

February "Coffee with the Principal" Notes – February 14, 2012, 7:30 AM

Sponsored by Mercy Parents Association

Attendees: Mr. Quinn, Principal

Emily Nunn, Passport Program Coordinator

Shaina Garfield, Student Volunteer for Passport Club

11 parents

Presentation – The Passport To Understanding program:

Emily Nunn/Shaina Garfield:

- The Passport Program is not a club – it's a program designed for HS girls to learn about, and get involved in, service to the community outside of Mercy. Events are incredibly varied – visits to nursing homes and retirement communities, serving at a soup kitchen, making meals at the Ronald McDonald house, helping at Special Olympics, etc. They try to stay away from fundraising.
- Girls can do as much or as little as they'd like. There are 8-10 events per month, and the time spent can count toward service hour requirements such as National Honor Society, Scouts, etc.
- Emily visits each Theology class in the fall to talk to the girls about the program and how to get involved. About 110 girls have done at least one activity this year; one girl has done 20.
- There is a Student Advisory Board made up of 7-8 students who advertise events and plan larger events like the upcoming Carnival.
- Girls can find out about the events through a weekly mailing, via the website, or through flyers posted around the school. Parents can request to be added to the DL as well. Emily drives the girls to after school events; they are then picked up at Mercy or at the venue after the event is over.
- Parents are always welcome as drivers, chaperones, and volunteers. Emily will also gladly accept ideas for new charities or activities.
- In addition to the scheduled activities through Passport, there are additional opportunities posted on the website. Look under Academics → Faculty/Admin → Passport To Understanding.

Besides Passport Club, here are some other ways to get involved in the community and live out our values: Habitat for Humanity – a separate club which does fundraising and participates at build sites. Girls must be 16 to work at a build site.

Campus Ministry – the body of students who organize most spiritual events around campus. Made up of a Leadership Team and two elected representatives from each homeroom (including Middle School), this group plans Mission Month, all school liturgies including May Day, Golden Mass, Senior Rose Mass, and Junior Ring Day, and coordinates the Christmas Basket program.

Middle School Ministry Days – Middle school students go out into the community to do a variety of service to the poor, elderly, hungry, etc. When asked about expansion into the HS, Mr. Quinn commented that the staff is currently sharing best practices with other area Sisters of Mercy high schools and this is one possible area for change.

Questions and Additional Discussion :

Q: Who is on the OLM Board of Trustees, and how are they selected?

A: There are 24 people on the Board, which is overseen by Mrs. Suzanne Johnston, President of OLM. President is Andrea Tomaino, an alum. The Board is a mix of alumnae, parents, and community leaders with specific areas of expertise in Finance, higher education, etc. They operate under a set of By Laws which govern their activities, and staff a number of subcommittees including a Selection Committee who solicit potential candidates. Membership is by invitation and requires a commitment of a three-year term, which can be renewed once. Any inquiries into possible membership should be directed to Suzanne Johnston, as Mr. Quinn is not involved in the selection process.

Q: What is the ownership of the school?

A: Mercy High School is an official Not-for-Profit organization under the governance of the Board (see above) and operated as a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy. The school rents the building from the Sisters of Mercy.

Q: Why is drivers education not offered at Mercy?

A: It hasn't been for a while; the investment required is significant, including the purchase of a car and hiring of an instructor. Instead, the guidance office publishes information about programs at other schools such as Harley and McQuaid. It was mentioned that the McQuaid schedule overlaps with the Mercy school day, but Mr Quinn indicated that they work with Mercy to accommodate the girls' schedules, including dropping them off and picking them up at the school for scheduled driving times. One of the parents also mentioned that AAA of Rochester also offers several different versions of the drivers courses.

Q: Mr Quinn was asked to comment on the rumors circulating about possible drug use on campus

A: Confirmed that there was one incident of drugs and alcohol on campus this year, and it was dealt with quickly according to the official policy, which is in the Student Handbook and covers a several-step process including suspension and eventual expulsion.

Q: The assistant principal position is posted on the website. Is Ms. Wawrzaszek retiring?

A: Yes, she will retire at the end of the school year. Over 70 applications have been received already and will be evaluated by a committee that includes students and parents.

Q: Are things more casual around Mercy than in the past? Are we relaxing things on purpose?

A: Mr. Quinn's style is more casual than past administrations, to be sure. In the past girls were scared of the Principal and Assistant Principal, and Mr Quinn does not want to return to that style, which is very different from his style. So yes, some things are more casual, at least in the way the administration interacts with the girls.

Final Comments from Mr. Quinn:

- The administration has started a book club, and are reading "Girls in Crisis", which strongly supports single sex education. It's not an easy book to read, but recommended for all.
- Course selection handbooks are out; please review them with your daughters. You are welcome to participate in the conversations with the counselors which will be announced shortly.
- There are some changes from prior years, most notably an option for Sophomores to take a full year, twice-a-cycle Health class if they are enrolled in a full year music or art elective and three new AP classes (Statistics, English Composition, and Science/Environmental Studies), as well as the option to take on-line AP courses if Mercy doesn't offer the one a student is interested in.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> grade plans continue to develop; there are 13 girls registered so far and 35 total took the entrance exam so more are expected. Tuition will be \$6000, in an attempt to keep the fees more closely aligned with the Catholic elementary tuition. 1-2 teachers will be hired in the near future.

Note:

The next Coffee with the Principal is scheduled for Wednesday, March 21 at 9:00 AM in the Board Room. The format will be slightly different; we will be discussing Anthony Wolf's book Get Out of My Life, but First Can You Drive Cheryl and Me to the Mall? Copies are available in most Monroe County Library locations, on Amazon.com, and through Barnes and Noble. Prereading the book before the coffee is recommended but not required. Mr. Quinn will be facilitating the discussion on parenting teenage girls in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.