



The Road

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Spring 2021

OUR COVER

THE FINAL HOURS

Front Cover: The 2021 Performing Arts Production was The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. The front cover image features principal cast members in the production. Further information on the show can be found on pages 6-9.

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CONTENTS

SPRING 2021 EDITION

3-4

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

6-9

COLLEGE PRODUCTION

10-11

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN A YEAR OF PANDEMIC

12-13

ARCHIVES - MEMORIES OF SHC

14-15

YEAR 12 FINAL CELEBRATIONS

16

PAYTON OVERALL - A VCE LIKE NO OTHER

17

CONNOR MONTGOMERY - GROWING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

18

LEARNING & TEACHING

19

BLAST FROM THE PAST

20-21

ANNE MCMILLAN RSM

23

WELLBEING

24-25

ALUMNI STORY - JASMINE FORBES

26

MOTHER'S & FATHER'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

27

GUEST SPEAKER LUKE KENNEDY

28-29

DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

30-31

JUSTIN MARSON - LEADERSHIP TEAM

32

ALUMNI STORY - BRONWEN LANE

34

140 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

35

GEMMA GALE & BRANDON JOHNSON / BREANNA GALE

36-37

ALUMNI STORY - JORDAN ROUGHEAD

38-39

DAMASCUS SRT

40-41

2021 COLLEGE CAPTAINS REFLECTION

43

ALUMNI STORY - KATHY CURRAN

44-45

FREEZING FOR A CAUSE

46-47

ALUMNI STORY - MAMMA MIA

48-51

CLASS OF REUNIONS

55

MEGAN O'BEIRNE - LANGUAGE SUCCESS

56

MAYA TOLLIDAY - LEADERSHIP AWARD

57

ALUMNI STORY - KAREN SIMPKIN

58

ALUMNI STORY - MAUREEN DONNELLON



FROM THE PRINCIPAL

MATTHEW BYRNE

Welcome to the Spring edition of The Road.

As we move through this 140th year of continuous Catholic education here in Ballarat, my gratitude to be able to have a part in this continuous mission connects me to past, current and future students, staff and families of Damascus College.

It is people who make up educational communities, and this has never been more pertinent than over the past 18 months. It has been during times when we have had the extensive physical infrastructure of the College sitting empty and yet the provision of quality learning and teaching continuing. We are proud of how we have evolved as an educational community, a result of these challenges of coming in and out of lockdown.

Our student population have needed to develop both resilience and independence in their capacity as learners, and this is something that we will need to respect and continue to respond to as they move through school over the coming years. Looking at how we deliver learning will need to continue to develop in line with this skill acquisition by our young people. Our Assistant Principals, Andrew Roberson, Tony Haintz and Ashwin Pillai, are sharing their insights in this edition.

This evolving response to the needs of young people aligns very strongly with the College's strategic desire to support the development of their social-emotional learning skills. A holistic approach to a Christ-centred education provides Damascus College students with the opportunity to gain greater social and emotional awareness and to practice interpersonal skills as they learn and grow. The capacity to demonstrate resilience, engage in relationships, be organised, persevere, and demonstrate confidence are the foundation of social and emotional learning skills that shape positive academic and wellbeing outcomes. These are key pillars of our learning platform now and over the next few years.

This term the graduating class of 2021 have concluded their time at the College. It would be easy to focus on what they have missed throughout their final years of schooling, but it would be remiss to not acknowledge their enormous growth as people and as learners, despite the challenges. We have seen some wonderful creativity amongst our student population at all year levels, through the diverse opportunities still available to students of the College, despite lockdown. 2021 graduates have used their learning to take up early offers to tertiary study, apprenticeships, well-considered future study plans and moves from school directly into employment.

The success of our VCE and VCAL programs in providing pathways into the future are complemented by our Teacher Advisor program, which has built the relationship of support between families and the College. I congratulate and thank our most recent alumni for their contribution to our College.

Among the wonderful milestones achieved was our production of the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, featured on the cover of this publication. This was a wonderful performance achieved by a resilient cast and crew, delivered across durations of lockdown to purely school audiences. To be able to deliver such an amazing show was a testament to the commitment of Director Nicole Burness, Musical Director Maria Russell and Producer Andrew Seary.

The Big Freeze provided an opportunity for senior VCAL students to demonstrate their applied learning competencies while raising funds to support the fight against motor neurone disease. You can read more about the event within this edition.

Damascus College's 140-year journey continues to build on the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy in Ballarat, and we shall always remain a Mercy school, however, the governance of the College will transfer to the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL), under the ownership of the Bishop of the Diocese in 2022. We are grateful for the governance provided by the sisters for the last 140 years and hope that they continue to play an active role in diocesan governance into the future.

We also acknowledge the loss of Sr Anne McMillan (RSM) who has been a long-time supporter of Damascus College and designed our College logo for the commencement of Damascus College in 1995. We extend our sympathies to the Sisters of Mercy and to Sr Anne's family. You can read more about Sr Anne's life and ministry within this publication.

Finally, I cannot affirm strongly enough the work of the Damascus staff. They have continued to respond to lockdown and change positively and productively, always keeping the needs of our young people front and centre. Each function within our staff team has had key and integral roles to play to enable Damascus College to continue to respond appropriately. The staff team are legitimately weary from their efforts to provide consistency in the face of uncertainty this year, and I thank them again and celebrate their commitment and achievement.

One hundred and forty years of continuous Catholic Education is a great achievement and one to be built upon. I hope the Damascus community will engage with our 140-year celebration publication and the gala event which has been rescheduled to early 2022.

Matthew Byrne, Principal



Year 12 Final Day



History Challenge



VCE Art Exhibition

Our Alumni are the wind beneath our wings.
You have the power to **inspire**, **electrify**
and **motivate** our students.
Please, help them **soar**.



SHINING LIGHT AWARD

FOR INSPIRING ALUMNI

The Shining Light Award is bestowed upon chosen alumni who have contributed significantly through their chosen field to Damascus College and our global community and who will be an inspiration to current and future students.

Categories for nominations are:

**Service to the global community • Science/Technology • Arts
Sport • Business • Academia • Faith Development**

NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

Anyone can submit a nominee for The Shining Light Award. Full details at
damascus.vic.edu.au/community/alumni/shining-light-award



THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

COLLEGE PRODUCTION

The 2021 Performing Arts Musical was The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. This fast-paced, wildly funny and touching musical, with a talented student cast of around twenty performers, brought to life this story of an eclectic group of six mid-pubescents as they vie, with the support of their quirky families, for the spelling championship of a lifetime.

While candidly disclosing hilarious and touching experiences from their home lives, the tweens spelt their way through a series of (potentially made-up) words, hoping never to hear the soul-crushing, pout-inducing, life un-affirming “ding” of the bell that signals a spelling mistake. Six spellers enter; one speller leaves! At least the losers get a juice box.

Complete with audience participation and a live band, this production was a heart-warming, joyous musical.

Due to COVID restrictions, the production was postponed but was later able to be performed for a small group of fellow students and staff. Although different, it was still a wonderful experience for the students to perform in front of a live audience, albeit a much smaller COVID-safe audience.

Well done to the Performing Arts staff, Nicole Burness, Maria Russell and Andrew Seary, for their hard work and dedication in enabling the show to go on. Although it was different, it was absolutely still a joyous celebration of the gifts and talents of all those involved.



