ACADEMY OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

Lauralton Hall

HALLMARKS SQUARED
V1.2026



During the 100 Days Dinner in mid-March, Hannah Newman '26, Becky Long '26, and Lydia-Grace Sessler '26 share smiles and laughter as they read letters written to their future selves during freshman year. Reflecting on memories, growth, and friendships formed at Lauralton Hall, they look ahead with excitement for all that is still to come.

Photo Credit: T Shane Photography

MARKING 120 YEARS, SHAPING WHAT COMES NEXT

A LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

We proudly celebrated our 120th Commencement on May 30, welcoming Jamie Signore McDonald '76, back to campus as our Commencement speaker. Jamie had a 40-year career as a paralegal and in business management. Jamie celebrates her 50th reunion this year and has been the Class of 1976 Class Agent since 1980, helping to organize all the major reunions for her class. In her address, she offered timeless wisdom to the Class of 2026: *"Face life's challenges with curiosity, not fear. Be open to new ideas. Your biggest regrets won't be the things you did—they will be the chances you didn't take."*

Her message beautifully reflects our Mercy Education Profile of a Graduate, particularly the Core Value of **Educational Courage** - grounded in critical thinking, personal accountability, and curiosity. It is these Core Values that continue to sustain our Lauralton Hall community for current students, and recent or long-term alumnae.
Over the past two years, our strategic plan—***Moving Forward with Mercy***—has driven meaningful progress across our school. Its four central goals are to:

- Prepare young women to excel in college
- Cultivate community and a lifelong commitment to service
- Promote the Lauralton Hall experience
- Strengthen our foundation to secure our future

Through this work, we are advancing curriculum innovation, deepening technology integration, strengthening connections with alumnae, enhancing engagement with prospective families, and securing resources beyond tuition to ensure long-term sustainability.

We are especially proud that enrollment is the highest it has been in five years with the largest freshman class in seven years, and our annual giving has more than doubled since the launch of our strategic plan. Our campus continues to thrive, hosting regional basketball and soccer tournaments, along with a variety of community events and facility rentals. Simply put, Lauralton is a vibrant place to be—year-round.

As we begin to shape our next strategic plan, we invite your voice into this process. What aspects of the Lauralton experience do you cherish most? What would you hope to see for future generations of students on High Street? These are questions we will tackle in small focus groups at our Reunions on the Road next year. When you see those invitations, we hope you will join us and share your thoughts. Lauralton needs your engagement, and we hope to see you soon!

In Mercy,

Beth Coyne

Beth Coyne



"It was an honor and privilege to return to Lauralton and represent myself and my "Golden Girl" sisters at the 2026 graduation. In 1976, I could never have imagined staying connected to Lauralton for the next 50 years. But I am so glad I did. My wish for this year's graduates is that they remain part of the Lauralton family for the next 50 years and beyond." - Jamie Signore McDonald '76

Notice something different?

No more paper envelope...

We are so grateful for the generosity of donors like you who make gifts each time Hallmarks Squared is delivered to your mailbox. You are our lifeblood! You make a Mercy education possible for many of our students.

In line with our Mercy values, we are working to conserve our natural resources and practice sustainable stewardship. Please make your donation today by visiting lauraltonhall.org/give or simply scan the QR code:

No envelope or postage required!

Amplify Your Impact with a Donor-Advised Fund Gift

Looking for a meaningful and flexible way to support Lauralton Hall? A gift through your Donor-Advised Fund (DAF) is an easy and impactful way to support our students and programs. If you already have a DAF, you can recommend a gift at any time—allowing you to contribute when it's most advantageous and support the causes you care about over time.

To make a gift, you can simply recommend a grant through your DAF provider (such as Fidelity Charitable, Schwab Charitable, or your community foundation).

Make a Meaningful Gift—While Maximizing Your Impact

If you are age 70½ or older, you can support Lauralton Hall in a tax-smart way through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA. A QCD allows you to direct all or part of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) to Lauralton Hall—potentially reducing your taxable income while making a meaningful impact on our students.

To make a gift, request a distribution from your IRA to:
Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall
Tax ID: 06-0653077
200 High St., Milford, CT 06460
To count toward your 2026 RMD, your gift must be received by December 31, 2026.

For assistance, please contact Kaitlin Ingerick, Chief Philanthropy Officer, at 203-877-2786 ext. 148 or kingerick@lauraltonhall.org. Your generosity helps ensure Lauralton Hall continues to educate and inspire young women to lead lives of purpose and integrity. Thank you for your support.

