

STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS | STEM TO STAGE | MILESTONE MOUNTIES

The Mount

THE MAGAZINE OF MOUNT ST. DOMINIC ACADEMY | WINTER/SPRING 2021



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“
 “While I may be the first woman in this office, I won’t be the last.”
 ”

KAMALA HARRIS

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The Mount

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ON THE COVER: The 2019 MSDA L.E.O. Program Pinning Ceremony; (BACK ROW) Kaitlyn Hladik '21, Alex Cucciniello, Lia Tortoriello '21, Patty Ann Forsythe '21, Frances Vagias P'18, Elisabeth Prioletti '21, Katerina Holevas '21, Theodore Vagias P'18, Ava Lukowiak '21; (MIDDLE ROW) Candice Davila '21, Hema Devalla '21, Theo Exilus '21, Sophia Garske '21, Julia Rodano '21; (FRONT ROW) Catherine Browne '21, Elizabeth Conti '21, Isabella Vescera '21. NOT PICTURED: Brynn Caufield '21, Renee Schuldiner '21, and Isabel Taffet-Isaza '21.

*Several photos in this issue were taken prior to March 2020. For recent photos, masking and distance guidelines were followed.



Mount St. Dominic
ACADEMY



Together Apart - Members of the **MSDA Class of 1995** celebrate their 25th Reunion via Zoom

Dear Friends,

NEARING ITS 130TH YEAR, MOUNT ST. DOMINIC ACADEMY AND ALL WHO MAKE THE SCHOOL A COMMUNITY – current students, staff and faculty, alumnae, parents, families, and friends – continue to make the mission of *Empowering Young Women* come alive.

Creativity, flexibility, grit and determination have allowed students and faculty to return to the classroom for hybrid-model, in-person instruction. Adoption of online technologies and a desire for continued connectedness have led to a new vision for Mount alumnae class reunions. And the continued commitment and heartwarming generosity of the Mount's community of donors during a time of global uncertainty has strengthened the school's ability to ensure that every Mount student may remain a Mount student when crisis hits close to home.

This mid-year issue of *The Mount*, spanning a slightly longer period of time than in the previous years, is making the economic and eco-friendly shift to an electronic publication. The pages ahead include mini-profiles of members of our 2020 Milestone year Classes of 1970 and 1995 – having uniquely commemorated their 50th and 25th reunions respectively. These brief snapshots are a way for us to get to know and celebrate our vibrant alumnae community, and we look forward to highlighting them through these pages, social media, and the MSDA website. We encourage MSDA alumnae to visit www.msdacademy.org/alumnae to complete the alumnae questionnaire for profiles, guest speaker, and mentor opportunities.

As we work together apart, through this challenging moment in history, our gratitude remains with all those individuals using their gifts to heal, and our prayers remain with those who have been faced with unthinkable loss. Encouraged and uplifted by the renewal of life that is dawning with spring's gradual arrival, we look forward to stories of continued achievement for our students, and to a hopeful future for our families, alumnae, communities, nation, and world.

With gratitude,

Kate Sullivan '88
Alumnae Relations Director

FROM STEM TO STAGE TO SPACEX

Profile of a Mount
Student: Julia Rodano '21

Walking up "the hill" – schoolbooks, Seussical script and robot in hand – **Julia Rodano '21**, is on her way to start the school day. It's one of just a handful of days that remain for her at the Mount, as graduation for Julia and her classmates is less than 100 days away. With "curricular" comprising the core of any educational environment and "extra" pertaining to all that is offered and pursued beyond a course of study, Julia has created and followed a passion-driven path at the Mount by successfully blending academics, arts, athletics, and more.

With a selection of electives and honors courses that complement the Mount's core curriculum, Julia's coursework includes AP Computer Science A, Robotics, and Honors Physics. A student in the Mount's first cohort of The L.E.O. Program, (see pages 6 and 7), Julia and her L.E.O. team members and senior classmates **Ava Lukowiak '21**, **Isabel Taffet-Isaza '21** and **Lia Tortoriello '21** – recently pitched their budgeting app start-up Bigger Buck\$, to a panel of MSDA-style "sharks."

Bringing the arts into the mix, Julia's roster of Mount-related activities includes Chamber and Concert Choir, Lords Chords, and every Mount production to hit the stage in the Doris M. Byrne Performing Arts Center since her freshman year. For her final Mount role, Julia took to the stage as the "Cat in the Hat," (in tandem with fellow "Cat" **Caty Backfisch '21** – see page 14 for more), in *Seussical the Musical*.

"Julia has served in many roles in both musicals and plays, but she has also put her blood, sweat and tears



Photo © Fred Goode

into helping to build and paint the sets, creating dramaturgical presentations and participating in choir," shared **Michelle Posner**, Director of Performing Arts. "She is active in the International Thespian Society and has been an integral part of the performing arts department."

From team player in the arts, to goalie on the Lacrosse team, Julia explores her passions through classes and clubs, gaining valuable experience that she feels will be helpful to her future. With her penchant for technology, it is no surprise that the MSDA Innovation Lab has become a place of inspiration for her. It also served as home base during her summer 2020 internship on the MSDA technology team, led by faculty member **Elizabeth Rogacki** and focused on preparing the classrooms for successful hybrid learning.

"I love to code," Julia remarked. "I am very involved in the Robotics Club, and we just submitted our game design challenge which was exciting since I have never really done any design before."

