

# SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

## Alumnae Profile Series

by Chelsea Ward '09

### Michelle Oppegaard '93HS '95C

**Client Service Manager**  
**Hunter Rowe Real Estate Agents & Advisors**  
**Wake Forest, N.C.**

#### Coastal Girl Moves to Raleigh

Michelle Oppegaard '93HS '95C is an "East Coast Girl" in every sense of the word. Born and raised in Topsail Beach, N.C., she attended Topsail High School in Hampstead before coming to Saint Mary's.

"I looked at transferring to Saint Mary's because I needed a change in environment away from my hometown," Michelle explains.

She interviewed and toured the Saint Mary's campus in March of 1991. "To this day, I vividly recall that interview with Jeannie Herbert, and in more ways than one," she says and smiles. "The blouse I wore was such a bright orange, so bright in fact, Mrs. Herbert *never* forgot it and would bring it up from time to time."

That fall, Michelle began her Saint Mary's journey, enjoying classes with Randall Lathan and Dr. Wylie S. Quinn III.

"Dr. Quinn taught philosophy and religion and was the organ player during chapel services for many years," Michelle says. "The Chapel was one of my favorite places on campus, especially when Chaplain Meta Ellington, whom I knew from Topsail, provided the homily."

Other campus areas Michelle enjoyed included the day student lounge on the Quad and the bookstore where she worked. "I have some great vintage Saint Mary's pieces from my time at the bookstore", she says.

As a student, Michelle also managed the recycling program, collecting cans to take to the recycling center in Raleigh, N.C., and a Resident Advisor in Smedes and Holt Halls.

Michelle recalls her father playing several instruments and sharing his love of music with her as she grew up. She carried that love for music with her to Saint Mary's as a member of the Chorale.

"I sang in Chorale all four years and practiced piano with Ms. Terry Thompson," she says and smiles.

Michelle was the first and only Paderewski Medal-winner at Saint Mary's, which is given by the American College of Musicians (ACM/National Guild of Piano Teachers (NGPT) to those who perform memorized pieces, 10 each year for 10 consecutive years, in front of the NGPT, and also demonstrating skills like scales, arpeggios, cadences and sight-reading.

Michelle's love of music was passed down to her daughter, Anna, a 10<sup>th</sup> grade day student at Saint Mary's who also performs with the Chorale. "Music is just in our family's heart and soul," says Michelle.



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### Life After Saint Mary's

Michelle graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Childhood Development and with a minor in Religion from Meredith College and then relocated from Raleigh to Durham, N.C. There, Michelle became a youth minister and parish administrator for St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Later, she decided to make a career shift into real estate.

"As a third-generation real estate professional, it's a business my family knows very well," Michelle says. "I started Weaver, Boryk, and Associates in 2007 which specialized in distressed and foreclosed properties."

In mid-2010, Michelle left her position to work as a data manager for the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS). "I wanted to spend more time with my children, and the position provided me with a much more flexible schedule."

As a data manager, she specialized in student information, managing things like grade-entry and reporting, scheduling, and attendance management. In some ways, the move to a school environment was natural, as her late mother, Annette, had been a longtime Media Specialist for the Topsail school system until her retirement.

Michelle spent nearly six years at WCPSS before deciding she was ready to get back into the real estate industry. Today, she's the Client Services Manager for Hunter Rowe Real Estate Agents & Advisors. "In this role, I help real estate brokers and their clients with purchasing, legal, and closing procedures."

### Advice for the Next Generation

As a dedicated Saint Mary's alumna, Michelle believes in giving back to her alma mater because of what the school did for her and what it is currently doing for her daughter, Anna.

"It's great to share the Saint Mary's experience with my daughter. She's getting a quality education in a terrific learning environment," Michelle says.

In addition to her volunteer work as a current parent, Michelle serves as a member of the Saint Mary's Alumnae Council. She sees firsthand how Saint Mary's continues to impact current students.

"I love the direction Saint Mary's is going and how innovative the curriculum is," she explains. "The educational opportunities for the girls are as impactful as are their days of service. I also love that they have 'Stop and Reflect' days, as well as opportunities for the girls with community partners. Saint Mary's truly is a transformative experience for so many women, and it's important we give back so today's girls continue to benefit as we did."

Saint Mary's alumnae, like Michelle Oppegaard '93HS '95C graduate with the skills, knowledge, and integrity they need for success. Whether furthering their education, pursuing professional careers, raising their families, or leading as volunteers, our alumnae are agents for positive change in their communities. Michelle is a great example how volunteering, contributing a yearly gift to the Annual Fund, and staying involved can help make a difference, and we're glad to share her story.

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