



AMSSA

Australasian Mercy Secondary Schools Association

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NEWSLETTER 03/05 OCTOBER 2005

Welcome to the third MSEA Newsletter for 2005.

Scroll down to find these features:

1. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2. REFLECTIONS FROM 2005 STUDENT LEADERS

Please pass these on to your final year students, your incoming leaders and to the staff responsible for your student leaders!

- **Megan Murray, Simone Zebisch, Mercy College Coburg, Vic**
- **Catherine Mulroney, Santa Maria College, Perth, WA**
- **Ioana Gordon-Smith, Lisa Jaques, Laura Hutchinson and Kristina Keogh, St Mary's College, Wellington NZ**
- **Louisa Reynolds, Andrew Keady, Katie Brennick and James Brown, Catholic High School Griffith, NSW**

3. A PRAYER FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS

4. A PRAYER FOR 11 NOVEMBER, the anniversary of the death of Catherine McAuley

THE NEXT NEWSLETTER, IN FIRST TERM 2006, WILL HAVE AS ITS FOCUS STAFF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT.

We will be looking for contributions about what you have found useful in providing for staff spiritual development, or issues you address, or helpful resources ...

Your comments, suggestions or material for sharing through this newsletter or for posting on our website are welcome. Just let any one of the MSEA executive know – email details are on the MSEA website at

<http://www.msea.mercy.org.au>

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At our meeting in Sydney in August we elected Jane Holloway (St Catherine's College Kilburnie, NZ) as our Deputy Chair. Jane brings considerable experience and insight to this position and we are grateful to her for accepting the role.

As you have probably noticed, there have been changes to the MSEA website to develop it as a useful resource for Mercy administrators, teachers and students. Early in 2006 there will be more changes, and now that schools have their own websites, the list of Showcase Schools is no longer needed.

The newsletter is now reaching sixty four schools in Australia, New Zealand and New Guinea, as well as some twenty Mercy Congregations and Offices. The first issue in 2006 will feature staff spiritual development.

Our discussions with Sister Ailsa McKinnon at the August meeting gave us clarity and reassurance as to the direction we are taking with MSEA and as to our relationship to the Sisters of Mercy Congregations.

Planning for the August 2006 Pastoral Care Conference in Parramatta, and for the August 2007 MSEA Conference is well under way. We also gave consideration to some possible initiatives for students to co-incide with the 2008 World Youth Day celebrations.

Thanks to the student leaders who have contributed to this issue of the newsletter and have provided us with such a breadth of thoughtful reflections on their experiences as leaders in our schools – we look forward to more contributions from the students in future newsletters.

Lee-Anne Perry (President) perry1@allhallows.qld.edu.au

REFLECTIONS FROM 2005 STUDENT LEADERS

**Megan Murray and Simone Zebisch Captain and Deputy Captain
MERCY COLLEGE COBURG Victoria**

As the College Captains of Mercy College Coburg for 2005 we have been lucky enough to be a part of an amazing leadership executive team. **Our roles** along include speaking at school and level assemblies, writing pieces for the College Newsletter, going to numerous conferences, organising school activities such as our Youth Week assembly and much more. We also chair the Student Executive meetings, and work with the SRC.

This role has allowed us to interact with both students and staff in ways that we never thought possible. We have been able to establish positive and strong relationships with staff in and outside of the classroom and have gotten to know many more students, which we would have not been able to do otherwise. We see this interaction with both staff and students as crucial in keeping a positive atmosphere in the tight knit community.

One of the leadership team's **best achievements** was having carried out and seen our Youth Week assembly in May 2005 in which so much work and hard effort had been put. It was not only the relief that such a huge project had been completed relatively smoothly but the great feeling we had in seeing the rest of the student body enjoying themselves and knowing our hard work was worth every bit. Also, as part of our contribution to the College's Ruby Anniversary Celebration we have introduced names to each of our Houses.

One of the best experiences was towards the beginning of our role was we wrote a speech in which we reflected on our years at Mercy and how it had influenced our lives. We were both quite proud of this speech and after having presented it to a group of prospective students and their families at Open Day we were delighted to hear that a few parents had decided to send their daughters to Mercy College, there and then, whether they had looked at other schools or not. Knowing that you have made such an impact on just one person for something that may seem trivial really lifts your spirits and confidence in what you can achieve in future.

