention given to the packing of the kits. These are received by the recipients with delight and gratitude knowing that their difficult situation is known and that there is a community who cares and wants to respond in a practical way.

ST ALOYSIUS COLLEGE ADELAIDE

Fair Trade Fortnight

Do you know where your hot coffee, hot chocolate or tea comes from? What about your clothes? From May 8-22, Saint Aloysius College recognised Fair Trade Fortnight. During Justice and Mercy Group sessions, students learnt about the benefits of supporting fair trade products and how in many industries, workers at the bottom of the supply-chain are being poorly treated. To raise awareness for fair trade and money for ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans), JAM leaders hosted a hot drinks stall on Wednesday and Thursday in Week 2. As people purchased their morning cuppa, they were encouraged to partake in a postcard campaign, asking brands such as Seed clothing to review their supply chain policies and make them transparent. The students enjoyed sharing their learnings and their passion with staff, students, parents and friends and raised more than \$180.00 for a very worthy cause.



On Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th of May, eleven Year 9 and 10 Green JAM and Green House students represented St Aloysius College at the Switched On Schools Summit, hosted by the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and the Adelaide City Council. Old Scholar, Bec Taylor (2007), is a sustainability manager at the Adelaide Council, whose passion for social justice inspired the students during the two days as they heard from an array of guest speakers, had discussions with Lord Mayor Martin Haese, participated in workshops and led a rally in Victoria Square. Many other schools from around Adelaide attended the summit, allowing the students to share ideas with likeminded peers. The public rally concluded the summit on Thursday, with students from each school outlining actions they wish to pursue. SAC students made a commitment to campaign against schoolyard littering and to creatively promote recycling. Green House and Green JAM are committed to working together to ensure that SAC is an eco-friendly school, dedicated to reducing waste and increasing appreciation for our lovely environment. Stay tuned for plenty of upcoming news and activities!





Maddie Kelly

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NEW PRINCIPAL APPOINTED FOR MARIAN COLLEGE



The Board of Trustees of Marian College Christchurch has announced that Mrs Mary-Lou Davidson has been appointed Principal of Marian College effectively immediately.

Mary-Lou has been a highly respected staff member of Marian for 18 years, most recently holding the position of Deputy Principal for the College.

“We are delighted that Mary-Lou has confirmed her commitment to the College, whilst taking the next step in her educational journey. We know there will be exciting times ahead for the College, under her visionary and compassionate leadership. Mary-Lou resonates the Special Catholic Character of the College and embodies the Marian

values of service, commitment and perseverance” says Jan Paterson, Chair of the Board of Trustees.

“Through her time at Marian, Mary-Lou has developed strong relationships within the College, the Catholic school network, and the wider Marian Community.”

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MERCEDES COLLEGE SPRINGFIELD

Raising Funds for Caritas

Mercedes College students raised more than \$13,000 for Caritas on our annual Caritas/Project Compassion fund and awareness-raising appeal bringing students from Reception to Year 12 together in solidarity to support the projects Caritas is targeting in the 2016 campaign to end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity. This is an excellent result and a sign of the wonderful generosity of the Mercedes College community.

The fundraising is gradual during the term with events such as the Year 8 Walkathon, MacKillop's Got Talent and Project Compassion fund raising boxes located in all the classrooms. The great excitement for the students happens after they have put their heads together to come up with various fundraising activities including food stalls, Haunted House, Target Practice, and Shooting Basketball Hoops.

Caritas Australia is celebrating 50 years of Project Compassion with the theme “Learning more, creating change”, by demonstrating how education, training and sharing knowledge is empowering individuals and communities in six countries around the world to transform their futures and create lasting change.



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Divine Mercy Pilgrim's Mass

On the 3rd of April the Mercedes College Italian Language and Culture tour group attended the Pilgrim's Mass in Rome celebrated by Pope Francis in Saint Peter's Square. The mass was concelebrated by many Cardinals and Bishops and attended by special guests.

The group of 35 students and five teachers was seated near the Obelisk at the centre of the Square with a good view of the altar, with the Jubilee Holy Door as a backdrop. They also caught a glimpse of the pilgrim representatives from the Sisters of Mercy with their banner held high.

The large video screens on either side helped the group to see every detail of the liturgy.



The Principal of the College, Mrs Kerrie Fraser, who was participating in her first tour with the College since commencing her role in 2015, said it was a good learning experience to hear the mass spoken in Italian with the Prayer of the Faithful in languages from around the world.

“A highlight of the liturgy was the beautiful singing by the Choir, and the parts of the mass sung by Cantors.”

The hour and a half long mass ended with Pope Francis' completing a lap of Saint Peter's Square in the Pope Mobile which enabled many of the group to get photos close up of the Pope.

The group began their three-week tour in Rome and visited the south coast of Italy before travelling north to the Tuscany region, Venice and Milan. They visited a number of historic and tourist sites, attended language classes and participated in a cooking and ceramic class.

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Social Worker Ann O'Brien receives 2015 OLMC Parramatta Alumnae Award

Social Worker Ann O'Brien was announced as the 2015 Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta Catherine McAuley Alumnae Award recipient at a special assembly at the College on Tuesday March 15, 2016.



Currently the Director of Marriage Support and Specialist Services at Catholic Care in the Diocese of Parramatta, Ann has devoted herself to the service of others throughout her 30 year career as a social worker. Principal Stephen Walsh says Ann embodies the College's Mercy qualities; "In particular, she has shown great compassion and caring throughout her life and work. Ann has practised her Catholic faith as a disciple of Jesus including by being very involved in her local parish community. She has served those who are marginalised, vulnerable and in need of support. Ann has followed in the footsteps of the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley, by living out our Mercy Values."