Role	Name	Year
CAST		
Rona Peretti	Payton Overall	12
Vice Principal Panch	Liana Canfield	10
Michelle Mahoney	Rose Spencer	11
Chip Tolentino	Gabriel Blake	11
Login	Amalee Eden	12
Barfee	Archie Jones	7
Leaf Coneybear	Megan O'Beirne	11
Marcy Parks	Gemma Angeli	12
Olive	Taya Thiele	9
Olive's mum/Chip's mum /chorus	Sara Abu Asbeh	10
Olive's Dad/Leaf's sister chorus	Elarin Johnson	10
Schwarzy Dad 1 Dan	Declan Eden	9
Schwarzy Dad 2 Carl	Brady Lucas	11
Leaf's Mum / Chorus	Eliza Karlake	12
Leaf's Dad / Chorus	Ben Casey	9
Leaf's sister/ Chorus	Chenoa Williams	9
Leaf's sister / Chorus	Lucy Gravell	7
Barfee's Mum / Chorus	Montana Forster	12
Marcy's mum/ Chorus	Ava Skilbeck	10
CREW		
Director	Nicole Burness	
Musical Director	Maria Russell	
Choreography	Nicole Burness	
	Emma Werdly	
Set Designer	Andrew Seeary	
Stage Manager	Mikayla Montgomery	11
Assistant Stage Manager	Eloise McGifford	11
Sound Operator	Sage Seeary	10
Set Construction	Andrew Seeary	
	Nicole Burness	
	Chiara Angeli	
	Megan O'Beirne	11
	Jeff Simpson	
Set Wizardry	Jim Brown	
Poster Illustration	Penny Taylor	12
	Anne Griffin	
Program Design	Sarah-Jo Seeary	
ORCHESTRA		
Cello	Elena Polevaya	
Woodwind	Joel Cassidy	
Percussion	Michael Evans Barker	
Piano	Jessica Schaefer	

MY PASSION

ARCHIE JONES

When I was just three years old, I went to a trial class of singing and dancing at the BCMA. This is where my love for theatre blossomed. Since then I have been working on and enjoying my time in lots of different musicals and dance recitals. This year is my first year at Damascus and my first school production. I had heard so many amazing things about the drama and arts programme and couldn't wait to see what I could sign up for! I was overjoyed when it was announced that The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee was to be this year's production as I had been listening to the cast recording and loved it. I knew I had to audition.

After auditioning I was cast as William Barféé (pronounced Bar-fay NOT Bar-fee). Spoiler Alert: He wins the Bee. Over the course of rehearsals, I had struggles with adapting to the character and his voice. I went through multiple varieties of the character and various accents until I had perfected him. The character had multiple allergies and a nasal issue, also.

I was shattered when we went into lockdown just less than a week before our opening night. There was a period where I was worried about whether our work would be showcased. Luckily, we were able to compromise and went back performing for students and staff over the course of three nights, with another lockdown in between. Being back on stage was such a privilege after all we had been through. I was filled with glee in seeing audiences laugh and enjoy themselves. It had all paid off, and we got there successfully and had a great show run.

I would like to thank the persistence of the cast, Miss Burness, Mrs Russell and Mr Seary. They have all taught me so much, and without their hard work and dedication to the show it wouldn't have happened.

Archie Jones, Year 7 student





FLOURISHING

AMALEE EDEN

With my final year of high school concluding amongst the strange and unpredictable COVID-19 VCE experience, Performing Arts at Damascus once again presented the comfort, familiarity, and uplifting support for which it continues to have an admirable reputation. Throughout my years of being involved, beginning in Year 7 in the Damascus Choir, all the way up to playing one of the lead roles in this year's musical production of Spelling Bee, Performing Arts at Damascus has allowed for genuine performance, rehearsal, ensemble and solo experience, as well as the opportunities for expanding memorable friendships.

Despite the less than ideal circumstances, and although we were unable to have a full house due to COVID restrictions, the shows were nothing short of gratifying, with a constant outpour of genuine laughter and joy from the audience. This outcome prompted a well-deserved feeling of bliss for everyone involved as we navigated the unpredictable lockdowns during the rehearsal process.

Playing the character of Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre (Schwartz) in Spelling Bee was the experience of a lifetime, and if I was presented with the opportunity to play her again, I'd accept the role in a heartbeat. Her fervent determination paired with her energetic nature was not only a constant joy to portray, but it also allowed me, as a performer, to step outside the typical roles I gravitate towards, more subtle and naturalistic characters. With the assistance of our brilliant director and music director, Nicole Burness and Maria Russell, I was able to fully embrace Schwartz's demeanour. Everything from her punchy gestures to her loveable lisp, as well as her hilarious songs and determined spirit, are all aspects of Schwartz that I am proud to say that I feel I achieved through guidance and consolidation with Nicole and Maria.

To anyone considering partaking in any form of Performing Arts at Damascus, whether that be drama or music based, I encourage you to listen to your gut and follow its lead. The friends you make, the opportunities you're presented with, the memorable experiences you're unlikely to forget and the constant support from staff and students alike is something that I and so many other students will cherish for a lifetime. Your capabilities are endless: Performing Arts at Damascus will allow for you to flourish.

Thank you endlessly to Nicole Burness, Maria Russell and Andrew Seery for the incredible opportunities you have all presented me with throughout my six years here at Damascus; your constant support and dedication is undeniably admirable, and my appreciation is infinite.

Amalee Eden, Year 12 student



Mud Brick House Landscaping

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN A YEAR OF PANDEMIC

TONY HAINTZ

“...young people have a deep desire to work for justice and equality and many find themselves drawn to the mission of the Church through its social ministries.

Instrumentum Laboris: Fifth Plenary Council of Australia n. 56

At Damascus College, despite the pandemic, the desire of our community to work on behalf of the needy continued in earnest in 2021.

The Justice Action Group, supported by the Student Representative Council members, were able to raise awareness on behalf of key Catholic support agencies. In first term, the annual drive on behalf of Project Compassion proved successful, raising \$6,537.

The lockdowns of second term did not dampen the final-day collection for the Vinnies Winter Appeal, with some \$3,229 forwarded for the support of local needy people. The Vinnies Op Shops around Ballarat were able to use Damascus College volunteers from both VCAL and the Christian Personal Development Year 10 Introductory Program (CPDA). The Vinnies Streetwise Sleepover was not possible again in 2021, and the Seeds of Justice, an initiative of the Mercy Schools in Australia, moved successfully to an online format. Unfortunately, the annual Catholic Mission collection was a casualty of the extended lockdown.

The CPDA program was revised in some respects because of pandemic restrictions.

The May program managed a COVID-safe retreat to consider the corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving a drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked and visiting the sick and those in prison. These works were studied both physically and figuratively, for at times we all hunger and thirst and feel imprisoned.



CPDA Melbourne Excursion

The retreat experience led to an encounter with the homeless of Melbourne through the “Big Issue” organisation, noticing those who are making a difference for those who struggle in our nearest capital city. The experience of volunteering showed students that they too can easily lend a hand up.

Due to the pandemic, the Timor-Leste Immersion Program, which has been a feature of College life since 2010, is in recess. It may even be a place too far, as the possibility of international student travel seems to be years away. This raised both the possibility and the need to investigate Australian social justice possibilities. It is hoped that a community consultation can lead to a Victorian Indigenous Immersion for students and staff.

Alongside this initiative, the College has enlisted local support for the establishment of a Reconciliation Action Plan. This is a strategic document that will demonstrate Damascus College’s commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples. It provides practical and measurable methods

of reconciliation and helps to weave the existing values of equity, respect and inclusion into the fabric of our culture.

The efforts for Catholic Mission were dealt a COVID-19 blow as students moved in and out of lockdown in Term 3, but the College made a significant effort in the Season of Creation. This celebration of the global ecumenical Christian community began in 1989 with the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s recognition of the Day of Prayer for Creation on September 1. Sustaining just ecological, social, economic, and political relationships requires our faith, reason, and wisdom. The Earth is a gift, held in trust. We are called not to dominate but to safeguard. The Season concluded with the Feast of St Francis of Assisi on 4 October. The Justice Action Group and the Enviro Group developed a sequence on the Damascus Day video. It used Season of Creation images collected from isolation by members of the College community.

