President's Report

for OLMC Alumnae AGM – 15th September 2013

It is with great pleasure that I report on the events and activities of the OLMC Parramatta Alumnae for the 2012-2013 year.

This year the OLMC Alumnae Committee witnessed and supported “the College of our hearts” in several endeavours. These were: the 2012 September Reunion and AGM, the Year 12 Dux and Catherine McAuley student awards, the ex-student OLMC Catherine McAuley award and sponsorship of several Mercy girls in world championship contests in the areas of public speaking and athletics. These opportunities make us so proud to be a part of the vibrant life of our dear Alma Mater.

The OLMC Annual Reunion day, including the Alumnae Association’s AGM, is the pinnacle of our year in service to the College. The day began with the Mercy Mass being celebrated for our OLMC community by Fr Walter Fogarty, the College chaplain. It was wonderful to hear the many ex-students comment on how the Mass encapsulated a feeling of sentiment for their College as the entrance procession with memorabilia was displayed. Particular mention must also be made of the music staff who rehearsed with the College choir and instrumental performers to sing and play the beautiful hymns chosen. These spiritual sounds lifted our spirits on high in fine Mercy tradition, drawing us ever closer to our God. We also appreciate that it is the grounds and maintenance staff who see to it that the chapel and all the areas of the College we use are meticulously prepared to welcome us.

The classes of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 1982 were represented with memorabilia symbols as part of their school life in the opening procession of thanksgiving. Special mention was also given, in memoriam, of several life members who had recently passed away. May they rest in peace.

Then all proceeded to the Christina Creede Music Centre where the Alumnae Association’s AGM was held. There was no election in 2012 as office bearers are voted biannually. College principal Kitty Guerin presented her report, highlighting the completion of more wonderful new facilities at OLMC. She made special mention of the OLMC Mercy Tree foundation with the opportunity for outreach in mercy it provides for present and past students. Sr Barbara supported Kitty in elaborating on two projects chosen for the appeal for 2013: water tanks for the farm at Mamre House and a program to better the conditions and opportunities of indigenous women and girls in a remote NSW community dispensed through the ministry of the Sisters of Mercy.

As the Alumnae present were very keen to hear more of such “Mercy works”, Sr Janet shared about initiatives that have been conducted, under her guidance, at Mamre House for several years. Here women from South Sudan are taught English and are prepared for the citizenship exam; thus they are supported and welcomed as they try to make their new home in Australia.

The meeting voted unanimously to donate $15 000 on behalf of all alumnae members for use in Mercy Tree projects in 2013.
As she was retiring at the end of 2012, a presentation was made to Vivien Brewer, Assistant Principal of the College since 2005, to thank her for her constant support of the Alumnae association, especially to the committee. Vivien, a Mercy girl through and through, attended many reunions. Her gracious manner and welcoming smile were hallmarks of a lady who has also made a practical contribution in taking photos for several years at the Annual Reunion Day Mass celebration.

Then it was time to catch up with old treasured school friends, natter and laugh over a light luncheon in the new senior common room. A highlight was the gracious hospitality extended by the newly elected senior school leadership team. The girls’ presence made us feel so special, reawakening those memories of when we were ‘once upon a time’, with youth on our side, wearing our school uniform. A really special part of this day was the finale, when both current and past students linked to sing the Alma Mater in chorus together.

Our other Alumnae-initiated function was the 2012 Catherine McAuley Alumnae Award, presented each year during the College assembly nearest to International Women’s Day. On 19 February, the award was presented to 1963 graduate Jan Chivers (nee Hargreaves).

It was truly an honor to meet Jan Chivers from the Western NSW country town of Cowra. It was particularly her lifelong work in community service that led her to be adjudged a most worthy recipient in every way. Jan believes that Our Lady of Mercy College was ahead of its time in responding to the educational needs of young women. Her strong identification with the mercy values of compassion, justice, hospitality and service is evident in her ministry.

Her College Assembly speech paid tribute to the role OLMC played in her life. She had these pearls of wisdom to share with the 2013 students:
“Whatever path you choose in life, you can live by the Mercy values and they will provide you with a moral compass by which you can chart your life… Your time at OLMC will see you grow from an OLMC girl to a Mercy woman”

It was very inspiring to hear how Jan provided hope for the girls in sharing her story of continual learning – that “you are never too old to learn, to seek new paths of learning, no matter what the future may hold”.

The committee was also pleased to have, on behalf of the Alumnae, financially supported the following girls:

- Two students to travel in March to Durban, South Africa and represent Australia at the world individual Debating and Public Speaking Titles. The worthy recipients were: Jodie Rodriguez (Year 12) and Imogen King (Year 11)
- One student to go in July to Kiev to the World Junior Athletics Championships: Alex Hully (Year 10)
- OLMC Parramatta Alumnae Award for Year 12 Dux - shared by Melissa Wehbe and Melissa Psaila
- OLMC Parramatta Catherine McAuley Year 12 Student award: Sandra Werdi
In June, 2013, the current P&F president Kathy McGiffen, herself an ex-student, joined our committee meeting, to see if there were ways in which both the Alumnae and P&F could liaise in mutual endeavours for the good of the College. We agreed that both associations are an integral part of the OLMC community, joining in College functions and seeking to financially support when requested student trips for educational and social justice ventures. It was good to make this contact for future reference.

At this point, I would like to thank Kitty Guerin for her endless support and encouragement to the Alumnae during her term of office as Principal of OLMC. Her inclusive, friendly and fair dinkum nature allowed the committee to run ever so smoothly. Thank you, Kitty.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated Alumnae team for their service in ensuring that our Alumnae represent “the college of our hearts always”. Their generosity with their time, talent and enthusiasm is a joy to behold.

Finally, in the words which are so much a part of our Mercy heritage- Sub Tuum Praesidium, - may we always take refuge under the gentle protection of Mary, our universal mother, who models for us the love of our merciful God

May you all have a wonderful Mercy Day on September 24.

Grace Blahut
(President)