If taken at face value, one might be confused by a high school senior's joy, enthusiasm and capacity – in equal measure – for all things stage and STEM. But to bring those passions into better focus and perspective, you just need to ask.

"I believe there is a connection between arts and STEM – both are about creating

“I believe there is a connection between arts and STEM – both are about creating and working toward building a better and more beautiful world.”

and working towards building a better and more beautiful world," Julia stated. "The expanded acronym – STEAM – includes "art," which shows how much art and STEM are intertwined; they both require creativity and they both bring joy to people."

When contemplating her path beyond the Mount, art and technology are core building blocks.

"I'm interested in both areas because I want to help make the world a better place and provide future generations with the resources they need to create a more sustainable and peaceful world," Julia continued. "I plan on majoring in computer science, hope to continue my journey with robotics, and as for the arts, I hope to find opportunities to be part of theatrical productions and choral groups." And if for some reason the college she selects doesn't have a robotics team – that's OK, Julia says she'll mentor students in creating one.



Throughout the past year, Julia noted that the ability to stay engaged with MSDA club activities has made the year seem almost “normal.” Also keeping her busy – college applications – with her sights set on multi-degree programs with acceptances from schools like DeSales, Montclair State, NJIT and Worcester Polytechnic Institute to name a few. As for life beyond the books? Julia’s sights are set high. *Really high.*

“I want to get a job at NASA or SpaceX. I have been interested in space for a long time, and the idea of the unknown is fascinating to me,” Julia concluded. “I want to thank the school administration and Mrs. Rogacki for their hard work and dedication to adding more STEM courses to Mount’s curriculum. I hope what has occurred in my four years creates a wave of STEM courses and encouragement for young women at the Mount.”

Julia’s path is unique, and exemplifies the Mount’s focus on helping young women “find their fire.” No two students share the same journey, strengths or passions, but with a dedication to empowering young women, the Mount provides them with opportunities for education and exploration that transcend traditional expectations, providing students with the chance to soar.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE CURRICULUM BOX

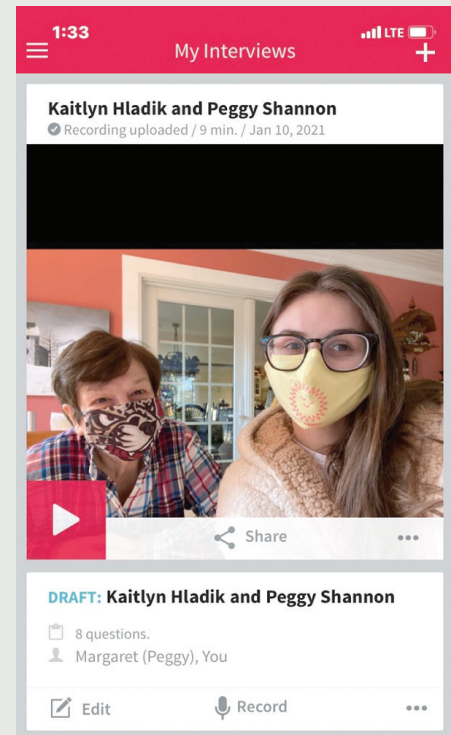
MSDA Journalism Class Explores Storytelling and StoryCorps

Expert research skills, strong writing ability and an unwavering commitment to the truth; core elements at the foundation of any worthy journalism course, including the special elective offered at the Mount and taught by faculty member, Mrs. **Erin Croarkin**. But like that news story that resonates in your psyche and delivers a fresh perspective, new insight or enlightening moment, the key to “landing the story” with a reader, viewer, or in this case - a student - is that special moment, unique viewpoint, and out-of-the-ordinary experience.

Through the exploration of a personal relationship of great importance, each journalism student undertook a midterm project that incorporated the framework created by the non-profit StoryCorps, whose mission is to “preserve and share humanity’s stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world.” As regularly heard on NPR, students focused their work on interview skills and story-telling, moving the mid-year test beyond paper and pen, to incorporate relationships, conversations and memory making.

“During this time where so many of us are physically separated from those close to us, the StoryCorps project was a way for our Journalism students to use their interview skills, practice their listening skills, and, most importantly, connect with a loved one,” remarked **Mrs. Croarkin**. “Even though we are not all physically together, we can still share stories, listen and connect.”

In a reflection on the project, **Kaitlyn Hladik '21** noted of her interview with her grandmother, “I know that my Nanny will not be with me forever, so I knew I wanted to have something of hers I could always hold onto. Her comforting voice is something super unique to always have access to in addition to her wisdom.”



COMPUTER SCIENCE FEMALE DIVERSITY AWARD

The Mount was awarded the **College Board AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award** for expanding young women’s access to AP computer science and helping to close the gender gap in computer science. A total of 1119 institutions earned College Board recognition in 2020, with the Mount being one of only 859 institutions honored for achieving this important result in AP Computer Science Principles.



Mount Students Enter the “Shark Tank”

INAUGURAL “LIONWORKS” ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETITION IS CULMINATION OF FIRST L.E.O. PROGRAM COHORT

On February 16, 2021, five “Sharks” arrived at Rosary Hall and took their places as judges for the first ever L.E.O. LionWorks Entrepreneurial Competition at Mount St. Dominic Academy. The exciting culmination of the Mount’s first cohort of the L.E.O. (leadership, entrepreneurship, and opportunities) Program – the two-year intensive elective that blends academics from the classroom with life lessons from the boardroom – the shark-tank style event featured head-to-head competition among four teams made up of the 17 students.