Tony Haintz, Assistant Principal, Catholic Culture



St Patrick's Day Procession



Picnic Day



Roll Call C1930



Physical Culture



Drama Studies

MEMORIES OF SHC

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Here in the Damascus College archives, we are fortunate enough to have a small collection of beautiful memories written in the 1990's by former students of Sacred Heart College collected by Sr Anne Forbes. Their reflections on the time they spent within the walls of the Victoria Street Convent allow us a small glimpse through the window of time back to a very different world than the one our current students navigate today. While we do not always have photographs of the authors of these small biographies, we do have many beautiful photos representing College life at the time.

“ Education is a preparation for
a complete living ”

“We who went to Sacred Heart College (SHC) were prepared to take our place in society. I was at the College in the depression era (1930s). A time when many workers lost their positions – from bank managers to labourers. Food and clothing were scarce and many families lost their homes. As a student I did not know too much about unemployment but heard and saw signs of the problem. There was no T.V. to give us day to day reports. Occasionally we read “The Courier.” The Mercy Sisters provided meals and clothing to so many people in Ballarat who were poor through no fault of their own.

As the classes at SHC were small in numbers we were a very close group of students. The Nuns wore habits in those days and were permitted to use the strap if we got out of line. If we complained to our parents that we had ‘the strap’, we were told “You must have deserved it!” Discipline was very strong both in College and at home. Our uniform was a navy tunic and blazer, and grey blouse, jumper, hat and gloves. We had both indoor and outdoor shoes.

Subjects at SHC included Geology, Geography, French, Algebra, Arithmetic, English, Religion, Christian Doctrine, Bible, History, Music, Drama, Verse Speaking, Deportment, Dancing and Social Culture as well as Commercial subjects – Typing, Book-Keeping and Shorthand.

Sports days were a big event, as were picnics to the ‘Gong-Gong’ reservoir, Processions and Feast Days – especially The Feast of the Sacred Heart. We had a great education and played many sports. Tennis, Badminton, Basketball and Vigaro were the favourites. Mr. Stanley was in charge of ‘Physical Culture’ – there were no shorts for sport then.

We were all good walkers and thought nothing of marching in the St. Patrick’s Day procession, Christ the King or a good hike to Villa Maria. Autograph books were very popular, crafts and needlework, darning and crochet were handy.

I do have happy memories of Mother Marie Therese teaching us in Inter, our English had to be perfect! The annual retreat at SHC in the hands of Redemptorist Fathers made our faith stronger and were a good grounding for the future.

I made life-long friends at SHC and we still meet, talk and laugh about our days at the College. ”

Mae Armstrong, née Green, Circa 1930’s

If you are a past student and would be interested in providing us with a memory from your time at school, please contact archives@damascus.vic.edu.au or (03) 5337 2222 and ask to speak with the Archivist.





YEAR 12 FINAL CELEBRATION

DAMASCUS EVENT

2021 has been a year of interruptions and constant change due to COVID lockdowns and restrictions for our Damascus community, none more so than for the Class of 2021.

Our Year 12 students have had an extremely challenging year, one where they have unfortunately missed out on many milestone events, as they did in 2020 as Year 11 students. Our group of Year 12 students is an inspiring bunch of young adults, and we are extremely proud of the resilience and fortitude they have developed over the last two challenging years.

On Wednesday 20 October, the community celebrated the Year 12s' final day. The entire school community was treated to a video

showcasing the Class of 2021, followed by a procession of Year 12 students wearing their graduation hats through the campus. Year 11 students and staff formed a socially distanced guard of honour to clap the students out one last time, culminating in the throwing of the graduation caps.

To the Class of 2021, good luck with life after Damascus College. The lessons you have learnt and the challenges you have overcome with such grace and determination will certainly hold you in good stead for whatever life has in store for each of you, next year and beyond. Good luck!



A VCE LIKE NO OTHER

PAYTON OVERALL

As my final year of secondary school draws to a close and I prepare to step out into the world, reflecting on the last two years is brought to the forefront of my mind. Who knew that my years of VCE and most significant years of my young life would mostly be spent at my desk, talking to my friends and teachers through a computer screen?

Damascus College has given me so many opportunities over the last six years that I will forever be grateful for, despite their disturbance by COVID-19. The time where going to Timor-Leste was a definite part of my 2020 calendar, allowed me to learn all about the Catholic mission we were going to be embarking on, to share our knowledge to better just a small part of our world. Despite the hope of the Timor-Leste Immersion's purpose, its very sad cancellation early last year was the beginning of the long list of things I have had to learn how to healthily cope with going forward. Despite multiple things being cancelled, such as last year's school production, numerous birthday parties and the full season of this year's production, taking the little moments to be grateful for what I have been able to achieve are the memories I will cherish as I move into university and life beyond Damascus.

Those bright spots have come from the Performing Arts department of the school. This year, I have been lucky enough to perform in The Final Hours, the Year 12 Drama ensemble's Lost and Found, and the production of The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. Being part of these shows has allowed me to form wonderful bonds with my classmates and peers, including those from other year levels. Being able to perform to audiences of my friends and family has been the best part of Year 12, despite the speed bumps in the way.

The endorphin rush of performing was sorely missed last year, but getting to perform as the Employee in Final Hours and Rona Peretti (how fitting) in Spelling Bee has not only been highlights of the year, but of my life so far.

Moving into remote learning on and off for the last year and a half has been challenging, with periods of time where I could not bring myself to do schoolwork, and my motivation fleeting, while at other times being completely on top of all my work. Remote learning is hard and draining and no one should feel guilty for not having the constant motivation to sit in front of a computer screen for six or more hours every day doing work. Despite this, I have been able to achieve results in my classes that I am proud of, and this wouldn't happen without the support of my mum and teachers. I have also been a House Captain for McAuley House this year, an honour and set of yellow badges that I have been proud to wear for Year 12. Due to this role, despite the COVID-related interruptions, I have been able to grow my leadership and teamwork skills, and I would like to thank Rachel Wallbank, Isabelle Miller and Laura Kimm for the opportunities they have given me.

While the last two years have been unexpected, to say the least, I know that I will walk away from Damascus College as an almost-fully-formed person due to the skills I have learned at school and as a result of the world events of 2020-2021, bringing me a better sense of social justice that I would not have had otherwise.

Payton Overall, Year 12 student



GROWING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

CONNOR MONTGOMERY

Even at the best of times, VCE can be tough. A mix of a higher workload, more regular assessments than previous years and the general pressure of the final year of schooling, all whilst attempting to maintain a healthy work-life balance, makes for a challenging experience.

It may seem like the COVID lockdowns would amplify these stresses, and although they do, it would be remiss to overlook the learning opportunities they have brought along the way.

Lockdowns allow for time to reflect on oneself and to find what you as an individual feel is important. For me, I found that I came to appreciate the smaller things in life a lot more than usual. Being able to find joy and happiness in simple day-to-day occurrences, such as good weather or admiring a pretty sunset, allows you to not feel encumbered by the burdens commonly associated with lockdowns.

When the first lockdown began, I felt worried and fearful for the health and safety of my friends and family, and I found myself spending a lot of time dwelling on things that I had no control over. The first lockdown was potentially the toughest for me because of the extreme learning curve that I had to undergo to adapt to the rapid changes to everyday life and my schooling that had occurred. However, these obstacles encouraged me to take more autonomy over my life and to re-evaluate how I handled stress and anxiety.

Some advice I could offer from my lockdown experience is this: don't linger on unhelpful thoughts about things you can't control; If you spend all your time worrying about bad things that might happen, you won't have time to focus on the good things you can

make happen. Keep a routine – if you can make a rough schedule of your day and allot time for things like study and self-care, you will find you are much likelier to complete tasks and feel more productive throughout your days.

