

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

by Lauren E. Gerber

Margaret McGlohon '81C

*Alumnae Director
Saint Mary's School
Raleigh, N.C.*

At Home at Saint Mary's

Margaret McGlohon '81C graduated from Saint Mary's junior college in 1981 and then went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she completed a bachelor's degree in Recreation Administration. She then went to work for the City of Greenville (NC) Parks and Recreation Department as a program director. Then, life brought her back to Saint Mary's.

"I was a staff member from the fall of 1988 through late August 1994 as the Director of Student Activities and Housing," Margaret explains. She left to join the sports development team at the NC Department of Commerce and returned in January of 2001 as the Alumnae Director.

"I served in the Alumnae Office for two years then moved back over to Student Life where I served as the Associate Head and Director of Student Programs (2003-2007) and then as the Assistant Dean of Students (2007-2010). In the summer of 2010, I returned to the Alumnae Office and have been here since."

In total, Margaret has given Saint Mary's two years of her life as a student and an additional 26 as a staff member. In 2021, she'll celebrate her 40th reunion with her classmates.

Technically, according to Margaret, "Saint Mary's has been part of my life since the summer of 1975 when I first attended Mary Lou Jones's Tennis camp. During that summer, I decided I wanted to come to Saint Mary's. I thought the camp counselors – Anna Neal Blanchard '76HS, Mabel Pace Geoghegan '76HS, Jean Walston Neese '76C, Lou White '76C, and others – were the coolest girls I had ever met, and they were great tennis players, too. At that time, the Saint Mary's Tennis team was the best in North Carolina, and I wanted to be a part of it! I kept returning to tennis camp as a camper and then eventually as a counselor for many summers."

Margaret has very fond memories of her time as a student at 900 Hillsborough Street.

"I remember being a freshman living in 1903, which is now the Binder Health Center. We had 'fun wars' with the girls who lived in West Rock," she says and laughs. "I also served as a Hall Counselor – which we now call a prefect – on second middle Smedes, alongside Ruth E. Perry Holding '81C. We lived on second middle Smedes with high school seniors. I loved the porch swing at 1903, looking out the window on second middle Smedes into the Grove, and spending time on the Eure Jones tennis courts."

It was there she played college tennis for Mary Lou Jones. "We had a really great team and the best coach around," she says.



Continued...

She also served as President of the Student Government Association her sophomore year. "I really liked the club activities and walks, attending chapel, going to assemblies, listening to the Cold Cuts, cheering on the Saints, and spending time on dorm."

Her Saint Mary's experience was also influenced by the way faculty and staff made her feel. "I was known by the teachers," she recalls. "Our faculty were excellent and prepared us for college and/or our last two years of college. Being able to serve as a student leader and as an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees were opportunities of a lifetime. And like so many, I made lifelong friends at Saint Mary's."

Living and Working on Campus

As a staff member, Margaret says, "I enjoy attending all campus activities and watching our current students lead and participate. It's fun to cheer on the Saints, watch performances in Pittman, and I enjoy being back in Smedes Hall on Monday night as I oversee study hall. I also love walking through the front gates every day as I come to work."

When asked why she chose to work at Saint Mary's for her career, she says, "You might say Saint Mary's chose me! I was working at Ms. Jones's tennis camps the summer of 1988 while finishing my master's degree at East Carolina University. Ms. Jones told me she'd set up an interview for me with Dr. Clauston Jenkins who was Saint Mary's president at the time. The Student Activities and Housing Director was leaving, and Ms. Jones thought I should apply," she explains. "I met Dr. Jenkins in his office during our lunch break, in my tennis clothes, and he hired me on the spot. I started work in mid-August that year."

In reflecting on that time, she says, "I'm not sure working at Saint Mary's was in my plan, but it sure has become my passion and I am fortunate to be able to serve my alma mater."

Margaret says the Saint Mary's girls of today inspire her. "I get to witness, on a daily basis, the transformation that is happening to students as they move through their SMS days and years. They grow in so many ways and are truly prepared for college and their next journey. I also watch their friendships grow and their love for this place grow. What is happening today is what has happened for girls since we opened the doors in 1842 – it happened for me, I know that for sure!"