Growing up in North Parramatta, Ann attended St Monica's Primary School before coming to OLMC Parramatta. She was Head Girl at the College and completed her HSC in 1972. She then went on to study a Bachelor of Social Studies at the University of Sydney where she majored in Social Work. Ann's first job was at the Royal Children's Hospital at Camperdown which gave her a solid grounding in paediatric health and the vital importance of a loving and stable family for children.

She then moved to Parramatta Psychiatric Centre where she provided care and assistance to patients suffering from mental illness. Her next roles were with Centacare as a generalist social worker and counsellor and with the Department of Community Services in the areas of Adoption and Permanent Care.

In 2008, she obtained a Graduate Certificate in Catholic Identity and Leadership at Australian Catholic University. Ann recalls that during her time at OLMC, there was both a spoken and unspoken expectation that you would grasp every opportunity given to you;

"Education was to be cherished and, as women, we could aspire to anything that we were prepared to work towards. OLMC was a place to learn, to be nurtured, to know that God loved us and to understand

that whatever gifts we had been given, we had the power to use these in many different ways, especially by bringing love and care to others.” ...“I’m a Mercy Girl and I continue to draw on what formed me through my Mercy Education. This includes the importance of compassion and caring, positivity and hope, charity, responsibility, acceptance, leadership and team work skills, discipline and clear boundaries. I will always remember that, as a woman, I have immense possibilities to influence through everything that comes from me – my words, my actions, and my conduct” says Ann O’Brien.

Introduced in 2009, the Catherine McAuley OLMC Parramatta Alumnae Award celebrates and acknowledges the great achievements of the OLMC Alumnae community. Nominees are chosen based on a number of criteria such as commitment to social justice activities, personal, academic and professional achievement, leadership, innovation and creativity, community involvement and contribution to Mercy/Christian based activities.

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OLMC HEIDELBERG

South Africa Immersion

As the school year drew to a close at the end of 2015 our first group of students and staff from OLMC headed off to South Africa for an awesome and inspiring couple of weeks of immersion within the culture and context of South Africa. The program enabled us to develop mutually beneficial relationships with communities in South Africa and to live out our vision and mission of as an educational community committed to justice and compassion.

The immersion provided an opportunity for students and staff to learn about local and global justice issues; join together with others as part of a common humanity; and to act together for justice and peace in our world. These experiences fit with OLMC’s mission and vision to ‘empower girls to be women of courage who will creatively participate in realising God’s vision of mercy and justice for all’.

The major themes underpinning the program in South Africa included:

- **Global Solidarity**
 - A desire to form genuine relationships across borders.
 - An appreciation of the need to be an active and informed member of the world community.
 - A willingness to “stand with” those on the margins of society.
- **Social Justice**
 - An understanding of how local and global structures often disadvantage people.
 - An ability to advocate and vision a more just world.
- **Ecological sustainability**
 - Awareness that environmental protection and sustainability is a global responsibility.
- **Intercultural understanding**
 - Respect and solidarity with people of different cultures and societies.
- **Faith-based responses to Justice**
 - An understanding and appreciation of the Church’s role in working with those most marginalised in our world.
 - An appreciation of the importance of a spirituality to sustain this work.

During the immersion some of the highlights that explored these themes included:

- **Development of Partnerships with Mercy schools and ministries**

Connecting with Mercy schools in the South African context gave us the opportunity to experience their incredible sense of hospitality and welcome which meant that we danced, sang, ate, laughed and talked as we spent time in their communities. Furthermore, with learners from Mercy schools in South Africa, we were together inspired as we connected with Mercy projects bringing skills, dignity, meals, shelter and education to women who are trafficked, homeless women and men, and people in poorer communities. These partnerships allowed young people to come together to explore common concerns and justice issues and to explore how these impact both the local and global setting and to learn from each other about how we can respond to the needs of our world.



- **Liberation Movement, Apartheid and Reconciliation**

The movement from apartheid to reconciliation is a powerful example and one that Australians can learn from in furthering our own reconciliation movement. During our visit we had the opportunity to hear and learn the amazing stories from places such as Soweto and Robben Island. We even got to stand in the prison cell where Nelson Mandela spent 17 of his 27 years as a political prisoner opposing an unjust and racist system, and to hear the stories of Uncle Kathy who served many of those years with him on Robben Island.



- **Church connections**

In South Africa the Church is engaged in exciting and transformational work with the poor and through education. An unexpected highlight for many of our students was the powerful experience of community in African liturgies where the link between faith and justice is tangible as people come together to pray, sing, dance and celebrate lives. All of us will remember the beaming smiling face of Sr Connie, who despite experiencing the devastating loss of her younger sister the day before to HIV, was at church to greet us in Soweto.



- **Local Community Based Programs**

Most of the programs we visited are run by South Africans for South Africans. Visiting community projects in the townships where women are doing practical and real things to educate, feed, clothe and nurture those in their community left us with much to contemplate about how we contribute our skills and gifts in our community.



- **Environmental Programs**

South Africa is understandably famous for their wildlife and the opportunity to encounter animals in their natural habitat developed a sense of wonder and awe about them, along with a desire amongst our group to protect them and their environment.

We are hopeful that these partnerships and connections will continue to grow and flourish into the future. Certainly there are many more stories to share.... Hopefully some of them are captured in these photos.

Kate Garrone
Ministry Co-ordinator
Our Lady of Mercy College

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AMSSA Staff Conference

August 8 – 10 2019

Monte Sant'Angelo Mercy College, North Sydney