These skills have been immensely advantageous in my remote-learning experience and have helped me develop into a more well-rounded person for the future. Particularly, my development of a consistent routine has been invaluable to my education by ensuring I am able to attend classes on time and submit tasks when they are due, but also allow for time to complete additional study outside of school hours.

Lockdown has had its negatives. But it has its positives too. Overall, my lockdown experience has helped me grow as an individual, and I believe Damascus College has gone above and beyond in assisting me to ensure I am well supported and prepared as I look to head into my future.

Connor Montgomery, Year 12 student



REMOTE LEARNING AND CHANGES TO LEARNING & TEACHING

ASHWIN PILLAI

In the last 18 months, our community has had its resilience tested with the constant pivoting to remote learning. As I write this, we are currently in our eighth lockdown. Although I cannot speak for everyone, what is significant is that our spirit has not been broken. We are determined to continue to come together as a community and continue to provide opportunities for our students. When we first went into lockdown, we were thrust into a rapid transition to remote learning. Gone were our natural approaches to pedagogical practice, which were influential when we were physically in the classroom. Teachers had to adapt quickly to the notion of delivering content and engaging students remotely. This pandemic provided educators with an opportunity for finding innovation in remote learning. The uptake in building our capacity to understand platforms like Microsoft Teams/Zoom across the world and in our College was incredibly positive. However, it also exposed our vulnerabilities, in our lack of knowledge and confidence in delivering rigorous curriculum remotely.

I will not underestimate the challenge we face in converting material that we usually deliver face to face to a digital medium. The time it takes to record a video or convert an instruction to a digital format was long. A survey conducted by Melbourne University indicated that nearly half of all teachers say they worked 20 hours in excess of their current workload per week. It's important to remember that the COVID-19 restrictions were imposed rapidly, with many teachers responding to the situation without sufficient time to plan for what lay ahead. As teachers, we continued to build our capacity, and although we had successes, we also began to face other patterns of behaviours not previously identified. Our College and community surveys identified that isolation and lack of physical

engagement negatively affected students' emotional wellbeing. This has been a challenging time for many families, with severe concerns raised by teachers, families, and students.

These learnings allowed us to respond by introducing opportunities for students and our community in promoting positive mental health. This was our priority. Our approach to remote delivery changed, with less time spent engaging in lecture-style delivery to more short-burst instructions, breakout activities, student-directed learning and reduced screen time. As our students came out of remote learning, the College responded immediately by providing additional support for re-engaging vulnerable students who were completely disconnected from schooling during this period.

Many times I have acknowledged that Damascus College is a microcosm of the bigger society. We are not alone in this. There are large-scale studies occurring and research papers released every day providing guidance and support in adapting to what we are experiencing. It is important to note that any opportunities arising from the COVID-19 period should be evidence-based and research-informed. Large-scale studies like this one are essential in examining how resilience and wellbeing play key roles in supporting beliefs, mindsets, knowledge and reasoning.

I am extremely proud of our students, teachers, staff, families and wider community, for their dedication and creativity in using what we've learned to continue to engage our students into the future. This crisis provided opportunities for reflection and real potential for making this happen.

Ashwin Pillai, Assistant Principal, Learning & Teaching



BLAST FROM THE PAST

FROM THE ARCHIVES

This year, the Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo provided us with a much-needed distraction from another year of pandemic news.

In 2004, during the Athens Games, the Victoria Street Year 7-9 campus held their own version of the Olympics in celebration of the event. Students were divided into countries, dressing the part while competing for medals and school glory.

An opening ceremony was held, and students enthusiastically competed in a wide range of activities, including tunnel ball, dancing, a marathon, chess and running races. The medal ceremonies were elaborate, and a fantastic time was had by all.

This special day is still remembered fondly by staff and students alike.



ANNE MCMILLAN RSM

DAMASCUS SISTER OF MERCY

Anne Elizabeth McMillan was born in Mildura on the 15th of July 1939, to Cissie and Arthur McMillan and was brought up on 'the block' at Cardross. Anne was a pre-war baby whose Dad went to war, leaving Cissie to raise her child alone through those war years. She started prep at three years of age when her mother was called upon to go back to teaching at the Cardross school.

Anne continued her schooling at Cardross, Mildura High School and then down to Sacred Heart College, Ballarat to complete her secondary schooling. She studied librarianship and worked in Mildura and Colac – before hearing and answering the call to the Ballarat Sisters of Mercy in 1962. This was on the brink of Vatican 2 – a time of turmoil in the Church which very slowly brought about immense changes in church life and in religious life. We did not know then the influence Anne's later Ministry would have in bringing about some of those changes.

Anne, then Sr Mary Philippa, taught in primary schools around Ballarat – St Alipius, St James, Our Lady Help of Christians – before moving to Robinvale for her brief 'country' stint and then returning to Sacred Heart College in 1971, where she was teacher-librarian and was also responsible for the running of the boarding school. Many cards have come in since Anne's death, but one in particular refers to this time with the boarders:

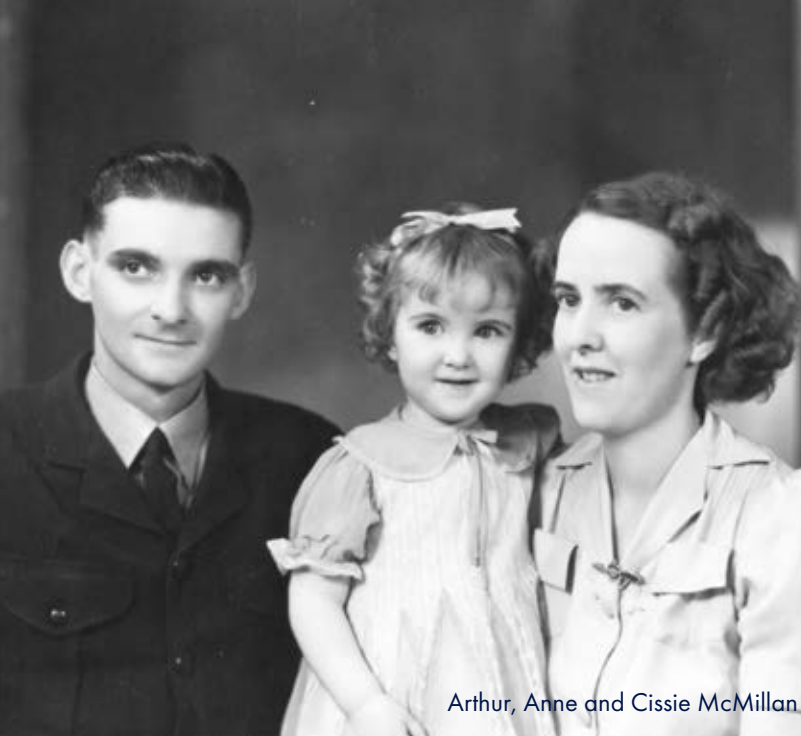
"I was saddened to read of Anne McMillan's recent death.

She made boarding school bearable and made a huge difference to the future of this one person. From myself & all those who passed through her caring and inspiring influence."

High praise indeed to be remembered in this way some 45 years later!

1977/78 brought a change in direction for Anne when she moved out of school and commenced working throughout the Ballarat Diocese. After study in Liturgy and Theology, she worked in adult education, striving to make a difference in the life of the people throughout our own diocesan church and beyond – always challenging injustice yet supporting the means to make things better for the whole church by raising the rights and the place of the laity in the church.





Arthur, Anne and Cissie McMillan



Anne Circa 1950



Anne (Novice) 1963

Her work throughout the Diocese brought her in contact with many from her days in schools – she would often come home from Parish meetings around the diocese saying that she had met up with some she had taught who were then taking part in Parish life, preparing their children for Sacraments or simply extending their own knowledge of their relationship with God. Those baptized in the past 30 or so years have received the Baptismal stole she initiated and designed; many school and other logos bear her imprint; she was also involved in the redesign of Churches to come up to contemporary standards.