When not on campus, Margaret enjoys traveling (and hopes to do more), spending time with family and friends, reading, catching the newest movies and cheering on the Tar Heels!

A Desire to Give Back

In her role as Alumnae Director, Margaret knows personally the importance of engaging today's alumnae in the life of the school.

"It is a joy to get to know alumnae of all ages and to share 'today's SMS story' with alumnae as we travel regionally and across the country," she says. "It's also fun to introduce alumnae who live in the same city to each other. An extra perk of this job is seeing and staying with my classmates as we travel."

Margaret often reflects on changes at Saint Mary's over the years since her own graduation.

"Our campus has the same feel as it did when I was a student nearly 40 years ago, although most of the spaces have been updated and look better than ever before thanks to generous donors" she says. "Our assemblies and chapels are the same; we gather in both places weekly and students continue to lead them. Student leaders also continue to learn *how* to lead and to take ownership of their school. We have 39 engaged faculty/staff living on campus who have built a wonderful campus community

Continued...

and who supervise and create programs for our girls. When I was a student, there were six housemothers, a president (i.e., Head of School), and the Chaplain living on campus. All in all, our girls continue to grow, find their voice and their passions while at Saint Mary's – just as girls have been doing for generations."

Alumnae are also very important to Saint Mary's and her success according to Margaret. "There are two things I love most being as Alumnae Director – connecting with alumnae of all ages and in all cities and helping current students understand what this place will mean to them once they graduate and what their responsibility is to her," she explains.

On one point, Margaret is very clear. "I give back to say 'thank you' to Saint Mary's for what it has afforded me the last 40 years: a great education, special memories, amazing lifelong friends and new friends along the way. In addition to what I do in my professional role, I give back because I want to help Saint Mary's continue to be a place where girls thrive – a place alumnae can be proud of. I know I was only a student for two years, but Saint Mary's impact on me has been lifelong."

Another reason Margaret says she gives back and why she encourages others to give is: "Because our alma mater needs us!"

She explains, "Yes, our grounds are beautiful, and our brochures and magazine are stunning, but we are a school for young girls. I wish we had an enormous endowment that allowed us to not worry about raising funds for daily operations each year, but we do not, so we need annual fund dollars from every donor – to fill the gap tuition doesn't fill or the endowment can't cover; to pay for scholarship aid, athletics, the arts, technology, buildings and grounds, student activities, clubs, and organizations, supervision and for faculty and staff. That's why our annual fund is so important and that is why we need ALL alumnae to give, not just a quarter of us. I know not every young woman who walked through the gates of Saint Mary's had the same experience as I did, but what I do know is that more than 25% of us love this place and give some credit to this place for their success. Doesn't she deserve our support now?"

Margaret also says there are lots of other ways alumnae can get involved and stay engaged in support of Saint Mary's.

"In terms of giving back, no gift is too small, and none is too great. And, alumnae can also attend regional events, keep up by reading the bi-annual magazine and monthly e-newsletter. (Do we have your email?) You can also keep up by following us on social media ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).) They can also come to campus – cheer on the Saints on the field/court at concerts and plays; they can host an event or help host an event. They can also share with their wide network all about Saint Mary's and encourage parents and their families to visit and consider Saint Mary's for their daughters' high school years. Alumnae can volunteer as campaign committee members, as secretaries for their class year(s) and help gather updates and announcements, as well as serve on other committees, the Alumnae Council, or the Board of Visitors. Alumnae who own their own businesses or who are in a position to offer internships to our students can have a significant impact on our girls."

Margaret also wants alumnae to make sure they come back for their reunions. "Come to Reunion Weekend when it's your class year's turn. We can reminisce and we can also make new memories."

Saint Mary's alumnae like Margaret McGlohon '81C graduate with the skills, knowledge, and integrity they need for success. Whether furthering their education, pursuing professional careers, raising families, or leading as volunteers, our alumnae are agents for positive change. Margaret's story demonstrates the abilities Saint Mary's women have to do big things out in the world, and here at 900 Hillsborough Street. We're glad to share her story.

#

© 2019

For information regarding re-prints of this article, please contact Saint Mary's School's Alumnae and Development Office at development@sms.edu.