THE PRODUCTS, TEAMS AND MENTORS

Presenting their business pitches to the panel of “sharks” were the four teams of Mount seniors who had signed onto this innovative elective in their sophomore year, and worked over the course of their junior and senior years to learn the start-up business lifecycle. The L.E.O. LionWorks teams were:

Bigger Buck\$ - a budgeting app designed to help high school and college students; created by **Ava Lukowiak '21, Julia Rodano '21, Isabel Taffet-Isaza '21** and **Lia Tortoriello '21**; mentored by Kelly Gillease, Chief Marketing Officer of NerdWallet

College: Unlocked - an app to help students with the college admissions process and beyond, created by **Catherine Browne '21, Sophia Garske '21, Kaitlyn Hladik '21** and **Isabella Vescera '21**; mentored by **Megan McGee '08**, Product Manager, ONYX Design

Charcuterie Chix - a female-owned and operated charcuterie board company, created by **Theodora Exilus '21, Patty Ann Forsythe '21, Katerina Holevas '21** and **Renee Schuldiner '21**; mentored by Silvia Lucci, Founder LUHV Food

D1 Heat - a company that strives to meet all your hand warming needs, created by **Brynn Caufield '21, Elizabeth Conti '21, Candice Davila '21, Hema Devalla '21** and **Elisabeth Prioletti '21**; mentored by **Jessie Garcia '08**, Founder and CEO, Tozuda

The “sharks” awarded the first prize of \$5,000 in collegiate scholarships, sponsored by Toyota North America, to College: Unlocked, and the second prize of a \$2,500 scholarship to D1 Heat. The second place scholarship was partially funded by an anonymous alumna’s \$5,000 donation in support of the L.E.O. Program.

Ms. Briana Nelson, General Manager of Toyota North America served as a “shark” and remarked, “As a champion of women in the workforce, partnering with the Mount and the Leonidas Foundation on behalf of Toyota North America to

provide tomorrow’s female business leaders with this unique opportunity has been so exciting.”

“Watching the young women of the Mount compete in their first ever L.E.O. “LionWorks” Entrepreneurial Competition was thrilling for everyone involved in the creation of The L.E.O. Program,” said Matthew Perricone, president of the Leonidas Foundation. “We are so proud of the work they’ve done.”

The inclusion of the L.E.O. Program as part of the curriculum at the Mount has enabled the school to morph the classroom into an entrepreneurial incubator, where discussions of customer segmentation, distribution channels and revenue modeling are the norm, and guest speakers and professional mentors serve as role models and co-educators.

“Today’s Mount students are the change-makers of tomorrow, and empowering them with the skills and self-confidence they’ll need to challenge the status quo and strive for the C-suite is something we take very seriously,” noted **Christine Victori**, moderator of the L.E.O. Program at the Mount. “These 17 young women have embraced the opportunities provided by the L.E.O. Program, and the time, effort and passion they’ve devoted to their work, and to each other, has been incredibly rewarding.”

A new group of students are currently enrolled in the second L.E.O. Cohort at the Mount, with a pinning ceremony planned for April 2021.



And the winner is - College: Unlocked! L to R: **Briana Nelson**, General Manager Toyota North America; **Alex Cucciniello**, Leonidas Foundation Vice President; MSDA Seniors **Kaitlyn Hladik '21, Sophia Garske '21,** and **Catherine Browne '21**; and **Matthew Perricone**, Leonidas Foundation President. Not pictured: **Isabella Vescera '21**.



Team Bigger Buck\$ L to R: Isabel Taffet-Isaza '21, Lia Tortoriello '21, Ava Lukowiak '21, and Julia Rodano '21



Team Charcuterie Chix L to R: Katerina Holevas '21, Renee Schuldiner '21, Patty Ann Forsythe '21, and Theodora Exilus '21



Team D1 Heat L to R: Team Mentor Jessie Garcia '08, Candice Davila '21, Elizabeth Conti '21, Hema Devalla '21, Elisabeth Prioletti '21, and Brynn Caufield '21

Mount Alumna Turned Judge and “Shark”

MSDA Alumna **Amanda Azzinnari '10**, is the director of brand partnerships and merchandising at Alula (www.myalula.com), a “radically honest resource making cancer less lonely, built by someone who’s been there.” Alula supports people, families, and friends through the entire lifecycle of cancer, from diagnosis and treatment to recovery and bereavement. As part of the founding team at Alula, Amanda knows first-hand the start-up process, with Alula recently securing \$2.2 million in seed funding from BBG Ventures, Andy Dunn, Metrodora Ventures, Thrive Capital, Village Global, Homebrew, Shrug Capital, Basement Ventures, Company Ventures, K5 Global, K50 Ventures, and several angel investors.

Fresh off the heels of the pitch process, Amanda took her place as a “shark” at the Mount’s first ever L.E.O. “LionWorks” Entrepreneurial Competition.

“It was wonderful to see the girls come up with creative solutions for problems they’re experiencing in this phase of life, whether it’s searching for the right college or understanding how to effectively budget their finances,” Amanda noted about the students’ project topics.

“That level of problem solving is entrepreneurship at its core.”