One significant contribution to Damascus College was her design of the College logo when it began in 1995 – one she was particularly proud of.

While Anne's influence in her formal Ministry was strong, her greatest legacy is in the way she treated those she associated with, whether in work or in social circles, to bring out the best in them and for them. She was one for the 'little people' – having the ability to see past the exterior and get to the heart to share her fierce sense of compassion and justice for what is right. There have been so many people who, since hearing of her death, have said they wouldn't be who they are today without Anne's place in their lives.

Anne's health deteriorated in recent times and she died peacefully at St John of God Hospital in Ballarat on September 8th, 2021.

Anne, we could say the world will be a poorer place because you are no longer in it – truer to say it is a better place because of the influence you have left behind in each one of us.

Sr Marie Davey, Past Principal Sacred Heart College and Deputy Principal Damascus College

BECOME ENGAGED STAY CONNECTED

Alumni are invited to engage and connect with the College and other alumni through our:
Reunions & Special Events
Alumni Facebook Groups
Publications

Activities like The Alumni Artwork Prize and The Shining Light Award for Inspiring Alumni

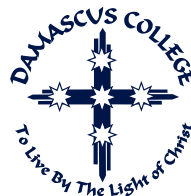
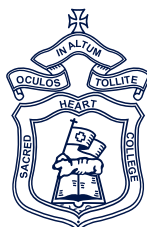
As a past student or staff member of Damascus College, or any of the founding schools, we invite you to
Update Your Details and become engaged and stay connected

damascus.vic.edu.au/community/alumni/stay-connected

Together. We are Damascus.



Together, we celebrate our proud history and recognise and celebrate our foundation schools;
Sacred Heart College, St Paul's Technical College, and St Martin's in the Pines.
Past students and staff of these foundation Colleges and Damascus College form our alumni.



connecting@Damascus



REMOTE LEARNING AND EFFECTS ON WELLBEING

ANDREW ROBERTSON

Students at Damascus college have been incredibly resilient throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenge has been to keep our students connected during periods where they have been forced into extended periods of isolation. Where students have struggled to maintain their connection with school, we have implemented reengagement programs that have supported students coming back on campus supported by a modified work program. These programs are tailored to meet the specific needs of students and can range from one-to-one tutoring sessions to small break out groups in our supervised remote study area.

Support at Damascus begins with the teacher advisor who reaches out daily to their students keeping them connected to the school. Where there are concerns raised by the teacher advisor, our wellbeing team, consisting of house leaders, school counsellors, school psychologists and a diverse learning team, work together to support individual students and their families. Our observations are that students with diagnosed anxiety and other mental health conditions are feeling more vulnerable because of the uncertainties surrounding the response to the pandemic. Any change in a routine for students experiencing high levels of anxiety can be problematic, something the College has been very mindful of. Our school counsellors continue to provide one-to-one counselling sessions via remote delivery to students who require it. The school continues to promote external services such as headspace and kids helpline, while remote services such as Andrew Fuller's online presentation, 'alleviating the stress of the lockdown' are promoted to parents.

Delivering classes online has been invaluable in keeping students connected and educational programs running, however, the College has been mindful to create opportunities for students to 'step away from their devices'. We are very mindful of the correlation between mental health and physical activity. A typical school environment is one where physical activity is a priority in supporting the wellbeing of our students, whether that be Physical Education classes, after school sport, recess games or moving around the campus between classes. For some students, the desire to remain active during periods of lockdown is challenging and one we have been mindful of promoting.

I want to recognise the wonderful work of the School Representative Council (SRC) who have played a wonderful role in keeping the House Spirit active. Video Clips promoting physical activity, checking on student wellbeing, learning to ask RU OK? and messages of gratitude have been regular features of House messages.

Remote learning has enabled our students to demonstrate the Social and Emotional skills of resilience, perseverance, organisation, confidence and engaging in empathetic relationships. The development of these skills during a period of crisis will hold them in great stead as they continue to navigate the world we live in, allowing them to Be their Best.

Andrew Robertson, Assistant Principal, Student Wellbeing



Rebecca Chadwick, teacher and TA with Jasmine, 2020

MY PASSION FOR DAMASCUS

ALUMNI STORY

Hi, my name is Jasmine Forbes and I graduated from Damascus College in 2020 – the most unprecedented year that I bet nobody was ever expecting.

I chose to attend Damascus because of the holistic educational experience and innovative learning that the College offers. There's just something about this place that other schools simply cannot replicate. I vividly remember being interviewed by former Assistant Principal of Student Wellbeing, Jo-Anne Kennedy in 2014 and taking in the atmosphere of Damascus. When I received my acceptance letter in the post, to say I was ecstatic is an understatement.

Our family has ties with this wonderful school. My dad, Matthew Forbes, was a student at St Paul's College and St Martin's in the Pines. My two uncles, Simon and Damien, also went to these two founding schools. My Nan, Noreen Forbes (née Burke), attended Sacred Heart College in the 1960s and my Aunty Ebony decided to follow suit in her junior years. My two younger sisters have attended Damascus as well – Phoebe from 2018–2020 and Isabelle started Year 7 in 2021.

I aspired to be like the "greats" who have left a profound legacy on the Damascus community. It wasn't until Year 12 that I became

fascinated with the history of the College. I knew I had to keep an archiving journal.

As a student, I looked up to people who had achieved so much in their time at Damascus and beyond. Some of my past-student influences are Rachael Beardall, Class of 2014. Sophie Anstis, Class of 2015. Elise Wright, Class of 2016. Abbey Cartledge and Natalya Munro, Class of 2017. Ellie Carroll, Class of 2018 and Daisy Jessup, Class of 2019.

My hobby of archiving developed over the COVID-19 Pandemic. Since I was not doing calisthenics every week, I was just sitting at my desk not doing much. So... I got my yearbooks down from the top shelf of my desk. I flicked through yearbook after yearbook and got hooked. From doing research on the computer to reading numerous The Road magazines, I wrote down EVERYTHING that I found interesting. This ritual is conducted often. It feels as though I am in "Damascus world" again – I never want to leave.

Other than archiving, I am a senior pupil at Sovereign Calisthenics College in Ballarat. I love performing on the stage and doing photography. I consider myself an old soul, too. I enjoy collecting antiques and listening to 1950s/60s music.



Jasmine's Damascus College Memorabilia

I have many treasured moments from my glory days at Damascus. In 2015, not only was I in Year 7, but the College was celebrating its 20th Birthday. I remember all the camps and excursions I went on.

Wednesday, September 18th, 2019, stands out to me the most – my last Damascus Day. An exhilarating feeling swept over me when I sat in the John Shannon Centre with the entire school community for Mass and watched the traditions unfold. I soaked everything up. It was on this day that my love of Damascus was profound.

I also performed a Graceful Girl solo at the 2019 Rice Day Assembly – daunting, I know! Looking back, I have no regrets. I feel great pride to have experienced these events – they were very enjoyable.

I remember painting balloons on our Principal Matt Byrne's face at Year 12 Retreat, and I participated in synchronised swimming.

I signed the Class of 2020 Flag (GO RICE!!) which is proudly displayed in the JSC with the other 15 flags. On my final day, I remember the staff and Year 11 students forming a socially distanced guard of honour as they clapped us out one final time, culminating in the throwing of our graduation caps. That send-off could not have been more perfect. Our year level was also the first to have their exams and graduation ceremony in the stunning Damascus Events Centre.