Having said that, we don't believe we would purposely do anything differently **if we had our time as leaders again**. Having grown as a person through this position we may be compelled to look at situations differently and therefore tackle them differently but we believe the leadership team of 2005 carried out our responsibilities and beyond them to the best of our abilities.

For all the new student leaders of 2006 we only have one piece of advice... enjoy your role. At the beginning it may seem both exciting and daunting, having such responsibility put on you as a leader of your school but the rewards you reap (unknowingly most of the time) are amazing personal lessons which cannot be gained through a typical academic education. The amount of exciting and new things you are able to do as a leader are there to be enjoyed as much as they are there to be taken seriously, so have fun with it.

For the staff leaders, well, being part of such a relatively new executive program it is hard to find room for advice. However, in my belief that there is always room for improvement I would only say that at times student leaders may feel constricted in their role when bringing forward ideas to improve the school or maximise days of celebration.

With that said and an English essay waiting to be written we give **this advice to all senior students** with exams drawing near. Hang in there and continue to maintain that standard of work you have throughout the year. As much as it may feel impossible to do so, exams are literally just around the corner and it is all worth it in the end and the end ain't that far away.

Good luck everyone.

Catherine Mulroney Service Captain SANTA MARIA COLLEGE Perth Western Australia

I am Service Captain at Santa Maria College, Perth. **My main role** at the beginning of this year was to help with the Young Mercies' service program and Amnesty International. This later developed into building the Mercy ethos in the school, educating students about social justice issues and giving them the opportunity to make a difference.

My best experience/achievement was that I ran a campaign about the issue of landmines in term three. This involved raising awareness about the issue at all year group assemblies using guest speakers and also promoting it through the newsletter and daily memo.

To encourage students direct involvement we spent the whole term collecting ring pulls from aluminium cans for 'Wheelchairs for Kids', an organization run by Brother Olly Pickett. This organization, supported by Rotary, builds wheelchairs from the aluminium that is melted down from the ring pulls. The wheelchairs go to children in third world countries who have lost limbs (or the use of them) as a result of landmines or from diseases such as polio.

At the beginning of the campaign we set a goal of collecting enough to build one wheelchair (5 kilos or 100 mugs full). By the end of term three the students had collected enough to build 18 wheelchairs! The enthusiasm was amazing, and I was so proud of the girls.

On Mercy Day we announced the winning house and presented the ringpulls to Brother Olly. The students got a real kick out of seeing how far a little ringpull could go, especially when they saw the finished product of a wheelchair.

This year I tended to work mainly by myself with the help of one staff member. **If I had my time again** I think I would try and get more

students involved – particularly those who were genuinely interested and wanted to promote social justice issues.

In hindsight, I think the real test will come next year when I've gone [I am currently in Year 12] and whether there will be some other people in the school with the drive and passion to continue with the work I have started.

My advice for the 2006 student leaders: Find people to help you who have a similar passion for what you want to do; people who will work with you to make things happen. There is never any need for you to take all the work on by yourself.

Do what you are passionate about and things that you believe in, dream big and the rest will fall into place.

Advice for the staff leaders of my school:

Looking back at the staff that helped me I would say that it is important for staff to be involved with student leaders, encouraging them with what they are doing and offering to help where they can. Not only will this be very rewarding for staff in terms of their relationships with students but the students will really appreciate your assistance.

I would also say that it is important for all staff to be understanding of the students who are holding student leadership roles and have a lot of things to do outside the classroom: these are the activities which allow students to develop as a whole person rather than just as a student.

As exams draw near, do you have a message for the final year students in the other sixty schools who receive this newsletter?

You have never done enough study, but if you can walk out of that exam and say that you put 100% effort in then that is what matters. Have faith that something will come your way, even when you least expect it.

Ioana Gordon-Smith Captain ST MARY'S COLLEGE Wellington NZ

Can you give as a brief outline of your role as a leader?

As Head Girl, my role is to be an example to the student community, liaise between Staff and students, chair the student council, represent the college at various functions, lead the leadership team and generally promote St Mary's College values actively through the school.

What is your best achievement or experience as a leader in building the ethos and values of your school?

It's hard to pinpoint one exact moment. The best achievement I've had as a leader probably hasn't been in actively promoting something myself, but helping other leaders with their tasks, such as mission month. The whole year we've tried to get across our slogan HIP – happy, involved, proud, to

emphasise school spirit. The best feeling is basically when you see people enjoying school. My best achievement came not from being a leader, but from being a student in a leadership position. This year winning the debating Henning Cup was made better by the fact that as a role model, I was setting an example which people may have aspired to. My personal achievements, unrelated to being a Head Girl, are what I consider to be my greatest leadership successes: I have been able to show people how much I enjoy taking part in school; it has made me happy, and I think that could be seen, as being a leader means many people follow my lead.