If A Girl Can See It, She Can Be It

Kamala Harris Becomes Vice President

By **Catherine Browne '21**, Editor-in-Chief of *The Argosy*

On January 20, 2021, Kamala Harris made history, as she became the first female, first African American, and first South Asian American to be sworn into the position of Vice President of the United States. Joe Biden had selected Harris as his running mate for the 2020 Presidential election as they ran against the incumbent, Donald J. Trump. Harris was inaugurated as the new Vice President of the United States of America, thus inspiring young women across the country. Politics was once a male-dominated field and Vice President Harris broke societal standards by being the first woman to gain the second most powerful position in the U.S. government. For a school with young women who are exploring their passions and interests for their futures in all arenas of the world, witnessing a woman ascending to the position of Vice President of the United States is another indication that there are no limitations to what women can accomplish.



© Jonathan Newton / The Washington Post

“Chucks & Pearls” on Inauguration Day COOL-CHIC ACCESSORIES ARE A SYMBOL OF CHANGE

January 20, 2021, was an historic day – America’s first female Vice President, first Black Vice President, and first South Asian Vice President was sworn into office. To commemorate the monumental milestone (and maybe to protect their feet from all the broken glass from the shattered ceiling on the ground), many women across the U.S. accented their outfits for the day with iconic Chuck Taylor sneakers and a strand of pearls. A staple in her campaign trail wardrobe, the energizing blend of cool comfort with stylish grace had become synonymous with then candidate Harris’ promise of a new day for women, and a new future for America.



Volante McGee Henderson '88, is a professional educator the Richmond County School System in Augusta, Georgia and Southern New Hampshire University. Volante studied at Lincoln University (where she joined the Zeta Phi Beta sorority) and earned her BA in criminal justice from University of Phoenix in 2008, and her MA in management and leadership from Liberty University in 2011. With a career spanning roles in education and human resources, Volante – mom to Quinton, Eshlyn, and Randy – noted on inauguration day that this was a moment for the history books, and a story she’ll look forward to telling.

“I work very hard to plant seeds of wisdom, hope and inspiration into my adolescent and adult learners alike. Not only did the appointment of Kamala Harris as our nation’s first woman of color VP affirm that preparation and commitment lead to success, I was personally moved because the world now has yet another positive example of what all people can do when provided with the opportunity. The more we can promote positive images and produce culturally diverse role models for our youth, stereotypes can be eliminated, esteem can be elevated and obstacles can be more readily overcome. I’m of that stock thanks to my education at MSDA.”

Mounties for Mounties: THE EMPOWER HOUR

The MSDA Alumnae Office is launching a new monthly series entitled, “Mounties for Mounties: The Empower Hour.” For 60 minutes, Mount alumnae will gather together on Zoom, and be encouraged, energized, and empowered by a fellow alumna who will be sharing their unique talent, profession, or passion. Make an hour-long escape with women of the Mount alumnae community, where connectedness, kindness, and fun are key.

Join us for launch on **March 29, 2021**, from 6 to 7 pm. Special guest **Dr. Amanda Aster-McKenna '06**, licensed psychologist in private practice and adjunct professor of psychology at Kean University, will lead a discussion on the ever-critical, yet woefully elusive, topic of self-care. Visit www.msdacademy.org/empower-hour for more information and to RSVP to receive Zoom details.

MSDA PRESENTS
MOUNTIES FOR MOUNTIES.

the
empower
hour

With Dr. Amanda Aster-
McKenna '06
March 29, 6 to 7 pm
Zoom

STAY TUNED TO MSDA SOCIAL MEDIA FOR UPCOMING ALUMNA SPEAKERS AND TOPICS. Email alumnae@msdacademy.org with topic ideas or a talent to share.

STUDENTS DRIVE CHANGE:

DEI STUDENT TASK FORCE TAKES SHAPE

SEPTEMBER 2020 USHERED IN THE CAUTIOUS AND MEASURED, YET HOPEFUL RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AT MOUNT ST. DOMINIC ACADEMY, with adjustments to schedules and hybrid learning models in place to protect students, staff, faculty and their families. Along with the cohorts and quarantine rules that had become part of the "new normal," the fresh school year also marked a major milestone for the Mount – a deliberate, intentional and multi-pronged approach to educating and elevating the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion across the MSDA community.

REPRESENTATIVE TEAM ANSWERS THE CALL TO ACTION

With the MSDA DEI Alumnae Network and the DEI subcommittee of the Board of Trustees created over the summer of 2020, the outset of the fall semester brought the inception of the DEI Student Task Force. The student-led group, which included an application process, was created to give students a voice, the ability to represent their peers to promote collaboration, and help effect positive change as part of the DEI initiatives underway.

Meeting regularly during CAP period in school and in the evening hours after extracurricular activities, the task force is working alongside two founding members of

the MSDA DEI Alumnae Network, **Chelsea Greene '16** and **Ghilianie Soto '08**. The task force and their efforts have been met with great regard during meetings with the MSDA Board of Trustees, the administrative leadership team, and the counseling department. The students' work is focused on the identification and implementation of programs to foster, embrace and celebrate a diverse and representative student body, create a framework for fairness and justice, and nurture an atmosphere of belonging within the school community.