In February 2021, I secured a 12-month, Full-Time Office Traineeship at my family's business – Wilson Memorials / Ballarat Rockworks

in Latrobe Street. If anyone reading this article needs to organise a headstone for a cemetery or stone benchtops for their house, feel free to visit the office. My role in the business is doing administration work. I type invoices and quotes on the computer, sign cemetery forms and bank cheques, file paperwork and serve customers. I am also studying a Certificate III in Business, which I hope to achieve in January 2022.

So, what is next for me? Honestly, I have no idea what I am doing tomorrow, in a fortnight or 6 months' time. I hope to one day work in an office in Ballarat, teach calisthenics and maybe in my later years, own an antique shop.

To the students at Damascus, I only wish you the best. Your moments here are numbered and are therefore valuable currency. Embrace school life while you can because it goes so quick. Trust me – once you leave, you will miss it. Make memories, seize every opportunity, participate in all that you can, choose subjects you enjoy, work hard and everything will fall into place.

This school means so much to me. It is a huge part of my life that I will follow forever. I will never lose the passion I have for Damascus, that's for sure. Maroon, Yellow and Navy Blue will always run through my veins.

Always remember to celebrate life in the living of it and chase your dreams.

Jasmine Forbes, Class of 2020

MOTHER'S DAY & FATHER'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

DAMASCUS EVENT

On Thursday 6 May, we were thrilled to host the 2021 Mother's Day Liturgy and Breakfast, which was a wonderful way to christen the new Damascus Events Centre.

More than 200 guests attended the event and were treated to a sumptuous buffet breakfast served by our wonderful VCAL students.

For social distancing purposes, the liturgy by Fr Kevin Maloney was held in the John Shannon Centre, followed by a sit-down breakfast in the DEC.

Unfortunately, due to COVID lockdowns and restrictions, our community was unable to gather to celebrate Father's Day, and so we developed an engaging video showcasing our staff and students with messages of gratitude for the significant men in their lives.

We hope to be able to come together in 2022 for these much-anticipated events in the College calendar.





GUEST SPEAKER LUKE KENNEDY

DAMASCUS EVENT

The annual Guest Speaker event pivoted to an online webinar held on 5 and 6 October, when our parent and staff community tuned in via Zoom, and our students participated in an engaging session via Microsoft Teams.

This year's guest speaker was Luke Kennedy, a motivational speaker and mental health advocate.

Luke's presentation, entitled 'Improve your mental health by developing self-care strategies and resilience', was timely and never more relevant than in 2021, a year where we have been ravished by COVID lockdowns and restrictions.

The 90-minute workshop discussed a multitude of interesting topics including:

- mental health – self-care strategies
- building resilience
- how to be yourself and to stop worrying what other people think
- how to combat self-bullying/negative self-talk.

Luke delved deep into his personal story and provided some mental health advice for attendees. He showed how having negative beliefs and being labelled early on in life turned him from being a normal, happy kid with a good upbringing to an obese thug, addicted to drugs and alcohol, close to death numerous times, and severely depressed and anxious. He then demonstrated how he turned it all around again to become extremely happy and successful. A wonderful lesson for us all to hear.

Our community left inspired, with simple yet extremely effective take-home strategies to improve connection with others, and also improve one's own mental health. Attendees were treated to a Q&A at the end of the online session.





Mercy Administration Forecourt under construction



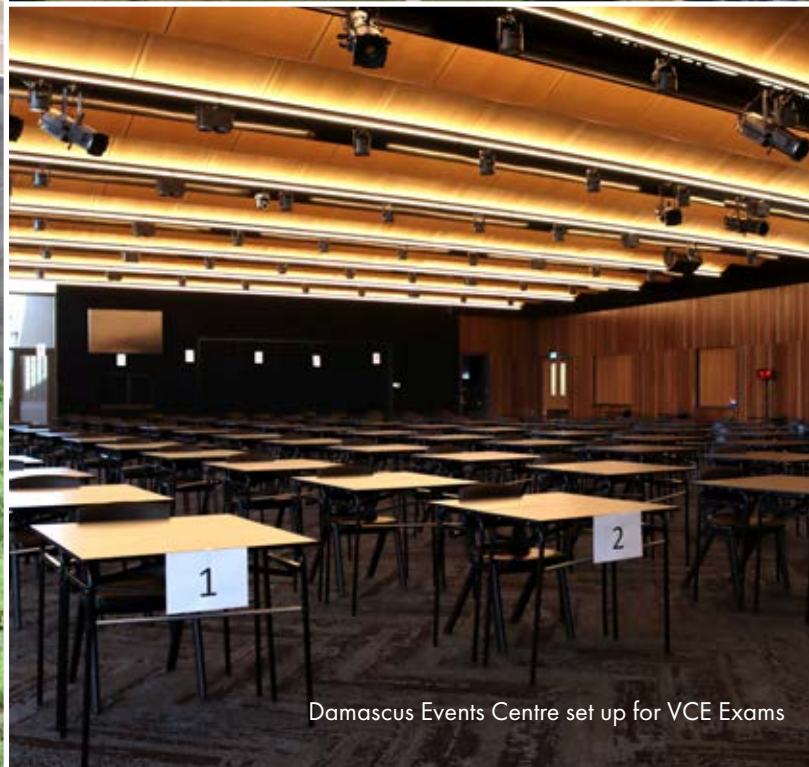
Completed Mercy Administration Forecourt



A kangaroo enjoying the natural bush setting



Damascus College Campus



Damascus Events Centre set up for VCE Exams



DAMASCUS MASTER PLAN

JUSTIN MARSON

Often surrounded by kangaroos, echidnas, ducks, rabbits and a range of birdlife, the natural bush setting of Damascus College lends itself to creating a learning environment of connectedness and peace. This natural setting becomes an attractive point of difference for students attending the College and is an essential consideration in planning future developments on campus.

With the recent completion of the Damascus Events Centre – a contemporary gathering and examination space with vistas stretching far across Ballarat city and its tree-lined surrounds – the College continues to plan for the future needs of its growing community.

An increasing trend of students choosing to continue their education through to the completion of Year 12 is presenting the College with challenges to comfortably accommodate these growing numbers within the current facilities.

To combat this, and to ensure that students at Damascus are provided with the best possible experience during their time at the College, the school is currently entering into a new master planning phase to incorporate the changing needs of delivering education, the next iteration of the Damascus Strategic Plan, and the continuation of the development of the campus in creating a contemporary and flexible educational space.

Currently being explored is the replacement of the senior year classrooms. The current space has featured in the education of generations of students at Damascus and its founding schools but is now showing elements of its age that limit the potential to revitalise and transform the facility to a standard consistent across the campus.

The replacement project will also look to accommodate a selection of complementary student services that enhance the experience for students to define their future paths, provide greater opportunities for social and emotional development and build further connections within the campus community.

The completion of a new purpose-designed building will also provide the opportunity for the removal of the final portable classrooms on site. The continual development of the facilities at Damascus since the decision to consolidate the Mount Clear and Victoria Street campuses has seen a reduction in the reliance on temporary classrooms and the programmed removal of excess facilities over time.

Outside, the College continues to develop the campus grounds. A refresh of the Mercy Administration forecourt has created a visible connection between the Damascus Events Centre and the existing campus, while also creating a safe passage between the two areas.

A study into traffic management around the site is also to be undertaken to understand the changing traffic flows and future needs of the site. A focus on parking facilities, bus services, student drop-off and collection points and general transit around the property will feed into the design needs for safe and functional student movement as the school grows.

Keep watching as the footprint of Damascus continues to evolve.

Justin Marson, Leader of Business Services



Justin Marson

OUR NEWEST MEMBER OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

This year we farewelled Business Manager, Paul Jans, after 14 years at Damascus College, where he was instrumental in leading the significant growth and development of our beautiful campus, over that time. We now move on to a new era, where we welcome Justin Marson to the College leadership team, as the Leader of Business Services with responsibility for IT, Administration, Property Services, Finance and Risk.

