

ACADEMY OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

Lauralton Hall



Head of School Beth Coyne walks and talks with students Batol Elsheikh '26, Elliott Goodman '26, and London Elliott '27, on another beautiful Mercy Day on campus.

Photo Credit: Shodes, Shutterstock Photography

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

A LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

As we near the end of the calendar year and the end of my first six months as Lauralton Hall's President and Head of School, I find myself pausing to count my blessings. One is finding a new home here. When I ask our students how they feel about Lauralton, they often share that there is a feeling of family in this community, where people have a mutual concern for one another. Our students are part of a sisterhood, growing and learning from one another and their devoted teachers.

This feeling of family also runs deep within our alumnae. On a recent call with our Class Agents, I learned about alums who interact on a daily basis on their class Facebook page, wishing one another happy birthday. I heard from a senior at Fordham University how the Lauralton alumnae who are juniors and seniors there got together to check in on the Lauralton freshmen new to campus. These are just two of many wonderful stories of connection that I have heard over these last months, and they make me think of the Mercy Education core value: "Mercy students honor the intrinsic value of the individual and recognize God's presence in each person." This value helps create a deep sense of connection and belonging that is an outcome of the Lauralton Hall experience. How provident!

Enjoy this issue of Hallmarks as you review the many wonderful events that took place this fall - the Family Picnic, Mercy Day, the Junior Ring Mass and more. I hope that when you count your blessings as part of your end-of-year reflection you will think of our school. Please remember us this Christmas in your prayers and consider us in your end-of-year philanthropic giving. Your gift to our Annual Fund will have a tremendous impact on today's students at Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall.

Every good wish,


Beth Coyne



Opening Mass, 2023. In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, Head of School Beth Coyne was gifted a Mercy Education candle, reminding her that her mission is to be a 'shining lamp, giving light to all.'

Why We Give to Lauralton Hall

Bill Stapleton P'15, Chair of Advancement Committee
Lauralton Hall Board of Trustees



Celebrating graduation: Bill, Debbie, and Tori Stapleton '15

An education is one of the most valuable gifts you can bestow on your child and choosing Lauralton Hall for our daughter Tori (Class of 2015) was a sound investment in her future. Seeing the bright, confident leader she became after four years, we knew we had made the right choice. Her Lauralton experience enabled her to attend a top liberal arts college, where she was extremely well prepared academically, played D-3 sports, and participated and eventually led one of the college's acapella groups.

Many of Tori's former classmates also had similarly amazing experiences at Lauralton and we continue to hear stories of their successes today. This is just one of the many reasons we decided to establish a scholarship fund at Lauralton. Tori, Debbie, and I believe the all-girls, Catholic education, particularly at Lauralton Hall, is a life-altering opportunity and we want to ensure it continues to be available to the young women in our community who, without financial assistance, might otherwise be unable to attend this wonderful institution.

We hope you will join us in supporting the mission of Lauralton Hall and all that the school has to offer future generations of Lauralton women.

Planned Giving

Shawn and David Garamella P'22

In a world filled with change and uncertainty, one thing has remained steadfast in our family life: the profound impact of faith-based Lauralton Hall education. A Lauralton education extends far beyond textbooks and classrooms; it is about molding young women to become responsible, compassionate, and socially aware citizens. Because of that, one decision that holds immense significance to us is deciding to leave a percentage of our estate to support the remarkable institution that is Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall.

Lauralton and Catholic secondary education hold a special place in our family's heart. Shawn (Polizzi Garamella) '90, our daughter Kaylor '22, and Shawn's mother Lorry (Lorraine Torre Polizzi) '66 are all proud alumnae. (David '88 is a graduate of Notre Dame-West Haven, and their two sons, Davin '23 and Dawson '24, attend now.) The school's legacy of empowering young women to be bold, to seek excellence, and to make a difference in the world is deeply ingrained in our family's story. The Sisters of Mercy, with their unwavering commitment to education, have left an indelible mark on generations of students, including our own.

The decision to include Lauralton Hall in our estate planning is deeply personal. It is a commitment to preserving the values and beliefs that have shaped our family. By leaving a portion of our estate to support Lauralton, we hope to ensure that this institution, with its rich tradition of empowering young women, continues to thrive. Whether it is supporting scholarships, enhancing facilities, or funding special programs, our contribution is a testament to our commitment to faith, excellence, and the enduring impact of education. By including Lauralton in our planning, we are not only honoring the values it represents but also securing a future where it can continue to inspire and empower generations to come. It's a legacy of faith, education, and the belief that our actions today can shape a better tomorrow.

We encourage you to explore how you can make a personal difference through your own estate planning. Just as Lauralton Hall has shaped the lives of our family, your contribution can have a lasting impact on the lives of countless others in the future.

To make your contribution, please use the enclosed envelope, visit our website, use Venmo (@LauraltonHall), or call the Advancement Office 203877- 2876, ext. 129.