Under the guidance of faculty members **Ms. Nicole Perez '10** and **Señora Ana Serra-Prescott**, the DEI Student Task Force, itself a diverse and representative group of young women, is comprised of **Ashlyn Brooks '23, Morgan Brown '23, Isabella Castillo '22, Reyna Gowie '23, Elise McGirt '24, Christina Piparo '22, and Elizabeth Victori '21.**

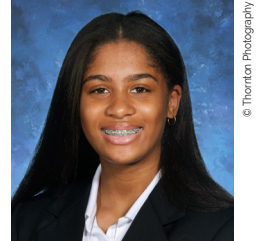
"Being part of the DEI Student Task Force has been an incredible opportunity for me to make a difference in my school and community," noted Ashlyn. "To me, it means being part of a team where everyone has the same goal: to create and nurture a school environment that promotes inclusivity and equality for every person that is part of it."

With "veritas" and "caritas" – truth and love – as core mores at the foundation of the Mount's mission, advancing an environment where every student feels the same, safe sense of belonging is critical.

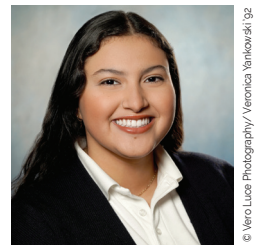
"The DEI Student Task Force is a chance to do better, to make a difference; to make the Mount the best place it can be, a place full of compassion and understanding," said Isabella. "It's a chance to learn to be better and build a better environment for future Mount students. It's a step in the right direction, a step towards change."



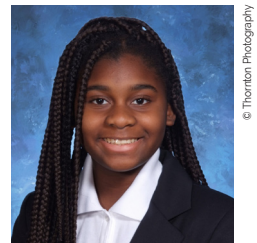
Ashlyn Brooks '23



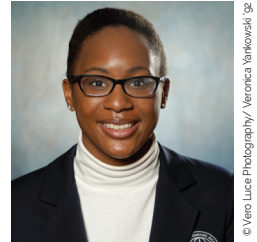
Morgan Brown '23



Isabella Castillo '22



Reyna Gowie '23



Elise McGirt '24



Christina Piparo '22



Elizabeth Victori '21

MSDA 50TH & 25TH MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS Spotlights and Reunions

WITH PLANS FOR THEIR IN-PERSON, 50TH REUNION DERAILED BY COVID IN 2020, THE MSDA CLASS OF 1970 TOOK TO ZOOM AND GATHERED VIRTUALLY TO CELEBRATE THEIR 5-DECADE MILESTONE.

The Mount congratulates the Class of 1970, and looks forward to sharing alumnae profiles from our Milestone classes on the Mount website. Here's a sneak peak at members of the classes of 1970, as well as the MSDA Class of 1995, who also took to the world of virtual connectivity for their 25th reunion this past fall.

RENEE ZILLOTTO FERRARA '70

Renee earned her BS in civil engineering from NJIT in 1975, and after a nearly 25-year career, left the field in 1999 to become a mom to triplets. After her children were born, Renee pivoted to the hospitality industry where she could work nights and weekends to balance her family's schedules, becoming the beverage manager at a golf club for 16 years. Since "retiring," Renee has joined the Manasquan Elks Lodge where she serves as banquet manager. At the Mount, Renee was "Stampman" for the Mount's annual plaid stamp drives, was active in the Pep Squad, and played Jonathan in "Arsenic and Old Lace."



"The Mount taught me the benefits of belonging and volunteering. Now that my children are grown and I'm retired, I have joined the Elks. It is such a great organization with our main objectives being our veterans and our special needs children."

ADELE ABRAMS '70

Adele earned her BS in Journalism from the University of Maryland in 1974; a Graduate Certificate in Public Relations from American University in 1984; and her JD from George Washington University



Class of 1970

National Law Center in 1995. As President of the Law Office of Adele L. Abrams PC, Adele focuses on occupational and mine safety law and employment law, and also teaches employment law as an adjunct professor at Catholic University and University of Colorado. She was the first attorney to pass the Certified Mine Safety Professional exam, and before rocking it in law, Adele was "rocking it" as a DJ for 14 years for WHFS-FM in Washington, DC. Married to James Anderson, Adele has five adult stepchildren, six grandchildren and two rescue pups. At the Mount, Adele was involved in Glee Club and Schola, and sometimes played piano to relieve Sr. Mary Ann.

Don't set limits on your potential careers, don't be afraid to explore different fields, and never settle for anything but the best for yourself personally.

MARYFRAN INTROCASO ANNESE '70

Maryfran earned her associate of applied science from Katharine Gibbs in 1972, and is a retired preschool reading and science teacher – having taught at St. Paul's Day School in Westfield, New Jersey for 15 years. Married since 1978 and residing in Westfield, Maryfran has one son and two grandsons (ages 5 and 2) and spends summers in Mantoloking Shores. Maryfran is currently volunteering with Learning Ally, a non-profit that provides textbooks and audio books for students with visual impairments and learning disabilities, recording audio versions of children's literature and text books. She is also a "baby cuddle" volunteer at Children's Specialized Hospital. At the Mount, Maryfran was involved in the Argosy, Lumen, Golden Fleece, Glee Club, Sodality, Sparkle and the annual musical.



You can be whatever you want to be! Since I graduated in 1970, many avenues have opened to young woman! The Mount is a great start. Take advantage of every opportunity offered to you.

Alumnae Profiles-Share Your Stories!

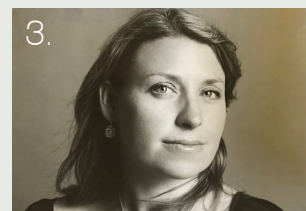
Visit www.msdaacademy.org/alumnae to complete an online alumnae questionnaire.