Preserving the Past
The Mansion's Story

By Helena Wade '26, Colby College '30



Lauralton Hall circa 1943.

Hallmark Squared presents the opportunity to hear about all the wonderful events and accomplishments that are currently happening at Lauralton Hall, but why not dive into the past, too? One of the most beloved parts of the LH campus is the Victorian Gothic Mansion, with its unique asymmetry and grand spiral staircase that make it impossible not to admire. Even though we all know and love it, most aren't aware of the fascinating history and intention behind the Mansion and its design.

Built in 1864 for Charles Hobby Pond, the 42nd and 44th Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut, the estate was originally named Island View, as Charles Island in Long Island Sound was visible from its square tower. Beyond the main residence, the property included a barn and a water tower, typical features of a Victorian-era farm. In 1889, the property was sold to Henry Augustus Taylor, who renamed the Mansion Lauralton Hall, in honor of his wife and deceased daughter who were both named Laura. There was vast remodeling done to Lauralton Hall after it was sold to Mr. Taylor, including the addition of the round tower, a classical colonnaded veranda, a three-story mahogany spiral staircase, and a redecoration of both the library and parlor. In 1905, Lauralton Hall was sold for $35,000 to the Sisters of Mercy of St. Bridget's Convent.

The Mansion features many unusual, yet extraordinary, architectural elements. Unlike the balanced symmetry of classical architecture, Gothic designs like Lauralton's Mansion embrace deliberate asymmetry, adding an organic and dynamic quality to their structure. The signature feature of Gothic architecture is the pointed arch, contrary to the rounded arches of Romanesque designs. This deliberate choice is shown through the Mansion's two towers. The symbolism of the pointed arch reflects the Gothic architect's desire to connect the earthly realm with the divine. The first floor of the Mansion is defined by dark Brazilian mahogany walls, an exotic wood valued for its durability, beauty, and strength. Due to popularity and overharvesting, the Mahogany is now heavily regulated under CITES Appendix II, making it rare and expensive.

The design of the Mansion can be interpreted as a deliberate expression of private wealth and social status. Post-Civil War America was a time when wealthy individuals invested in land and estates, often in means of displaying their stability and success. However, when the Sisters of Mercy eventually took over Lauralton Hall, the Mansion's purpose changed from wealth to education. The estate was repurposed to reflect service, learning, and community. Although the Mansion structure remains the same, it now holds completely different values.

"The rich, if they are wise, will esteem it a privilege to serve the poor, and both will be blessed." – Catherine McAuley

Lauralton is Innovating!

At Lauralton Hall, innovation is not confined to a single classroom or subject—it is a mindset that shapes how students learn, create, and lead. Across disciplines, students are using the Innovation Lab and digital tools to deepen their understanding and bring their ideas to life. In Chinese classes, students are blending tradition and technology by using Dremel machines to design custom stamps while also practicing calligraphy with traditional materials (pictured below). Religion classes are interpreting Scripture through video projects, while English and social studies students are researching advertising, reenacting Shakespeare with green screens, and producing creative multimedia work that reflects both critical thinking and creativity.



Hands-on innovation extends beyond academics into media, environmental science, and more. LH News is expanding its role on campus, providing live commentary for varsity basketball games. AP Environmental Science students are using professional-grade meters to analyze pollution and temperature patterns on campus. The Innovation Lab's new hydroponic grow kit and the Fashion Club's upcoming sewing projects further reflect the diverse ways students are experimenting, designing, and building.

"Innovation at Lauralton means giving students the tools, space, and confidence to explore big ideas and make them real," says Director of Academic Technology Juliet Sullivan. These experiences reflect Lauralton Hall's mission - by combining cutting-edge tools with creative inquiry and community engagement, Lauralton students are not only learning about the world—they are innovating within it, developing the skills, confidence, and vision to make a meaningful impact beyond our campus.

Juliet adds, "Looking to the future, our 3–5 year technology plan prioritizes modernizing classroom audio-visual systems so every student can fully engage with learning. The addition of a new touch-enabled smart board in the Innovation Lab is just one step in ensuring our students have the tools they need to learn deeply, innovate thoughtfully, and lead with confidence."