Sugarplum Mansion Original Artwork by Kennedy Jennings '27

A Season of Celebration

On Friday, September 8, Lauralton Hall celebrated the start of the new academic year with their annual Opening Mass, which included a Commissioning Ceremony for new Head of School Beth Coyne. The Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Hartford, His Excellency Juan Miguel Betancourt, S.E.M.V. presided, along with concelebrants Fr. Aidan Donahue of Precious Blood Parish in Milford, Fr. Brian Konzman S.J., of Fairfield College Preparatory School, Fr. Ryan Lerner of Yale University's St. Thomas Moore Chapel, and Deacon Dominic Corrado of St. Mary School in Milford. Additional guests including Lauralton Hall Board Members, alumnae, past parents, and several Catholic school leaders joined the Lauralton Hall community for this special assembly.

Bishop Betancourt offered words of encouragement to the students and faculty, wishing them well as they embark on the new school year. He also reminded all present of the importance of Mother Mary, as Friday was also the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary.



Photo Credit: Aaron Joseph, Catholic Transcript

After the homily, Sr. Lisa Griffith R.S.M. and Susan Smith, delegates from Mercy Education, led the school community through a special blessing of Mrs. Coyne. Various constituent groups offered well wishes and prayers to Coyne, with Coyne reciting her own beautiful acceptance prayer in response. The day was full of excitement; the joy was palpable.

A Warm Embrace

Some might say that joining the vibrant community of Lauralton Hall feels like a warm embrace from your best friend. Lauralton Hall welcomed the Class of 2027 and several transfer students this fall with a week of activities to acclimate the students and their families to our campus. The weather was sunny and warm as we kicked off the week with a Welcome Back picnic outside by the Carousel. Current and new families had an opportunity to meet one another while enjoying the potluck of side dishes and desserts, as well as the music provided by DJ Buddha LuvJonz.

Students returned to campus to participate in an array of orientation activities, and the week concluded with a beautiful Matriculation Ceremony in the 106-year-old Chapel. Pledging to uphold the Core Values of the Sisters of Mercy, each new student was called by name to be formally recognized and welcomed into the Lauralton Hall community. In just a few short months, these new students have already made their mark – dancing the night away at their Homecoming Dance, scoring a winning goal in their Field Hockey game, participating in a Freshmen Retreat with the LH Religion Department, and volunteering their time and talents at LH alumnae weddings and Christmas in the Mansion. We look forward to the next four years as our new students grow and develop into confident, young women of Mercy.



Photo Credit: Shades Shutters Photography



Uniting Mercy Educators

With a wave of the Jamaican flag and Bob Marley's "One Love" resounding through the room, Kimberly Baxter, Associate Director for Programs and Services for Mercy Education, opened the 41st annual Mercy Education Conference, held October 12-13, 2023, in Kingston, Jamaica. Together the 190 representatives from 44 Mercy schools joined in the singing: "Give thanks and praise to the Lord and I will feel alright." (Mercy Education)

Three Lauralton Hall teachers were blessed with the opportunity to travel to Kingston, Jamaica for this annual Mercy Education Conference. Director of Campus Ministry Erin DaCosta, Spanish Teacher Marnory Hawes P'21, and Science Teacher April Kelley '85 spent three days immersed in this year's theme, Earth Justice: Our Mercy Commitment to Care for Creation. The conference was filled with many opportunities to learn, network, and share best practices with other mercy educators from around the world.

Keynote speakers touched upon several important issues including care for the earth, climate change, and environmental racism. The conference also shed light on the environmental realities Jamaica is currently facing. Señora Hawes was delighted for the chance to speak with Sister Tita Lopez, RSM who is currently working with the indigenous people of Panama, saying, "It was wonderful to make connections between the work Lauralton has done in the Chiriqui region of Panama through School the World and the greater mission of the Sisters of Mercy."

The conference also included an evening visiting some of Jamaica's many Mercy institutions, including Alpha Infant & Primary Schools and Alpha School of Music. Conference attendees were able to participate in a spirited Mass, tour the Mercy schools, enjoy an incredible dinner with many local dishes, and listen to the fantastic talents of the Alpha School of Music. The most amazing part of the evening



was meeting other Mercy students. Despite being raised in a different country and culture, the Mercy charism was palpable in the girls. Says Kelley, "The students encountered in Jamaica were not unlike our own Lauralton students. Their Mercy spirit was truly alive and visible in all they did."

Lauralton Hall faculty and staff will have an opportunity to learn more about this experience as Mrs. Kelley, Mrs. DaCosta, and Señora Hawes will lead a Professional Development Day in the spring to share the knowledge and ideas they brought back from Jamaica.

"Are you ready for your first Mercy Day?!"