1. **Meredith (McGuire) Corsino '95**
Meredith earned her BA in English from College of William and Mary in 1999 and her Masters in school counseling from George Mason University in 2009. She is a high school teacher and instructional coach supporting teachers in various capacities in Fairfax County Public Schools in northern Virginia. Married for almost 13 years with a 9-year old daughter, Meredith's memories of the Mount include hanging out in Sister Peggy Ann's room, and a trip to Princeton for a state basketball tournament. Her advice to Mounties: *Being in such a small, nurturing community is a gift. Don't be afraid to fail. Ask for help. Reach out to the staff and let them mentor you.*

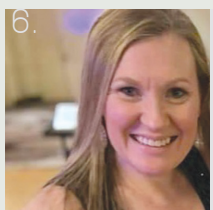
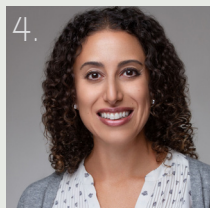
2. **Paula Giardina Czaplá '95**
Paula attended Villanova and completed her BA at Seton Hall University in 1999, and earned her Doctor of physical therapy from Seton Hall University in 2006. Owner and physical therapist at "A Life In Balance Physical Therapy and Wellness," Paula is married to Jim, and has an 8-year old daughter and a 14-year old son – plus four dogs. A four-year varsity athlete in Softball and state champion at the Mount, skiing is her family's biggest hobby, with Paula serving as development coach at Camelback Mountain. Crediting the Mount with helping her with confidence and drive, along with empathy and strength, Paula says to students: *Enjoy your time - get as much out of it as you can - academically, extra curricular - and SOCIALLY - these relationships will stay with you.*

3. **Kathleen (Cohrs) Falvey '95**
Kathleen earned her BA in history from Villanova University in 1999, and her Master of education from Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2004. A progressive educator focusing on implementing social-emotional, anti-bias, and core curriculum through a constructivist approach in elementary education, Kathleen lives in Los Angeles with her husband Mark. A favorite memory is journaling in Sister Peggy Ann's class, and she wishes for today's Mounties: *Take risks and try things out of your comfort zone.*

4. **Susie Ghali Freda '95**
Susie earned her BA in psychology from NYU in 1999, and her MA in counseling from Seton Hall University in 2005. She is Senior Director of marketing and sales and professional services procurement at Teva Pharmaceuticals. Married to Jason and mom to 7 ½ year old twins Jamie and Andrew, Susie loves to run, practice yoga, and cook. During



CLASS OF 1995 PROFILES



her days at the Mount, she enjoyed managing the volleyball team. Susie's advice to current Mounties: *Get involved wherever you can. And cherish those friendships!*

5. **Kate (Birch) Karwelies '95**
Kate earned her BA in public policy analysis from Vanderbilt University in 1999. As Executive Director, Head of Health Services at CVS (Aetna), Kate lives in New York City with her husband Matt, and their daughters Allie (12) and Kaitlin (10) – who play soccer and lacrosse – with their mom (a former Mount soccer player) cheering on the sidelines. With love for the mountains and the beach as a family, Kate's advice for today's Mounties is simple: *Enjoy!*

6. **Kellianne K. Martin '95**
Kellianne earned her BA in history from Montclair State University in 1999, as well as her Masters in 2001 and her Doctorate in 2007, both in occupational therapy from Chatham University. She is a senior occupational therapist (OTD, OTR) - external education with Trinitas Children's Therapy Services where she provides therapeutic intervention to school age children and supervises a team of therapists. Involved in cross country, track & field and Christian Concerns among other MSDA activities, Kellianne enjoys time with her family and is a member of the Pastoral Council at our Lady of the Lake Church. Her advice: *Your life journey will take many twists and turns but what it can potentially lead you to might just be totally worth it. Always remember, positive thoughts yield positive results.*

7. **Nancy (Hauser) Mingari '95**
Nancy earned her BS in biology and psychology from Loyola College in Baltimore in 1999, her BSN from Rutgers University in 2002, and is studying toward her MSN in nursing informatics at the Thomas Edison State University. An RN for Hackensack Meridian Health Network at Hackensack UMC, Nancy is mom to two wonderful children and has been a Neonatal ICU nurse for the past 18½ years. A member of the volleyball team and ski club at the Mount, Nancy enjoys outdoor adventures with her children. And her advice for students: *Work hard and don't be afraid to follow your dreams - they can come true!*

8. **Jennifer Montesano '95**
Jennifer earned her BA in physical education and health education from Montclair State University in 2000, her Masters in kinesiology and curriculum in physical education and movement sciences from Columbia University in 2003, and her MS in administration and supervision from Caldwell University in 2005. A school superintendent in Hudson County finishing up her 21st year in education (pictured above with Former NJ Commissioner of Education, Dr. Lamont Repollet,) Jennifer has many memories from the Mount's soccer fields to classrooms, and says: *You can do anything that you can imagine!*

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MSDA '05K

MEGHAN DOYLE

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REGISTER: www.msdacademy.org/msda05K

All proceeds support the Financial Assistance Program that provides critical tuition relief for Mount students impacted by Covid-19



Mount St. Dominic Academy Presents the 2021 Mountie Bounty 50/50 Raffle!

