



# AMSSA

Australasian Mercy Secondary Schools Association

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## NEWSLETTER 03/07 JULY 2007

Welcome to the MSEA Newsletter.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### **Mercy in Action**

In keeping with the theme of our forthcoming conference, this newsletter is devoted to **Mercy in action**. Contributions from St Aloysius, OLMC and Santa Maria give us an overview of some outstanding initiatives in educating for Mercy and Justice, and rich food for thought in setting up, running and evaluating our own programmes.

### **Brisbane Conference**

Plans for our Conference in Brisbane in August are well in hand. This is a last reminder for anyone who has not yet registered that if you intend coming, or want some of your staff to attend, you need to send in the registration forms as soon as possible. The closing date for registrations was Friday July 6 2007. You can contact the conference secretary, Mrs Christine Carmichael, at All Hallows School, on her email [carmichaelc@allhallows.qld.edu.au](mailto:carmichaelc@allhallows.qld.edu.au)).

### **Biennial General Meeting of the Association**

This will be held during the Brisbane conference, on Friday August 17. There is an agenda with this newsletter.

### **MSEA website**

Thanks for all the interest in upgrading the MSEA website. The redevelopment is now under way, and the new site will be in operation before the August conference.

**Lee-Anne Perry (President)** [perryl@allhallows.qld.edu.au](mailto:perryl@allhallows.qld.edu.au)

### **NOTICE OF 2007 BIENNIAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION**

The Biennial General Meeting of the Association will be held on Friday, August 17, during the Association Conference.

The Agenda is as follows:

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. President's Report
4. Secretary/Treasurer's Report
5. Report of previous conference (Melbourne 2004)
7. General Business
8. Election of President
9. Selection of Executive

### **St Aloysius College Adelaide Mission to Argentina 2006**

from Susan Holoubek, Social Justice Coordinator

St Aloysius College has a slightly unusual history. It was established in 1880 by the Sisters of Mercy, most of whom were Irish-born, but all of whom had arrived here from Buenos Aires, after spending 24 years there in service to their Irish compatriots who had settled in Argentina following the potato famine and the Irish political troubles of the early 1800s. In 2003 following initiatives by Sr Judith Redden, (Principal of St Aloysius College), to reconnect with the Mercy congregation in Argentina, music teacher Craig Evans was inspired to return to Buenos Aires for six months at his own expense, to explore the possibilities of setting up a permanent foundation to assist works being undertaken with poor communities in areas around Buenos Aires.

St Aloysius College has subsequently raised thousands of dollars to assist with on-going projects at several community centres and is in the

process of completing the building of a new parish/community centre in a severely disadvantaged barrio, the rubbish dump of which has become home to thousands of recently arrived refugees from Paraguay and Bolivia.

In 2006 a touring group comprising of 19 students, 5 staff and two old scholars set out on a mission to Argentina with a dual purpose:

1. To continue to build on the relationship established with the wonderful students and families of our sister school in Argentina, St Ethnea College and with the inspiring work of the local Sisters of Mercy
2. To undertake hands-on work at the three community centres currently supported by 'Mercy in Action', the foundation established by Craig Evans in conjunction with local community workers, priests and educators.

It was a whirlwind 20 day tour which all participants seized with both hands and supped to the full! It was an experience none of the participants will ever forget.

We will treasure forever: the intense and moving welcome we received from the students and their families, the love and friendship of the people of the barrios, the colour, excitement and vigorous history of the city itself, the beauties of the Spanish language and the laughter and encouragement of the locals as we tried with all our hearts to transcend the language barrier, the beautiful compliments we received on our Australian readiness to jump in and 'have a go', on our mutual love and respect for family and on our sincere and enthusiastic appreciation of our hosts and their amazing country. We are grateful, too, for the invitation from the Australian ambassador to join him and his staff for morning tea to share our common affection for Argentina and her people and our commitment to developing ongoing relationships and projects between the two countries.

The reflections that follow are quotes from some of the students who participated in the mission, penned on the final evening of the tour amidst groans about the inadequacy of words to truly capture what was in their hearts...