If you had your time as leader again, what would you do differently?

I would try to get a lot more done person to person as it is more effective that way. I think people appreciate being approached individually. I would have also done a lot more thinking away from school so that time at school organizing things was much more productive as the base work would have already been done. A lot of things that I have done this year could have been structured better and more clear-cut. Above everything, I would spend more time just enjoying the time spent with all the new people I have been able to meet, and spend more time just being with the students with no other purpose than just to enjoy their company. In short, I would have realized that sometimes all you need to be a leader is to be yourself.

What advice do you have for the 2006 student leaders?

Be as organised as possible. This way you don't waste time trying to work out nuts and bolts of plans, especially as time goes extremely fast. Leave some time for study. It's so easy to be caught up with trying to make a difference but sometimes the biggest difference you can make is being good at something and inspiring people that way – that type of skill comes only with practice.

What advice do you have for the staff leaders of your school?

Never give up on a person.

AS exams draw nearer ...

Always aim for excellence in everything you do, that way if you fail you still would have done a great job. But if you aim for a pass and fail, you ACTUALLY fail. Sometimes, the benefits of studying are more important than the benefits of a good exam mark. Realize that studying isn't just for the exam, but so that you become a more well informed person.

Lisa Jaques ST MARY'S COLLEGE Wellington NZ

My role as Deputy Head Girl of Special Character consists of working with the Director of Religious studies at St Mary's College, Wellington, to

enhance the Special Character within the college, to promote awareness of Special Character events within the community and to represent the college.

My best experience: During August this year, the whole college fundraised for the missions in Peru in the event we call "Mission Month". This year we raised approximately \$4900.00 from selling sausages, cakes, sweets, cooked breakfasts, fresh hot donuts, hot chocolates, raffle tickets for a new cellphone, body lotions, a live concert and St Mary's Idol. Getting the school to bond together was extremely hard at first, but once we got started, it was hard to stop.

If I had my time again: I would make sure I had a stricter timetable to follow so that I could more effectively make use of my time.

New student leaders: Go hard in all you do. Be enthusiastic, get the whole school involved.

Advice to staff: Be supportive of your student leaders and have faith in them. Help them to be the best leaders they can possibly be.

Message for final year students: Study hard to get the best results possible. Remember to give as much attention to your study as you do to extra-curricular activities. Good luck!

Laura Hutchinson Sports Captain ST MARY'S COLLEGE Wellington

As Sports Captain **my role** is to promote sport throughout the school and to encourage and enthuse students to participate in sport. My role is also to be a role model to other students by participating in sport and being enthusiastic myself and by actively supporting other teams when they play. Working with some of the staff and the rest of the student leadership team is also part of my role where we work together to create and share ideas to make a better college.

One of the best experiences of being Sports Captain is seeing my ideas and organisation come to fruition. For example, earlier this year I organised a Year 9 volleyball tournament. I found it very rewarding to see so many positive responses and how much fun was being had. It was also great to see girls who weren't so enthusiastic, come to life and become more confident with themselves.

If I had this chance again I wouldn't worry about other people's expectations of me and also ensure that I am more organised and have even more fun!

Advice for the 2006 leaders: Be yourself, don't worry about people's expectations, work hard and have fun – it's your final year!

Advice for staff: be supportive, be encouraging and help the leaders accomplish what they want.

To the final year students: Work hard, study hard and get the results you want, and try your best at everything.

Kristina Keogh, Cultural Captain ST MARY'S COLLEGE Wellington NZ

As Cultural Captain, **my job** is to ensure that students are involved in the numerous extra curricular activities that are offered at St. Mary's. I have to promote the activities through the cultural notice board and by speaking at assemblies.

The best experience I have had this year, is definitely congratulating girls on their achievements in cultural activities. It is absolutely fantastic to get up at assemblies and read names out in order to congratulate them. We have had a very successful year so I was able to speak about many successes throughout the year.

If I had this time over again, I would encourage more girls to get involved in cultural activities. I found that many girls weren't involved in things that they wanted to be involved in. I would also have liked the chance to set up new activities for girls who wanted different clubs to be set up.

