

# Villa Maria Academy High School: EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN

BY JULIA KRUMENACKER

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“Girls’ schools create a culture of achievement and empower students to become bold leaders. Students at all-girl schools have higher aspirations and greater motivation than their female peers.”

NATIONAL COALITION OF GIRLS’ SCHOOLS – RAISING GIRLS’ VOICES

What do Madeleine Albright, Condoleezza Rice, Georgia O’Keeffe, Cokie Roberts, and Reese Witherspoon have in common? Besides being immensely accomplished women who have made significant contributions to the world, they are all graduates of all-girl schools. Eight out of the top 12 *Forbes* World’s 100 Most Powerful Women also attended an all-girl school at some point in their education. Multiple female ambassadors, U.S. senators, world-class athletes, journalists, and CEOs all share the same experience of attending an all-girl school.

Why are women who attend single-sex schools more likely to make substantial advances in the leadership arena? Because girls’ schools engage, challenge, inspire, and prepare students to reach their full academic and personal potential. The science behind how girls grow,



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mature, and learn is at the heart of each school's academic and social setting. Research supports the fact that in a single-sex environment, girls are more likely to take on challenging math and science subjects, have the courage to take risks, pursue new interests, and ignore gender stereotypes while fully developing their competitive side.

Villa Maria Academy High School in Malvern is a place where every young woman is challenged and supported to be the best version of herself, every day. For almost 150 years, Villa Maria has been devoted to nurturing faith, creativity, intellectual curiosity, and compassion in every student, allowing them to achieve their fullest potential. A Catholic, college-preparatory school rooted in the charism of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate

Heart of Mary, the school's mission is to empower young women to lead lives of spiritual growth, intellectual inquiry, and Christian service.

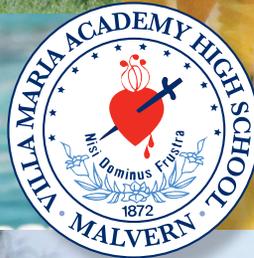
At Villa Maria, young women are respected, while their talents are appreciated and nurtured. It is an environment where girls find the freedom to be themselves, develop self-confidence, assume leadership roles, and develop high aspirations for their futures. "In a single-sex setting, girls are free to be themselves in so many areas," stated Kathleen McCartney, Director of Advancement and longtime basketball coach. "We have assemblies, pep rallies, and homeroom challenges that the girls find to be unbridled fun. Yet, they can be serious in the classroom without worrying about what the boys will think about a studious, smart girl. I feel the greatest

upside to an all-girl education is the confidence that young women develop during their time with us. It may not necessarily be there as freshman, but by senior year, the transformation is remarkable."

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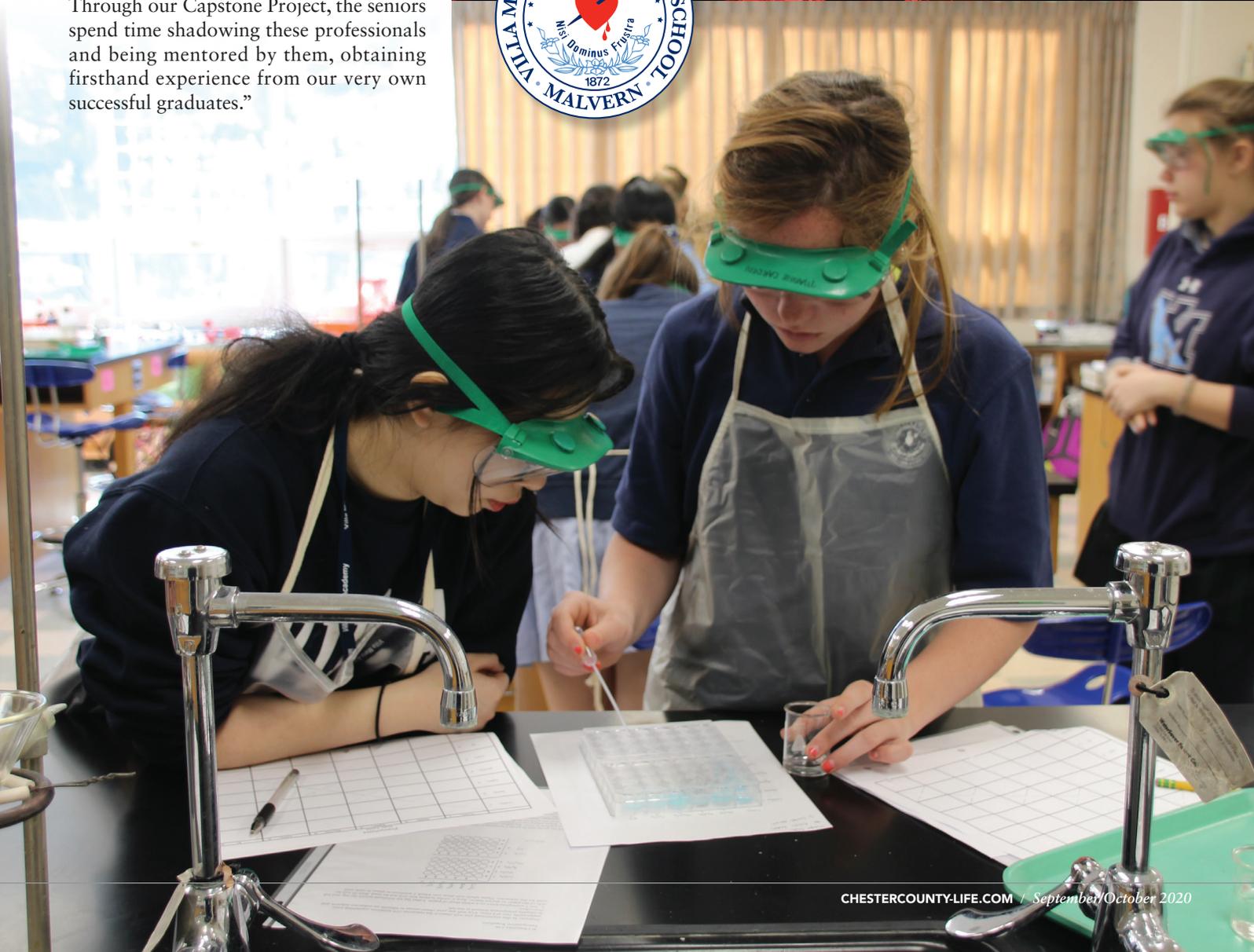
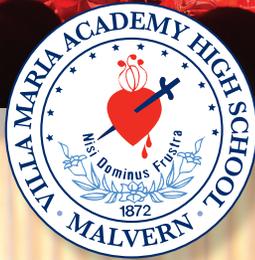