This annual, end of year raffle, directly supports the students of the Mount. One lucky winner will receive 50% of all funds received.

Tickets are \$50 each or three for \$125.

The drawing will be held at the Parents' Association end-of-year celebration on **June 7, 2021** at 8pm. Winners need not be present. For tickets, email development@msdacademy.org.

Thank you for your support and good luck!



together
THE MOUNT FUND

DIDN'T MAKE YOUR DONATION YET FOR THE 2020-2021 MOUNT FUND? THERE'S STILL TIME!
SEE WWW.MSDACADEMY.ORG/DONATE TO SUPPORT MSDA THROUGH 6/30/21.

Legacy Gift Honors Future Women Leaders

Mount St. Dominic Academy is thrilled to announce the latest in a series of recent major gifts made to the school – a pledge of \$50,000 – from the Sontz family. Brand new to the Mount community, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sontz are the proud parents of **Cassidy '24**.

This generous gift is taking center stage in the Mary Jo Codey Gymnasium in the MSDA Athletic Center with the dedication of the main scoreboard.



"It was back in the fall - we were elated to receive a commitment from the Sontz family for such a generous and meaningful donation and we are so grateful," noted Tracey Taylor, director of development for the Mount. "The family's decision was inspired by their daughter Cassidy's experience, with quite an impression being made just a matter weeks of into her freshman year."

"The Mount has been so inspirational in the development of our daughter's confidence, individuality, and leadership," remarked Mr. Sontz. "We are proud to be part of such a wonderful legacy and are excited to support the Mount's mission of developing future women leaders!"

Over the last few years, the Mount has been blessed by the generosity of several Legacy Donors, resulting in the naming of **Pettengill Hall**, the creation of the **Doris M. Byrne '40 Innovation Center**, and the dedication of the **Sister Fran Sullivan, OP '60 Arcade**, to name just a few.



"The impact our school is able to make in the lives of the young women who attend the Mount simply would not be possible without the generosity of our community," said **Sister Fran Sullivan, OP '60**, MSDA Head of School. "I'd like to thank the Sontz family for joining our Mount family, for their belief in the Mission of our school, and for the enriching experiences and opportunities they will make possible for our students with their incredibly generous gift."

For more information about Legacy Gifts, and to discuss naming opportunities at the Mount, visit www.msdacademy.org/naming-opportunities or call **Tracey Taylor**, director of development at 973-226-0660, ext. 1130.

2020 REINDEER RUN, MSDA-STYLE, RAISES NEARLY \$50,000

In a year of immeasurable challenge and change that included the sad and sudden closure of Trinity Academy at St. Aloysius Parish in Caldwell, the Mount's adoption of the Reindeer Run 5k insured the milestone running of its 10th anniversary race. Though the format was remote, the vibe of togetherness was palpable as more than 320 participants from near and far joined the ranks of runners and walkers, and helped raise close to \$50,000 in support of the students of the Mount.

Mount St. Dominic Academy is forever grateful to the amazingly giving volunteers and incredibly generous sponsors who continue to believe in the mission of the Mount and the promise of our young women.



Sponsored by



Reimagining the Stage in the Age of COVID

MSDA PERFORMING ARTS DIRECTOR
MICHELLE POSNER GETS CREATIVE

In times of uncertainty - when the world's got you down - the arts can serve as the perfect elixir, a remedy of escape from the ordinary, to aid whatever's ailing you. But when Broadway and nearly all live-stage entertainment hits pause and the escape hatch is closed, where is one to turn?

Enter stage left, **Michelle Posner**, MSDA's Director of Performing Arts. With a vision for the COVID-conscious re-imagining of the theatre program, Mrs. Posner started with a plan to get the students on the stage.

"When we decided to move forward with stage productions during the pandemic, we needed to ensure the safety of everyone involved," noted Mrs. Posner. "This meant smaller audiences, smaller cast sizes and limited crew. Everyone would need to do their jobs masked, and there would need to be extra cleaning protocols in place like daily sanitizing of the space and every piece of equipment."

In the fall, the Mount revisited the 1900s for the genre of its production - radio. A format absent much of the traditionally complex and close-contact stage direction and crowded backstage inner-workings, the format lent itself to creating a safer environment for the students and staff as they rehearsed for and put on "The 39 Steps" and "The Radio Play Disaster" to the delight of a limited number of in-person audience members and several streaming online.

Converting a typically grand and amusingly over-the-top musical production into a COVID-friendly format - particularly with so much interest from students - was not as simple. Yet through the ingenuity and determination of Mrs. Posner, Director **Jensyn Modero**, Producer **Kelly Sullivan King '84**, and Musical Director **David Modero**, two casts were cast, providing the opportunity to produce more performances which meant more audience members would get the chance to see it. And so, "Seussical the Musical" with cast Thing 1 and cast Thing 2 was born.

To help ease the two casts' grasp on the material and to carry out full safety protocols, the script was adjusted and the choreography was imagined in a way that was interesting to watch, yet realistic to perform while masked, singing, and consistently staying six-feet apart. With a team approach to rehearsal, for example, the Hortons from each cast, aka "Team Horton," or the two "Cats in the Hats" (played imaginatively and energetically by seniors **Julia Rodano '21** and **Caty Backfisch '21**) learned their number and developed their characters together. According to Mrs. Posner, this team approach turned out to be an efficient way to manage rehearsals and allowed the casts to create together. An additional benefit of the double casting meant actors were able to fill in for each other if someone was quarantined during rehearsal or performances.