I'll be honest. I was not. The first four times my new Luralton colleagues posed this question, I nodded and smiled, doing my best to politely mirror the palpable excitement. After the fifth time, I went back to my inbox and examined the day's schedule to see what I was missing.

Was it mass? Sure, just like everyone else, I, too, was immediately enamored with the Chapel's quiet elegance the first time I walked up the stairs. But that couldn't be it. An early dismissal on a Friday certainly is worth celebrating, but I couldn't shake the feeling I was still missing something.

As the girls unfurled blankets, unpacked treats, shared cookies, and warmed in the September afternoon sun, I figured it out: it was a simple hour on the grass. That was it. That was all. Just the cordial hum of the girls enjoying each other's company (along with a sugar rush). No megaphone, DJ, or inflatable sumo suits necessary. This was a community.



And of course, 200 years ago, Catherine McAuley already knew that the spirit of a Mercy community "renews, invigorates, and warms." I wasn't ready for my first Mercy Day, but I do have a feeling my daughters will be better prepared for theirs.

Written by Luralton's English Teacher, Mr. John Fallon. Mr. Fallon comes to Luralton after teaching at Notre Dame in West Haven for the past 5 years and at Fairfield Country Day 10 years before that. Mr. Fallon teaches sophomore and junior English classes this year.



Photo Credit: Shades Shutters Photography

A Weekend of Milestone Celebrations

Alumnae filled the halls of Luralton Hall as they came together to celebrate Homecoming-Reunion Weekend. Classes ending in 3 and 8 were delighted to visit their alma mater and reconnect with classmates, sharing stories of their days as Luralton ladies.

The festivities began with Mass in the Chapel celebrated by Rev. Ronald Perry S.J. of Fairfield Prep, followed by a special recognition ceremony - the Athletic Hall of Fame Induction. Captain Patricia Miller '68 (U.S. Navy-Retired), Heather O'Donnell Figmic '89, Eileen Flaherty Moore '03, Keylantra Langley '10, Coach Lucille Pynch (posthumously), and Coach Fran Pfeiffer P'89, P'90, P'95 were recognized for their contribution to the success of the Luralton Hall athletic program.

The Mansion came alive with merriment and laughter as guests enjoyed delicious food, libations, and each other's company.

More than 30 women from the Class of 1973 were welcomed into the Golden Girls Society with a pinning ceremony in the Chapel. Luralton's Golden Girls, those women celebrating 50+ years since their graduation, come back year after year to welcome the newest inductees and to enjoy each other's company during a beautiful luncheon in the Claven Auditorium.

The Alumnae Relations Office is grateful to the faculty/staff, alumnae, and student volunteers for making this weekend memorable for all attendees.

Save the Date! Next year, Homecoming-Reunion Weekend will be celebrated September 21-22, 2024, and we look forward to welcoming all alumnae back as we recognize our milestone reunion classes ending in 4 and 9! If you would like to be a part of the reunion planning committee, please email alumnaerelations@luraltonhall.org.



Photo Credit: Shades Shutters Photography

Call for Class Agents!

Thank you to everyone who attended the virtual Class Agent Meeting on Wednesday, October 25. Class Agents are volunteers who support Luralton Hall by promoting alumnae engagement and encouraging financial support from classmates. Their work is critical to the success of your Alma Mater each academic year as well as long-term. Class Agents also play a vital role in keeping classmates connected by maintaining and promoting communication. There are nine classes that no longer have class agent representation and more than 20 classes that only have one class agent. If you are interested in learning more about the Class Agent program or would like to volunteer, please email alumnaerelations@luraltonhall.org.

Celebrating three generations of Luralton Class Agents: Lorraine Torre Polizzi '66, Kaylor Garamella '22, and Shawn Polizzi Garamella '90



SAVE THE DATES

January 4, 2024
Recent Alumnae Panel & Reception

February 9-10, 2024
Student-Directed Winter Play:
The Outsiders

March 2, 2024
Irish Night

April 27, 2024
Spring Auction & Gala

April 30, 2024
Spring Concert

September 21-22, 2024
Homecoming-Reunion Weekend

May God preserve and bless you and grant you all the graces and precious gifts reserved for this Holy Season. —Catherine McAuley



Original artwork by Tanner Lovegrove '27

Lauralton Hall

200 High St, Milford, CT 06460
LauraltonHall.org

NONPROFIT ORG
US Postage
PAID
PI #447
New Haven, CT

Please keep us up-to-date on your latest moves at:

[LAURALTONHALL.ORG/MYINFO](https://lauraltonhall.org/myinfo)

For a list of Lauralton loved ones who have passed away in the last year, please visit:

[LAURALTONHALL.ORG/INMEMORIAM](https://lauraltonhall.org/inmemoriam)



Mercy
Education

Courageous Action. Selfless Spirit.™

Lauralton Hall is a sponsored ministry of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and is a member of Mercy Education.