Lauralton's Campus Ministry debuted the Prayer Locker this semester —a quiet and confidential space rooted in the Mercy tradition where students and faculty can share prayers, intentions, reflections, or gratitude.

Mercy Education Mission Accountability Self-Study

In January, Lauralton welcomed a visiting team from Mercy Education as part of our second Mission Accountability Self-Study. This important milestone followed a year-long, prayerful reflection process examining how our Catholic Mercy mission is lived across all aspects of school life. The visit offered an opportunity to celebrate our strengths, reflect on our journey, and look ahead with purpose.

Through this self-study, three priorities emerged, which the visiting team affirmed. They commended Lauralton's mission in action, highlighting our retreat program, enrollment efforts, and the traditions that shape our community.

This successful visit was truly a community effort, with faculty, staff, students, trustees, and partners all contributing. We are grateful for this opportunity for reflection and look forward with hope to the continued growth of Lauralton Hall's mission and ministry.

Telling Our Story

At Lauralton, we ***"Empower her Potential"*** *BECAUSE* ***"Here, She is Everything"***

Earlier this year students, faculty, Board members, alumnae and parents worked on our school story to help us with our marketing materials. We are excited to share "Empower Her Potential" is an evolution of Lauralton's long-standing promise to empower young women for life — but with a sharper focus on both the audience (her) and the outcome (her potential fulfilled). It transforms empowerment from a general value into a personal, actionable commitment. This theme speaks to what parents and students want most: a place where girls are seen, supported, and stretched to discover who they are and who they can become. "Empower Her Potential" also honors the school's Mercy heritage — deeply rooted in the radical espousal of women's potential — while expressing it in a bold, modern, and girl-centered way. At Lauralton, empowerment isn't abstract — it's what happens every day when faith, learning, and love unlock the limitless potential in every young woman.

Our secondary theme, "Here, She Is Everything." captures the essence of Lauralton Hall — a place where every girl is both the center of purpose and the author of her own becoming. This theme carries a powerful double meaning: She is everything to the school. Each Lauralton girl is seen, valued, and prioritized. She is not one of many, but one of one. She can be everything she dreams of. At Lauralton, no part of her identity, curiosity, or ambition is limited. She can lead and create, question and believe, laugh and achieve — all in the same day. It's both emotional and empowering; a rallying cry that says: This is where girls shine, where potential is limitless, and where every student matters deeply.

Look for our execution of these two themes on our social media channels and our website.

Trócaire: Honoring the Mercy Tradition at Lauralton



In late February, forty-three students participated in Lauralton's inaugural Trócaire Retreat. Inspired by the long-standing Kairos tradition, Trócaire—meaning "mercy" in Gaelic—was created to more intentionally root the retreat experience in our Mercy identity, honoring the legacy of Catherine McAuley and the ways our students live out compassion and justice.

Held at Holy Family Retreat Center in West Hartford, the three-day retreat offered students time to step away from daily life to reflect, pray, and connect. Led by a dedicated team of seniors (pictured left), the experience included powerful witness talks, small group conversations, and communal prayer, all fostering a deep sense of belonging.

Senior leader Eve Mena shared, "Trócaire allowed all of us to open up to people we pass in the hallways… now they are the face of a friend I know I will have forever."

With a meaningful and successful inaugural retreat complete, juniors are already looking ahead with excitement to carry this new Mercy-centered tradition forward.

Please keep us up-to-date on your latest moves at:
LAURALTONHALL.ORG/MYINFO

For a list of Lauralton loved ones who have passed away, please visit:
LAURALTONHALL.ORG/INMEMORIAM

The Class of 2026: Reflecting, Growing, and Moving Forward



Photo Credit: T Shane Photography

As the Class of 2026 neared graduation, the senior students took a moment to reflect on their remarkable four-year journey. A cherished tradition at the 100 Days Dinner brought this reflection to life: reading letters they wrote to themselves at the end of their freshman year.

This tradition, started over 20 years ago by retired PE and Health teacher Peggy McGowan, continues to inspire students to pause, look back, and appreciate their growth. "I felt it was a great time to reflect on their future at Lauralton Hall… you need to look at your past to grow and move forward," said McGowan. Students were invited to consider what they would say to their senior selves—insight, encouragement, and dreams all written down years ago, now rediscovered with a fresh perspective.

As the 120th graduating class, these young women are ready to step confidently into the next chapter—college, careers, and beyond. Lauralton Hall celebrates their resilience, curiosity, and dedication, sending them off with pride and excitement for the bright futures that await. May they carry the lessons of the past and the promise of their dreams into everything they do.