"It took a great deal of planning and consideration to pull off a live theatrical experience during the pandemic," concluded Mrs. Posner, "but we were able to do it safely and creatively and we had a fantastic time doing it!"



Performance Photos © Fred Goode



MOUNT STUDENT ATHLETICS NEWS

SIGNINGS & ATHLETICS

COLLEGE SIGNINGS



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Alex Cruz '21 signed her commitment to play softball at Ithaca College.



Alexa Raphael '21 signed her National Letter of Intent to play softball at Villanova University.



Bianca Coltenback '21 signed her commitment to play basketball at DeSales University.

NATIONAL GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SPORTS

Clare Mulvihill '21, MSDA varsity soccer and basketball player, was selected as the 2021 MSDA Nominee for the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic



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Association National Girls and Women in Sports Day Award. At the completion of the fall 2020 soccer season, Clare was named to the Super Essex Conference First Team in the American Division.

MOUNT COACH HONORED

MSDA faculty member and Cross Country and Track & Field Coach **Rob DeCarlo** was inducted into the New Jersey State Coaches Association Hall of Fame. Mr. DeCarlo coached at both Don Bosco Prep and the Mount for a combined 37 seasons, with accolades that include four Non-Public A Spring Track & Field Championships, one Non-Public Winter Track Championship and the National Scholastic Indoor National Champions 4x800 Relay.



PADDLE CLUB


The 2020-21 MSDA Paddle Club season attracted a record number of students. Fielding two teams for twice-weekly clinics, the Mount's paddle players were coached this season by the nationally ranked Men's platform tennis pro team of Mikk Irojda, Director of Racquet Sports at Montclair Golf Club, and Sven Burus, Director of Racquet Sports at Essex Fells Country Club. After the coaches' recent win at the Western New England Men's NRT Championship, two Mount varsity players, **Katie King '23** and **Tori Schmey '23**, came in second place for their age group at the American Platform Tennis Association's Junior Nationals Tournament.




CONFERENCE SELECTIONS

After a spring that saw many sports sidelined, MSDA athletes eagerly anticipated the fall 2020 sports season. Though elements of competition were adjusted, games and meets ensued, enabling student athletes the opportunity to return to the fields, courts and tracks. Many students were recognized with selections to the **Super Essex Conference American and Colonial Division All-Conference teams**:

CROSS COUNTRY 
 First Team:
Carol Aguirre '21
Juliana Herbst '22
 Honorable Mention:
Victoria Wall '22
Cassidy Sontz '24

FIELD HOCKEY 
 Honorable Mention:
Louise Adillon '21
Bella LaCapra '23 (GK)

SOCCER 
 First Team:
Clare Mulvihill '21
 Second Team:
Brynn Caufield '21
Sophia Garske '21 (GK)
 Honorable Mention:
Maria Holevas '23
Gianna Mangili '22

TENNIS 
 First Team:
Rebecca Hess '24, **Tori Schmey '23**;
 Second Team:
Ava Pizarro '21, **Emma Buono '23**, **Katie King '23**
 Honorable Mention: **Annabella Heaney '23**
Rebecca Hess '24 was also named to the 2020 Third Team All Non-Public Team for Girls Tennis, the only MSDA freshman singles player to make any All Non-Public Team.



Mount St. Dominic Academy

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EVENTS AND NEWS

For more information:
MSDAcademy.org/EVENTS

MAR 29
MONDAY
6:00PM

**MOUNTIES FOR MOUNTIES:
EMPOWER
HOUR**

Zoom Meeting

MAR 31
WEDNESDAY
7:00PM

**FATHER DAUGHTER
DINNER DANCE**

The Grove,
Cedar Grove

APR 20
TUESDAY
7:00PM

**L.E.O. PROGRAM
PINNING
CEREMONY**

Mount St. Dominic
Academy

APR 22
THURSDAY
6:30PM

**VIRTUAL
ADMISSIONS
OPEN HOUSE**

[msdacademy.org/
register](http://msdacademy.org/register)

APR 25
SUNDAY
10:30AM

**MOTHER DAUGHTER
COMMUNION
BREAKFAST**

Richfield Regency,
Verona

MAY 13
THURSDAY
7:00PM

**ACADEMIC
SYMPOSIUM**

Mount St. Dominic
Academy

JUN 5
SATURDAY
10:30AM

**BACCALAUREATE
MASS**
Notre Dame Church,
North Caldwell

LUNCHEON
Mayfair Farms, West Orange

JUN 6
SUNDAY
10:30AM

GRADUATION

Mount St. Dominic
Academy

JUN 7
MONDAY
8:00PM

**MOUNTIE BOUNTY
RAFFLE DRAWING**

Parents' Association
End of Year Meeting
Mount St. Dominic
Academy

MAY 1-5
PICK YOUR
DAY AND
PLACE TO
RACE!

Virtual 7TH ANNUAL EVENT PRESENTED BY **investorsBank**

**MOUNT SAINT DOMINIC
MSDA '05K
MEGHAN DOYLE**

Help Meghan's family and the Mount community carry on the spirit of this spirited alumna while raising important funds in support of the Mount's financial assistance program. The annual run/walk event is a wonderful way to get outside and support the Mount. Visit www.msdacademy.org/msda05K for more race information.

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