

It is with great pleasure that I report the activities of the OLMC Parramatta Alumnae Committee for the 2018-19 period.

The 15th Reunion and AGM was attended by approximately 80 Alumnae. In the Parramatta Mercy tradition, the recently elected Student Leadership Team for 2019/2020 supported the gathering of ex-students with cheerful hospitality and service, acting as tour guides and ushers throughout the day. Alumnae members appreciate the participation of current OLMC girls who were interested to hear the many and varied school day stories from many decades ago.

We extend our grateful thanks to the College Principal, Stephen Walsh and the College Board for facilitating our use of the Edith Angel Hall, and opening up the new College buildings for conducted tours on Reunion Day. Being on College grounds ensures that Alumnae members see the upgrades to older buildings, the newly completed facilities, and observe the evolution of this exceptional educational setting.

A central part of the reunion program is Mass celebrated by College Chaplain Fr Walter Fogarty. On behalf of the Alumnae, I thank the Parramatta Sisters of Mercy for the privilege to use the Mother Mary Clare Dunphy Memorial Chapel. Our appreciation is also given to the College String and Chorale Ensemble for the musical accompaniment they provide during the Mass, and the support from Mr Paul Whitney, the College Director of Music Performance.

Last Reunion, the Deputy Principal, Mrs Marie Wood reported on the successful introduction of four new Houses, Callan, Kavanagh, Doyle and Callaghan that joined the Houses of McAuley, Mercedes, Clare and Stanley. This vertically grouped House structure is designed to provide a strong pastoral link of belonging, family, unity and shared values amongst the 1000-strong enrolment at OLMC. Mrs Wood also outlined a project earmarked for the coming 130-year College anniversary. A bronze cast sculpture of the Venerable Catherine McAuley will be placed in College grounds adjacent to the Convent rear garden. The Alumnae elected to contribute up to \$3000 to this project which is anticipated to be completed in November 2019.

Term 1 2019 saw the first Alumnae Scholarship holder commence her education at OLMC. The annual commitment of \$5000.00 to support a young woman's education in the Mercy tradition, is now a significant and ongoing connection between the Alumnae and the present-day College community. In March, another group of eligible applicants completed the College Scholarship application process, including a written submission, sitting the Allwell tests, and an interview before the Scholarship panel. I am pleased to advise that the second Alumnae Scholarship has been offered to the daughter of an OLMC Parramatta ex-student to commence Year 7 in 2020. I remind members that an additional amount from today's registration fee will be contributed to the Alumnae scholarship fund. Private donations made to the Alumnae Scholarship fund are tax deductible.

At the AGM, \$3000 was directed to support the Mercy Tree projects. In 2018/19 the Alumnae's contribution was allocated to the House of Welcome, a project to provide holistic support for refugees and asylum seekers living in the community. Our support of Mercy Tree works maintains a strong connection between the Alumnae, the community works of the Sisters of Mercy and the College commitment to Mercy programs. The Chinese Elm tree planted in the College's Brigid Shelly Courtyard is the living symbol of these connections.

The Alumnae sponsors two cash prizes at the Year 12 Graduation Assembly each year. The 2018 prizes were awarded to Dux of Year 12 - Akyra Yoshiy, and to the recipient of the Catherine McAuley Student Award - Claudia Connelly.

The 2018 Catherine McAuley Alumnae Award was presented to Dr Melissa Hunfalvay on 14 May 2019 at a College Assembly in the Ailsa Mackinnon Community Centre. Dr Hunfalvay flew from the USA to accept her award. In sharing her life story, Melissa was both inspirational and entertaining. Her theme and message to the girls was “to be persistent and willing to fail, as experiencing failure is a valuable learning experience”. Melissa initially moved to the USA to follow a professional tennis opportunity. During the subsequent years of residency in the USA, she participated in the professional tennis circuit, moved to athletics coaching, and studied Sports Science and Psychology to a Doctorate level. Melissa’s years of extensive research was motivated by a quest to develop inexpensive tools suited to providing accurate diagnosis for a wide range of childhood and adult disabilities. A set of quantitative eye-tracking products, marketed under the name of *RightEye*, were the result. They are currently in use across the USA, Europe and more recently in Australia.

I take this opportunity to encourage all Alumnae to take the initiative and nominate a fellow ex-student whose good works and personal commitment to Mercy values flies under the radar in the wider community. We have an online nomination process on the College website and the Committee welcome questions to assist with preparation of a nomination.

In March, members of the Alumnae once again participated in the annual OLMC Parramatta Open Day. The enthusiastic response from several recent College graduates to the callout for Open Day Alumnae Ambassadors, is indicative of the strong alumnae connection nurtured amongst present day OLMC graduates. Charged with greeting and sharing their OLMC story with prospective students and parents, the Ambassadors reported great interest from visitors about the 130-year history and the strong Alumnae connection that permeates the educational experience at OLMC.

In May, the Committee hosted an informal gathering of the most recent College graduates to welcome them into the Alumnae. At this event, the Year 12 graduates collected their 2018 Misericordia, shared news with classmates and teachers, and were encouraged to remain connected with their Alma Mater into the future.

Alumnae activities are featured in the two annual *OLMsCene* magazines. This space allows the sharing of Reunion Day photos and gatherings of the milestone year class groups. We thank the College Communications team, in particular Christine Pace and Sue Giacomelli, for their creative layout of our content. We also acknowledge their regular production of the OLMC Alumnae e-newsletter that keeps the broad Alumnae community connected with all manner of happenings associated with OLMC Parramatta. Alumnae member also have the OLMC Parramatta website and Facebook pages to stay up to date. Do encourage any classmates that you remain in contact with to complete the online Alumnae membership form or to keep their contact details up to date.

With this report, I have the opportunity to sincerely thank each individual Alumnae Committee member for the contribution to our activities over the past 12 months. Without a team effort

the tradition of annual Alumnae reunions and practical links and support for current College activities could not be continually celebrated and assured into the future.

On your behalf, I thank each one for their enthusiastic behind the scenes' preparation for the Reunion and co-ordination with the Student Leadership Team on their tasks throughout today. Particular thanks to our Secretary/Treasurer, Andrea Kohler and the College Staff supporting her role. Special mentions to Angela Green for preparing the archive photo slides projected on the screen today, Jenni Gordon for liaison with the College Student Leadership team and Sr Barbara for her work to foster contact amongst the Milestone Year class groups.

This is an election year for the Alumnae Committee. We are fortunate to have many of the current committee prepared to stand again for election. At the same time, I acknowledge the commitment to the Alumnae and pride in their Alma Mater of Committee members who retire at this AGM. They will continue to be amongst the strongest advocates for the value and goals of the OLMC Parramatta Alumnae and most welcome Reunion attendees into the future.

In conclusion, I urge all Alumnae to be guided by the spirit of compassion and service to those in need which inspired the selfless actions of the Venerable Catherine McAuley and her community of Sisters. Let us frequently pause and give thanks that those same guiding principles and Mercy traditions continue to underpin our educational experience at OLMC Parramatta.

Christine Robertson (Zadro, 1970)
OLMC Alumnae President