Fatima Hanif '26 (pictured on the left) shares: "Reading my letter to myself was both emotional and heartwarming. I didn't realize how much I had grown over the past four years until I saw what I had written as a freshman. It made me reflect on the hopes and goals I had back then and just how far I've come since. I feel proud of the person I've become and grateful to my younger self for believing in me."

Celebrating Our Retirees: A Legacy of Dedication and Impact

This year, we honor three extraordinary members of the Lauralton Hall community—Jan Powers '75, Susan Fracker P'09, and Catherine Gallagher '85, P'15, P'16, P'18—whose combined legacy spans more than a century of service, leadership, and care. Together, they have shaped generations of students and strengthened the heart of our school.

Across decades of dedication, each has brought something uniquely meaningful to Lauralton. In the academic program, Jan Powers has been a steady and visionary leader, expanding opportunities for students and strengthening the school's foundation. Reflecting on her time, she shares, "I have been so fortunate to work with such dedicated colleagues and remarkable students… I am confident our students will continue to make their mark on the world."

Sue Fracker has been a trusted mentor and compassionate presence in our Center for Guidance and College Planning, walking alongside students through the college process with wisdom and care. "It has been an honor to be part of this community," she reflects. "Lauralton became my second home and an extended family."

In the classroom, Catherine Gallagher has inspired students through her love of literature and her gift for connection, helping young women find their voice and confidence. As she shares, "Lauralton has been so many things to me… I am proud to call it my home and its people my family."

We are deeply grateful for the impact Jan, Sue, and Catherine have made on Lauralton Hall. Their legacy lives on in the students they inspired and the community they helped shape.

In honor of their extraordinary contributions, we invite you to make a gift to the Lauralton Hall Annual Fund before their retirement on June 30. Your support is a meaningful way to celebrate their legacy and ensure the Mercy mission continues to thrive.

To make a gift in their honor, please visit: lauraltonhall.org/give.



2026 Retirees Sue Fracker P'09 (25 years of service, 2001-2026), Catherine Gallagher '85, P'15, P'16, P'18 (33 years of service, 1993-2026), and Jan Powers '75 (46 years of service, 1980-2026).

Athletic Hall of Fame

Established in 2012, the Lauralton Hall Athletic Hall of Fame honors individuals whose achievements, and dedication have left a lasting impact on the school's athletic tradition. These distinguished inductees exemplify excellence both in competition and in their contributions to the continued growth and success of Lauralton Hall athletics.

We are proud to announce the 2026 inductees:

- Coach C. Martin Antisdale, *posthumously*, (Tennis)
- Amy Campanelli Bugge, '92, P'22
- Marisa Dowling '12
- Nicole Maier Gilberti '09
- Judith Guido '76
- Robin Lewis McGovern '90, *posthumously*

We invite you to join us on Saturday, September 26 as we celebrate these exceptional individuals and honor their enduring contributions to the Lauralton Hall community.

For additional details, please visit: lauraltonhall.org/ahof



SAVE THE DATES

June 29, 2026
Golf Tournament

July 16, 2026
Concert on the Lawn

September 26, 2026
Athletic Hall of Fame

September 26-27, 2026
Alumnae Weekend

December 5-6, 2026
Christmas in the Mansion

Last Call to Tee Off!

Join us Monday, June 29, for an unforgettable day on the green at the Lauralton Golf Tournament at the award-winning Great River Golf Club in Milford. Spots are filling fast—don't miss your chance to play, connect, and support Lauralton Hall!
Register today at www.lauraltonhall.org/golf



Summer Sounds at Lauralton

RumRunners, a local Milford favorite, returns this summer for our Concern on the Lawn after a fantastic show last year! Join us Thursday, July 16 at 6:00 pm for this free, family-friendly event with food trucks, music, and summer fun.

For more information or to be a sponsor, visit www.lauraltonhall.org/concert.

Support Lauralton Hall: Become a Sponsor!

Partner with Lauralton Hall and boost your business while supporting local education.

Sponsors gain brand visibility at our signature events, connect with the community, and help empower young women for life!

Interested? Contact Kaitlin Ingerick at kingerick@lauraltonhall.org.

Lauralton Hall
200 High St, Milford, CT 06460
LauraltonHall.org

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

Mercy Education

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