Girls' schools empower every student to realize their power and potential as a young woman. At Villa Maria, every seat on the student government, the captain of every sports team, and speaker at every school-wide event is carried out by a girl.

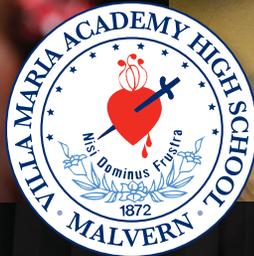
on the student government, the captain of every sports team, and speaker at every school-wide event is carried out by a girl. A recent study conducted by the National Coalition of Girls' Schools showed that 75 percent of girls attending a single-sex school reported that their experience taught them that women can accomplish anything, and that girls' school graduates demonstrate more confidence and ambition than their peers at co-ed schools. Some even report that their college professors can spot an all-girl school graduate!

"There is far less gender stereotyping in single-sex schools," remarked McCartney, "which carries over to college and careers. Our students believe in themselves and in the limitless possibilities of what they can achieve. When alumnae come back to speak with our students, the girls see women who once walked our halls who have become doctors, engineers, writers, and successful business owners. Through our Capstone Project, the seniors spend time shadowing these professionals and being mentored by them, obtaining firsthand experience from our very own successful graduates."



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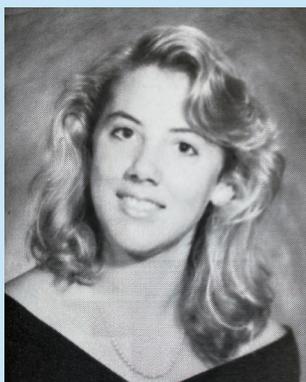
SARA LALLY, MD



Villa Maria graduates have earned respect and recognition for decades as competent professionals and leaders. “Villa has an amazing academic focus nurtured in an all-female environment,” noted alumna Sara Lally, MD, board certified ophthalmologist with Wills Eye Hospital and assistant professor at Thomas Jefferson University. “My time at Villa gave me the confidence in myself to compete at the highest levels academically. The teachers always pushed me to be the best and instilled in me that I can accomplish anything if I put my mind to it.”

“Because of Villa’s emphasis on empowering young women, classroom discussions often pertain to the role of women in history, literature, and today’s world,” added Shackelford. “It’s easy to develop positive relationships with teachers, who often reach out beyond the classroom to provide support. The teachers and administrators love to encourage us and our aspirations and emphasize the power we have as females.”

“Our girls are not afraid to express their thoughts and defend their positions intelligently and passionately,” voiced McCartney. “They have confidence that



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their ideas will be heard although not necessarily accepted by all. They will be civil voices in boardrooms, courtrooms, and universities. The confidence that grew from their high school experience will make them believe they can achieve anything and be treated with respect in the workplace. They just won’t accept anything less.”

Shackelford, who also attended Villa Maria Academy Lower School, proclaimed, “After 12 years of attending an all-girl school, I cannot decide the exact reason why it makes me feel as happy, encouraged, motivated, and loved as it does, however, I know it creates this amazing unity among the students. Having a community of people being there for you is invaluable in the process of growing into the person you aim to be.”

“Villa Maria is simply an amazing school,” declared Dr. Lally. “It built the foundation for me to be successful in my career and life. I always say, *Villa got me where I needed to go.*” **ACL**

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