Growing up on a dairy farm in Simpson, then in Kyabram, Justin has always enjoyed open spaces and natural surrounds. As one of five children, there was always plenty to do and plenty of competition. If he wasn't playing sport or music, he would be milking cows, carting calves or slashing paddocks.

"I may never have fully appreciated it at the time, but it was a great environment to grow up in, with plenty of freedom and experiences that I'd love my own children to have been able to share," he said.

Justin's parents placed great value on education and made many sacrifices to provide their children with the best Catholic education they could. His brothers and sister were all given the opportunity

to attend boarding school to complete their final years, and this brought Justin to St Patrick's College here in Ballarat when he was 16.

Choosing to stay in Ballarat after finishing his VCE, Justin entered into a Commerce degree at the University of Ballarat, and in his final year, enrolled in a newly offered double degree, committing to another two years and graduating with Bachelors in Commerce and Management.

"The friendships I made in those final years are connections I still treasure now. These are truly talented and courageous people that still motivate and challenge me today, including my wife Jaci."

Accepting a graduate position at the Commonwealth Bank, Justin spent two years in business banking before transitioning to a local accounting firm in a space where he was providing taxation and business advice to a broad range of small and medium businesses. He also commenced further studies undertaking and completing his CPA.



Adelle, Anna and Elliott Marson

A member of the Ballarat East parish, Father Adrian McInerney approached Justin to become a member of the Finance subcommittee at Damascus in 2012, and he has seen incredible transformation of the school over that time, including the operations and fee policies, consolidation of campuses, refurbishments and new developments.

“There was a presence and purpose you felt immediately stepping into Damascus. You could tell that the leadership had a clear passion for the school and a visible belief in the mission and values they were building into the school’s culture. I was quickly drawn into the infectious enthusiasm Paul and Matt shared for the College.”

After leading the Financial Services team at the City of Ballarat for nearly 10 years, Justin joined Damascus as the Finance Manager in March this year, excited to be working along side Paul Jans, and when Paul took up a new challenge at DOBCEL in July this year, Justin was humbled to be appointed into the Leader of Business Services position. His hopes are to continue to build

upon the amazing work completed over the last 10+ years and continue to provide excellent facilities for a range of programs and opportunities where staff and students can thrive.

“Joining the leadership team, the commitment to the students education and wellbeing was immediately evident, as was their drive for collective success.”

Justin and his wife Jaci (a Sacred Heart and Damascus College alumni, Class of 1996) have three lovely children, Elliott (11), Adelle (9) and Anna (7). Jaci shares a passion for education and is currently the Deputy Principal at St Alipius Primary school. In exploring options for secondary education for their own family, they know Damascus will deliver a holistic education, caring for the academic, spiritual, social and emotional needs of their children, in a contemporary setting and beautiful surrounds.

We wish to welcome Justin to the Damascus community and look forward to his contribution to our College.



Bronny on set in Ballarat directing 'Bad Dad' in 2019

ONCE UPON A TIME

ALUMNI STORY

Storyteller and creative dynamo Bronwen (Bronny) Lane, Class of 1989, has found lots of ways to celebrate her craft despite living in Melbourne and enduring more time in lockdown than other city in the world during this pandemic.

She joyfully celebrated back in July the success of her short film 'Bad Dad' which played as part of the Los Angeles based Flick Fair Film Festival, which presents artists work online, to a global audience.

'Bad Dad' is a short, dark adult comedy/horror film that has a laugh at the horror genre while paying homage to some legendary filmmakers. Bronny wrote and directed this Indie Short. It was produced on a micro-budget and filmed here in Ballarat.

"I wanted to film 'Bad Dad' in Ballarat in the middle of winter because I knew how spooky and atmospheric the town is. There's nothing quite like a misty Ballarat early morning. Also, I knew the Old Ballarat Cemetery was not only the perfect location but also provided the most beautiful backdrop for the story of a man who works at a cemetery by day and is a murderer by night," said Bronny.

'Bad Dad' was filmed in 2019 and has so far achieved 16 official selections (that is where you enter the film festival competition, and they select your film from hundreds, sometimes thousands of entries). 'Bad Dad' has been awarded best crime short and placed top 3 for best trailer.

"We brought our entire Melbourne crew to Ballarat for the 'Bad Dad' shoot and it was like taking a trip down memory lane, in particular filming on the Scott Street footbridge near the Sisters of

Mercy convent. I crossed that bridge daily as a kid, first going to St Alipius and then Sacred Heart College and St Martin's. I remember it when it was a rickety wooden bridge with palings missing," Bronny reminisced.

Bronny has worked in the arts and entertainment industry her entire career and has worked at places like Festival Hall in London, Esplanade Theatres on the Bay in Singapore and Lincoln Centre in New York City. She was also a radio presenter in Melbourne on dance music radio station Kiss FM and a TV Presenter on Channel 31. She has dabbled in comedy acting but her real love lies in writing, directing and producing behind the camera.

"I have more great ideas to get more of Ballarat in film and television. I have written a pilot for TV called 'Based In Ballarat', this is a comedy centred around an aspiring musical theatre director and actress as she negotiates the tricky path of juggling family life and the pursuit of fame whilst being based in Ballarat. There is so much creativity in Ballarat. I know, because I grew up surrounded by it, performing at Her Majesty's Theatre, attending the musical soirees, performing at the local nursing homes, and watching my friends in productions. I felt a TV series inspired by Kath and Kim tonally but with Ballarat as the real hero of the piece was a wonderful way to pay homage to the town I grew up in," Bronny said.

Bronwen Lane, Class of 1989

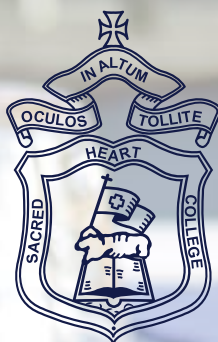
BRIGHT FUTURES BREAKFAST

You are invited to
SAVE THE DATE

Thursday 7 April, 2022

7am - 8.45am

Please join us for this annual
Damascus College event to support
the Bright Futures Scholarship



#TogetherWeAreDamascus

140 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

DAMASCUS EVENT

In 2021 our community celebrates our long and proud history, with our 140th anniversary of providing Catholic education, since 1881.

Throughout the year, the 140th anniversary has been celebrated at key College events, including the Opening Mass, Damascus Day and it will be celebrated at the end of year Awards & Achievement Event.

To tell the story of our history throughout the year, and to engage with our current students and the wider community, there has been a series of video compilations developed that are accessible via the Damascus website at <https://www.damascus.vic.edu.au/news-events/140-year-anniversary>

These videos focus on the history of each of our foundation colleges, Sacred Heart College, St Paul's Technical College and St Martin's in the Pines. These video compilations also extend to reflections from our alumni, staff and current Damascus students, on the 140th milestone.

As part of the year's festivities, a special anniversary badge was created and distributed to interested students, alumni and staff. It is heart-warming to see our current students wear the badge with such pride on their blazers.

Another feature of the 140-year anniversary is the creation of a special 140-year publication, which is a fitting keepsake of this milestone occasion. The publication showcases our long and proud 140-year history, including celebrations of milestone events and activities at our foundation schools and as Damascus College. This special publication will be posted to alumni, current families and supporters of Damascus College in December 2021 and will be available electronically via the College website under About Us/ Publications.

The hallmark celebration for our anniversary culminates in a community event known as the Gala Night. This event had been scheduled to Saturday 23 October 2021, but due to COVID restrictions, has had to be postponed to early 2022.

The new date for the Gala is Saturday 26 March 2022.

We encourage our alumni and wider community to obtain tickets

[damascus.vic.edu.au](https://www.damascus.vic.edu.au) or
<https://www.trybooking.com/BTQJX>

Tickets are limited.