*... 'I can't begin to describe the people – the way they greet you with a kiss – total strangers! That's just crazy – I love it – It's like you've got this instant – no, wait – it's like you've already passed the first step – been accepted into a relationship...*

*Another thing that was cool was that I saw what all that money – money that I and a fair few of my mates back at school would moan about after we had chucked a few dollars into a fundraiser and wished we hadn't – actually went towards. I felt pretty good about the fact that I had contributed, even if it was only a little, to the foundation and to the happiness of a fair few people and that that contribution had helped to restore their faith in a future worth believing in ... Daisy McLeod Yr 10*

...'I have grown so much as a person from this experience and one memory that will stay in my heart forever was the day we played handball with the children from the barrios. It was their first game and it was an international one! Naturally they won and so we sang their national soccer song. One old man who was watching was so moved he began to cry. His loving hugs will stay in my heart forever...' *Lisa Crowder Yr 11*

...'The strangest thing about this trip was that although the barrier of language seemed huge – it wasn't a big problem...the one language we all spoke was the language of love. It's universal. It doesn't need conjugations or verbs – but everyone understands it. Everyone speaks it and everyone shows it differently. At the end of the day, love in your heart and in all your actions is all you need...' *Tenielle Nuske Yr 10*

### **Immersion Experiences - Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta** Paul Lentern Director of Mission

There's a great deal of truth to the old adage that a picture paints a thousand words. Even more so, perhaps, to the idea that we remember and understand a great deal more from our own experience than any information or explanation. These ideas underpin the concept of immersion experiences where students move out of their own culture and spend some time "immersed" in a different culture. It is anticipated that these experiences will result in powerful learning which is both profound and lasting.

At Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta, there have been four types of immersion experiences offered to students over the last decade. The first falls into the category of overseas excursions where students study a particular language spend some time in a country where that language is spoken. These excursions provide outstanding opportunities for gaining an ear for the language as it is spoken as well as experiencing it in a cultural setting. Such excursions are offered to language students every second year.

The second type of immersion experience has been in the form of an exchange program with an indigenous community from Central Australia. On two occasions, groups of staff and students travelled to Alice Springs to visit the Irrkerlantye Learning Centre run by the Eastern Arrente people. This experience not only included an opportunity to see the work of the learning centre in Alice Springs but also to spend a week camping on traditional Arrente lands and experiencing ceremonies enjoying bush tucker etc.

The reciprocal part of this exchange saw a group of teachers and students spend a week in Sydney, living in community with students

and teachers from OLMC, taking in some significant sights and running a range of cultural workshops for OLMC students.

A third form of immersion experience has been to take students to Ireland to meet students in Mercy schools as well as visiting the Mercy International Centre at Baggot St and Coolock house. For the Parramatta crowd, a visit to Callan in county Kilkenny puts us in touch with the place from which the first Sisters of the Parramatta Congregation came. Rome is also included in the itinerary to give us a chance to have an audience with the Pope, to see some of the great sites of significance for the Christian Church as well as visiting St Prudentiana's Church which houses the original painting of Our Lady of Mercy.

The fourth, and most recent, form of immersion experience has been for staff and students to spend time in India visiting some of the human rights and social justice projects carried out by various Church and community organisations. It provides a most dramatic and memorable encounter with the 80% world and leaves us in no doubt about the enormity of human suffering and disadvantage. Yet at the same time it provides an incredible window into the hope and determination of those who live and work in such desperate circumstances.

At OLMC, Parramatta, immersion experiences are a vital component, not only for their value with our students but also for the irreplaceable experience of professional development and formation they provide for our staff.

### **Santa Maria College Attadale - Service Program**

from Loretta Wholley [whol@santamaria.wa.edu.au](mailto:whol@santamaria.wa.edu.au)

*"It is for God that we serve..... and not for thanks." ~Catherine McAuley~*

The Service program at Santa Maria College provides students with opportunities to become involved in a wide range of activities:

- This program together with Religious Education will encourage all students to use their talents and skills to spread the word of Christ's Gospel by their actions;
- This program will be a commitment by the College to allow young women to experience the joy of giving and receiving by way of sharing with others;
- The program is based on the role of the Sisters of Mercy as being women outside of their sphere, whereby, they gave service to the people in their community when they saw a need.

