Sowing Seeds of Nonviolence

Returning to school on August 26, we began the year with a series of events to orient the new students and welcome our returning students. The new fifth grade girls, the Class of 2023, are positive, enthusiastic, and eager to learn. They arrived at Sisters Academy from 13 public elementary schools. Three of our new students have older siblings in the eighth grade, creating a special bond that is growing between the two classes.

After a summer of increased violence in our city and division within our nation, the Sisters Academy Pledge of Nonviolence is now more important than ever. As we began our new year, the students, faculty, and Board of Directors participated in conversations that explored the meaning of the Pledge as lived daily at Sisters Academy. During the first week of school, the seventh and eighth grade students led the younger students in a series of activities designed to illustrate the seven tenets of the Pledge. During the August faculty meetings, three graduates returned and presented a panel discussion on how the Pledge continues to influence their lives. And at the first meeting of the Board of Directors, a panel of eighth grade students shared how they have grown to embrace the tenets of the pledge over the years.

Creating a peaceful place of learning begins within each person in our community. Each of us commits ourselves to become a nonviolent and peaceful person. In the words of Mairead Corrigan, a peace activist from Northern Ireland who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976, “If we want to reap the harvest of peace and justice in the future, we will have to sow seeds of nonviolence, here and now, in the present.”

During one month in the summer, four women of peace, friends of Sisters Academy, passed to eternal peace.

- Sister Dorothy Daiger, SSND, who established the Library and served as Librarian from 2003 to 2015, died at Villa Assumpta in North Baltimore on July 27.
- Sister Marcella Marie Missar, SNDdeN, who volunteered in numerous capacities from 2004 to 2007, died in Cincinnati, Ohio, on August 9.
- Sister Mary Rita Nangle, CBS, faithful friend who served as nurse and patient advocate at Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital, died at Bon Secours on August 13.

May they rest in peace and may all of us be at peace!

— Sister Delia Dowling, SSND, President

Pledge of Nonviolence
To Respect Self and Others
To Communicate Better
To Listen
To Forgive
To Respect Nature
To Play Creatively
To Be Courageous
Principal's Message

Each year, the school selects a theme. Our theme for the year, “We rise by lifting others,” invites us to reach out to one another with life-giving words and actions; each of us is stronger when we care for one another. With that in mind, Sisters Academy strives to do the very best to create a holistic program that challenges and uplifts our students.

I am happy to share some new initiatives with you. We are pleased to welcome Sr. Karen Kane, SSND, as our full-time school counselor. Sister Karen brings a wealth of experience to us, and most recently served as Principal of Notre Dame Preparatory School. We have renewed our partnership with Outward Bound, thanks to a generous grant from the Knott Foundation. Our eighth grade students will participate in a week-long outdoor expedition in Western Maryland and our seventh graders will have a day-long experience. We are in the initial stages of planning for technology upgrades. We are in the process of transforming an underutilized space into our Innovation Lab, a hub for creating, collaborating, and connecting Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) across the curriculum.

The teachers and staff join me in thanking you for your faithful support in helping us develop the best possible program for our students.

Seventh Grade Visits Sisters of Bon Secours

On Wednesday evening, September 25, the seventh grade visited the Sisters of Bon Secours during their General Chapter at the Retreat and Conference Center at Bon Secours in Marriottsville, Maryland. Sisters from Peru, Ireland, Paris, South Africa, and the United States attended the meeting and warmly welcomed our students. The students shared dance and poetry with the Sisters. They shared their reflections on what makes Sisters Academy special, and also their hopes and dreams for their future. The evening ended with an ice cream social and “Dancing with the Stars.”

News Notes

Graduates Support the New Frontiers Summer Program

Over the summer, graduates participated in the New Frontiers program as teacher aides and volunteers. The New Frontiers Summer Program is a prerequisite for the girls applying for admission into the fifth grade. The girls attend classes with a daily program including math, reading, language arts, dance, art, and team building. Ashae Singletary and Shamerra McCoy, Class of 2014 and now in college, supported the students as teacher aides during math and language arts classes. Julissa Vargas, Class of 2018 and now a sophomore at Mercy High School, provided hip hop dance instruction for the girls. Fernanda Gonzalez, Daphnie Hain, Jaleah Jupiter, and Abriana Frye also volunteered in variety of New Frontiers activities. It was a great opportunity for the younger girls and our graduates to work side by side with one another.

Welcome New Board Members

We are pleased to welcome Karen McGee, Sr. Geraldine McPhee, SNDdeN, and Dr. Marcia Cort, MD to the Board of Directors. Ms. McGee’s relationship with Sisters Academy began in 2004 as the first Development Assistant when the school opened. In 2005, she moved on in her career to work in Media/Event Relations for the Baltimore Ravens and most recently completed a M.A. Degree in Theology at St. Mary’s Seminary. Sr. Geraldine McPhee, SNDdeN, joins the Board as the appointed representative for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Her career background is in early childhood education. And, Dr. Marcia Cort, MD, Medical Director of Ambulatory Services at the University of Maryland Capital Region Health, is returning to the Board after serving from 2012-2018. We are excited to gain the expertise and service from each of the new board members.

A Celebration of Shining Stars RSVP Reminder

In appreciation for your commitment as a loyal donor and friend, we hope you plan to join us to celebrate with our students and to experience our mission in action.