My advice to the new leaders is: just try your best and set goals for yourself. Try and achieve at least one thing each term. Just go hard with pushing school spirit and encourage everyone to get involved in your school.

My advice to staff is: make sure you set up regular meeting times with your Student Leadership Team and ensure that ideas and suggestions are followed up. Really listen to what they are saying because it may be the start of a great idea. Give reasonable explanations about why you are saying "No" to an idea.

To the final year students: Good Luck for all your exams and don't dwell on the problems of the past. Concentrate on the future and enjoy it!

James Brown, Andrew Keady, Louisa Reynolds and Katie Brennick, Captains, CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL Griffith, New South Wales

Our role as leaders has been to be a link between the staff and the students, and we've been the heads of the Prefects and the Student Council, and so we've been working with them. We tried to maintain the school motto, 'The Way, the Truth and the Life', and the goals of the school by applying ourselves and doing our best in our studies, sporting activities and the different activities we've done through the school. It's setting an example, being a role model especially for the juniors. It's not just within school – if you are playing representative sport in teams outside the school it means that you are judged not only for who you are, but what you do is a reflection on the school.

An important part of the role is being accessible to the other students, and if you are it makes it much easier as a leader. We have quite a lot of different ethnic backgrounds in the students and about half of them use a different language than English, so it's been important to us to get to know them and for them to feel they can approach us.

Some of our **best experiences** as leaders have been being able to be positive role models, and being able to help the younger students. There are some in Years 7 and 8 that you can tell just by looking at them that they're not having the best time at school. You can do a lot by even just talking to them. Because some of us set out as leaders to be very visible on the playground, we've been able to include some of these kids in our groups. That gave them some space and now they've got friends of their own. Also it has been great to be involved in all the Prefect and Student Council activities especially in helping with the school's charities.

Our advice to new leaders:

Be positive and confident in your abilities as leaders. Don't let people tell you something is too hard to achieve. Just do your best.

Get involved and try to get around the younger kids at school. It doesn't feel like a big thing to us but it makes a lot of difference to them in settling in and feeling supported.

Start early. We had a project to get new graffiti boards but it has taken so long and we relied on getting other people to give messages to the art classes. It's too late in Term 3 when you're trying to cram everything in. Find ways to communicate – our new school weekly student newsletter will be a good way for the new captains to do this.

Get to know Year 7. This Year the Year 11's, who were the Peer Support leaders, had much more to do with Year 7 than we did, and so there were Year 7's who didn't know us except for seeing us running assemblies.

Our advice to the staff is to make use of the student leaders more when there are junior kids not coping as well as they might. Two years ago Sister Colleen who was running a school for girls in Pakistan visited us. We give quite a lot of our mission money to that school, and it meant a lot to hear her say how she would use the money for the girls. It would be good to see more links like that. And most importantly, keep on offering that support to the students especially in the senior years. We don't always say thank you but we really appreciate it – the extra work they put in, and the time they gave us. They are so much more involved than in the junior years and they've been great in helping us try to achieve what we want.

And to all you final year students: be confident, stay relaxed and believe in yourself and your abilities. There's more to life than the HSC – there's a challenge to find out what success you really want and how you want to give of your skills. Achieve whatever you want!

A PRAYER FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS - HOPE FOR THE JOURNEY

As we look to tomorrow,
Let us today embrace the past with remembrance
And the future with longing.

Let us face our future with confidence and hope,
Daring to stay open to whatever today will offer us, or tomorrow;
Daring to go fearlessly into things without knowing how they will turn out;
Daring to keep on going, even when something doesn't work out for the first time.

Let us pray that we travel into our future
With a trust that enables us to put our hand into the hand of God,
Confident that it will be better than a light,
And safer than a known way.

A PRAYER FOR NOVEMBER 11, THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF CATHERINE McAULEY 1778 – 1841 (Adapted from Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy)

On this anniversary of Catherine McAuley's death we remember her and all her sisters who have given their lives in service to others, and so we pray:

- For each of us, that we may be a steady influence for good on this earth;
- For hearts free from anxiety and fear, and full of self surrender;
- For trust in God's providence during times of doubt and uncertainty;
- For all who are nearing the time of their own death, that the hope of eternal life will comfort them
- For Sisters of Mercy throughout the world and for their co-workers, that Catherine's life and death may continue to call us to embrace her spirit of hospitality and service.

We ask this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.