The service they provide must be done freely, out of their own choice, without expectation of reward, money or gifts. It should be a service that young women are capable of doing by themselves in a safe environment. Furthermore it should offer them a real sense of personal

achievement and invite them to learn new skills as well as utilising their given talents.

## **The Programs**

To fulfil the Service Program students must complete a number of activities in the time period allocated. These programs are constantly under development and change according to the needs of the community and the talents and gifts of our students.

They are currently run as follows:

### Year 8 ~ A Generous Heart

- Complete a minimum of 10 hours of service
- Complete a reflection journal
- Lessons are allocated through the Religious Education program to introduce the purpose of "service". eg. why are we doing this, what is the Gospel message of service (using Scripture) and how does it fit in the with story of Catherine McAuley.
- Reported on in Semester 2.

### Year 9 ~ Reaching Out

- Complete a minimum of 15 hours of service
- Complete a reflection journal
- Lessons are allocated through the Religious Education program to introduce the purpose of "service". eg. why are we doing this, what is the Gospel message of service (using Scripture) and how we are fulfilling the work of the Sisters of Mercy.
- Reported on in Semester 1.

In Years 8 and 9 this service is to be completed in:

- Their home or extended family community – weeding, cleaning (not chores)
- The Parish community – altar server, reader, children's liturgy
- The College community – assisting in various College activities
- Their neighbourhood – visiting the elderly, volunteering at SLSC

### Year 10

Students have no structured program, however, there are opportunities to serve others through a commitment to Young Mercies, St Patricks Care: Fremantle, Amnesty International, Young Christian Students or the Eco-Sisters.

### Year 11/12 ~ Mercy in Action

- Complete a minimum of 20 - 30 hours of service in a not-for-profit organisation
- 20 hours of Service (*compulsory*)
- 30 hours of Service (*Notre Dame University*)
- Complete an academic component
- Complete a reflection essay (1000 words)

### Year 11 – Optional – PIP

For the first time this year we have introduced an Immersion program in partnership with the Punmu RAWA Indigenous community (650kms east of Port Hedland). Students nominated to be a candidate. The Punmu Immersion Program (PIP) will endeavour to foster a respect for the people, history and cultures present in remote Indigenous communities; a recognition of God's presence in the lives and cultures of people they encounter; and a willingness to be challenged personally by the stories, experiences and relationships that are encountered on the journey.

**PRAYER** *(Adapted from Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy)*

**Creator God, we praise you for the wonder of human life and of all your creation. Help us to treasure these gifts and live gratefully in our universe. In this spirit, we pray:**

For all creation;

❖ *That we do not plunder our resources, but use them with awe and respect.*

For all living things:

❖ *That they flourish in harmony and interdependence.*

For all people:

❖ *That we reverence diversity rather than fear it.*

For world leaders:

❖ *That they find ways to restore hope and dignity to those suffering from war  
and natural disasters.*

For Church leaders:

❖ *That they foster collaboration and shared decision-making.*

For the community of our school:

❖ *That we incarnate God's loving compassion for all people.*

***God of all peoples, bring forth your reign of peace and justice upon the earth. Gather nations together for the common good of their members. Bless our efforts to bring an end to famine, social injustice and the exploitation of nature. We ask this in the name of Jesus, whose promises never fail. Amen.***

## RESOURCE

### **Listen, Journal of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia Vol 25, No 1, 2007**

Available from the Institute National Office, 1 Thomas Street, Lewisham NSW 2049, email [isma@mercy.org.au](mailto:isma@mercy.org.au)

This issue includes the addresses by Deirdre Mullan and Kathleen Hill on the 150 Anniversary Celebrations in Melbourne, and an article from Patricia Bolster: *Embryonic Stem Cell Research, Good Science or Good Ethical Decision Making: Where's the Balance?*