Friday, October 25, 2019
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Greetings, visiting with students, a short program, and refreshments.

RSVP by October 20, 2019
to Barbara Tipton
btipton@sistersacademy.org
410-242-1212 x14
**Blessing and Investiture Welcomes Class of 2023**

On Thursday, September 12, 2019, the school community gathered together for the 16th annual Blessing and Investiture of the fifth grade students, Class of 2023. Family members and recent SAB graduates gathered with the faculty and students to welcome the new fifth grade girls into our school community. As a tradition, each of the three classes, 6th, 7th and 8th grade students, presented cards and posters to the new students, and two of the classes performed dances as a celebration of the new girls becoming a part of their school sisterhood.

As part of the ceremony, the students were offered encouraging remarks presented by Amira Williams, a 2016 graduate, now a senior at Woodlawn High School. “Who would have thought that I would be speaking at the Sisters Academy Investiture? I was not what you would call a ‘star student.’ But it was this school that gave me a foundation and the starting points for success. Sisters Academy taught me the importance of equality, prioritizing, and happiness. So do your best to incorporate all these things and even more while you are here at Sisters Academy.”

Following Amira’s remarks and the class presentations, Sr. Delia Dowling, President, and Mrs. Laura Minakowski, Principal, presented each new student with her class stole. “The stole is a symbol of our sisterhood, surrounding each student with our blessing, peace, and love,” stated Mrs. Minakowski. In closing the event, all in attendance – students, graduates, teachers, parents, and younger siblings – together recited the school’s Pledge of Nonviolence. This positive and joyful experience marks the full incorporation of the new class into the school community.

**An Extraordinary Partnership Helps to Sustain Our Mission**

Throughout the year, when Crissa Holder Smith walks across campus at Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU), she is greeted by students, colleagues, and friends with the question, “When are girls coming back?” “The girls” are the Sisters Academy seventh grade students.

For more than a decade, Crissa Holder Smith has provided our students with a week-long communications camp at the NDMU campus. The camp is designed to develop writing, research, and presentation skills. As she explains, “In our first summer together many years ago, the girls developed writing projects they could present as a news story for a television newscast. Not only did the projects include research and writing for the news, the students discovered their talent for presenting stories in front of a teleprompter and camera.”

Today, with changes in technology and the vast array of social communication platforms, the students now utilize YouTube for presenting their projects as videos before a live audience of University professors, students, and staff. And before producing their videos, the girls are instructed on the rules and etiquette for the safe use of social media.

This summer, the students chose to explore trafficking and produced short videos that exposed how young women could be enticed into unhealthy situations. The students also participated in the Trail Blazer program that is offered for first-generation college students. The program provided a question-and-answer session about things to know when preparing to attend college. The program also included a tour of the campus, including the college book store, where the girls discovered that the “book” store sells more items than just books.

Notre Dame of Maryland University has provided a variety of resources for the benefit of Sisters Academy students and teachers. Since 2008, we have held our graduation in the beautiful Marikle Chapel of the Annunciation. In addition, faculty members Kristine Kirk and Lawrence Beyer have served on the Board of Directors. Sisters Academy of Baltimore is blessed to have this extraordinary partnership.
Natural Concerns Lends A Hand

The campus at Sisters Academy is once again weed-free, trimmed, tidy, and beautiful! Many thanks for a job well done by the landscape team from Natural Concerns, Inc. Our summer campus clean-up was made possible by company owner, Roland Harvey, and General Manager, George Goodhues, who both support the mission and vision of the school. These two men have built a successful company based on a philosophy of hiring, training, and supporting young men and women who have grown up in what they refer to as “at-risk” Baltimore — at risk of dropping out of school, at risk of violence, at risk of a life of permanent poverty or prison. Natural Concerns is committed to supporting their staff members with the training and opportunities that enable them to continue learning, to grow into leadership positions, and to develop their full potential. Like Sisters Academy, as a company, Natural Concerns Inc. demonstrates a passion for original solutions.

In addition to the contributed services from Natural Concerns, Inc. we are also thankful to the Bon Secours Health System employee volunteers who last spring worked alongside our students in planting flowers around the school grounds. We are grateful to these organizations for their generous “helping hands” in making our school grounds beautiful!

Charitable Giving

Fall marks the time for many organizations to hold charitable giving campaigns in the workplace. Please remember Sisters Academy of Baltimore as you make your pledges for the coming year.

- **United Way**—Sisters Academy of Baltimore is a write-in designee.
- **Combined Federal Campaign**—#46817
- **Maryland Charity Campaign**—#341975939
- **Combined Charity Campaign for Baltimore City**—#2746
- **Giant Food** is continuing its A+ School Rewards program. **New supporters** need to register your GIANT card and designate Sisters Academy of Baltimore (School ID #04638). Register online at [www.giantfood.com/aplus](http://www.giantfood.com/aplus) or call 1-877-275-2758.
- **Harris Teeter** offers a similar program “Together in Education.” To enroll, simply tell the cashier at checkout that you want your VIC card linked to Sisters Academy of Baltimore’s account number (1837).
- Don’t forget to save and send in your “Box Tops for Education.”
- **Amazon Smile**—Start your holiday shopping at [www.amazonsmile.com](http://www.amazonsmile.com) and designate Sisters Academy as your beneficiary at no cost to you.