Gemma Gale



Brandon Johnson



Breanna Gale

REFEREES WITH A CAUSE

GEMMA GALE & BRANDON JOHNSON

Year 9 students Gemma Gale and Brandon Johnson joined forces with Headspace Ballarat throughout August to raise awareness for those struggling with their mental health.

Throughout the month, basketball referees blew green whistles in support of the organisation, which supports young people dealing with mental health issues.

Gemma said that she got involved in raising money for mental health awareness because she knows how hard mental health is for some people.

“I also know how hard these times are for some people, and chucking in a few bucks to help those who need it the most is something so little that we can do. I am proud to be helping out our community and raising money for those who need it the most,” she said.

Well done Gemma and Brandon, what a fantastic example of giving back to assist others in our community.

NOMINATED FOR LOCAL YOUTH AWARD

BREANNA GALE

Congratulations to Year 10 student Breanna Gale, for being nominated for the City of Ballarat, Youth of the Year Awards under Leadership in Sport.

Towards the end of last year, Breanna was coaching a junior basketball team – the Ballarat Wildcats – through Zoom, and they have since nominated her for this very special award.

Breanna said that she feels very grateful to be nominated and will continue to contribute to the community and her basketball club.

I created the online coaching clinic during lockdown to keep kids active and happy

“I first got involved in basketball five years ago when I joined an under 14 team and two years after that I began coaching. Since then I have coached from ages U/8s–U/16s.”

“After I finish at Damascus, I’m hoping to go to Uni to study teaching, as being a teacher is something I’ve always wanted to do and coaching kids has definitely contributed to that.”

We wish Breanna all the best for the award ceremony on 26 November.



COMMITTED TO MAKING OUR COMMUNITY BETTER

ALUMNI STORY

Damascus College alumnus, Class of 2008, and AFL premierships player Jordan Roughead was nominated for the 2021 Jim Stynes Community Leadership award, presented to an AFL or AFLW player who has demonstrated commitment to the community through making a difference and helping others, and through the way they have represented the game on-field. The award is presented in honour of the late former Melbourne Football Club President and player Jim Stynes, whose values as a role model in the AFL community formed the criteria of the award.

The successful nominee is presented with \$40,000 to be donated to the charity or community program of their choice. Jordan, a current player for the Collingwood Football Club, was nominated for his significant contribution to the LGBTIQ+ community, women's sports, climate action and disadvantaged youth.

Jordan's work with the LGBTIQ+ community has seen the education of young people about the impacts of homophobia through his collaboration with Stand-Up Events as an ambassador. Stand-Up Events is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to fighting sexual and gender discrimination in Australian sport, having partnered with Monash University to conduct world-first research into homophobia in male team sports, of which Jordan was an active participant.

Jordan's impact continues with his leadership in the advocacy of gender equality and female athletes in sport through his role as an assistant coach for Collingwood's AFLW program. Jordan has coached in the AFLW since being appointed in 2017 with the Western Bulldogs and has empowered many female athletes to enjoy the game of AFL over this time.

Jordan has also been a driver of climate change awareness through his collaboration with environmental organisations, including the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), Frontrunners, and the Sports Environment Alliance. The ACF is an advocacy organisation for climate damage and habitat destruction in Australia, while Frontrunners and the Sports Environment Alliance, the latter for which Jordan is an ambassador, work to promote sustainability and climate action through the sports community.

To further add to his nomination, Jordan is an active board member and mentor for Ladder, an organisation supporting the self-efficacy, health and wellbeing, employment and training of young people, especially those who are homeless or considered disadvantaged.

At Damascus College, Jordan proudly led the school in 2008 as College Captain. After winning a premierships with the Western Bulldogs eight years later, Jordan returned to Damascus in 2016 with his premierships medal to speak with the College community. He shared what he had learned in his time at school and in the years following Damascus, including how he had pursued an International Business Degree in addition to his time in the AFL. Four years later, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Jordan and his partner Bridget Davies, Class of 2007, shared a special video message with the community. In the video, Jordan offered his advice for staying positive during the period of isolation and encouraged students to embrace the challenges of remote learning.

On the AFL field, Jordan was described by his club as a fair and valuable contributor, and through the culmination of his community involvement, a worthy nominee for the annual award.

Despite this year's honour being presented to Travis Boak of the Port Adelaide Football Club, Jordan continues his great work as a shining light in our community.

Damascus College warmly congratulates Jordan on his nomination and community achievement.

Jordan Roughead, Class of 2008



Evan on the prototype for the 4-wheel electric off-road access vehicle

HELPING TO BUILD A BETTER WAY OF LIFE

DAMASCUS SUSTAINABLE RACING TEAM

Earlier in the year, the Damascus Sustainable Racing Team (SRT) was treated to a visit by Evan Milne, an occupational therapist who delivered an inspiring talk to our students, to commence an exciting new project for our SRT.

Evan spoke of his love of life and outdoor activities, and as an occupational therapist, Evan has shown great compassion in assisting people with disabilities through building one-off items, from electric wheelchairs to car modifications.

Unfortunately for Evan, things have changed, and since contracting an extremely rare disease that is slowly affecting all of his body and reducing his mobility, he is now in need of many of the services that he once championed for others.

The project the SRT are undertaking will be to create a 4-wheel, electric off-road access vehicle that will enable Evan to access the bush he loves so much. SRT is involved in the frame construction and fit-out, while Evan's other contacts are assisting with machining and design tasks.

Evan's great attitude was evidenced by the sense of humour he displayed during his talk to our students and his zest for life during

the subsequent demonstration of "stunt" riding in the carpark, using his current 3-wheel disability scooter!

The numerous lockdowns throughout 2021 have proven challenging for SRT to get traction on this project, but we were lucky enough to welcome Evan on campus in between lockdowns. He visited the workshop to get an update on progress and for a measure-up session. It was wonderful for Evan to be able to sit in the vehicle, as it now has a full-suspension front end, a suitable seat that meets Evans ergonomic requirements, and a mock-up of the overall machine to best suit Evan's egress needs.

SRT Coordinator Alan Strange said that parts are on order from overseas, and as soon as we can get time back in the workshop with students and volunteers, we will fabricate the chassis.

"We have an SRT motto which is holding us in good stead, particularly in these challenging times: ADIMOV – Adapt, Improvise and Overcome! It certainly is being put to the test," he said.

Good luck to our SRT members as they continue on this exciting and innovative new project, and well done to Alan Strange for leading this opportunity for our students.



SRT PURPOSE STATEMENT

DAMASCUS SUSTAINABLE RACING TEAM

Each year the Damascus College Sustainable Racing Team seeks participation from students, in years 7 through 12 as well as support from parents, volunteers and staff.

From the beginning in 1998, the SRT has had a fine tradition of innovation. Their vehicles have been unique expressions of the labour and ingenuity of many students, staff and volunteers. In keeping with the SRT sustainability commitment, they are currently developing machines that will have a far lower environmental impact than previous designs, and will be highly repairable to extend their life

SRT MISSION: "To provide creative opportunities to work together supportively and responsibly, and to encourage personal growth within a network that includes students from year 7-12, past students, volunteers and staff."

SRT CORE VALUES: Through sharing knowledge about Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, we learn about the practical application of STEM.

- By providing leadership through mentoring and teaching we are committed to being respectful of property and self in a safe working environment.
- We want to demonstrate good stewardship through operating a sustainable program that respects environmental, human and financial resources.
- We are committed to teach skills applicable to workshops and industry, while developing competitive race vehicles.

Note: this purpose statement has been derived from the original EBT mission statement

Anyone interested in joining this amazing team where you will make new friends, learn new skills, enjoy the racing and much more, should contact SRT Co-ordinators Alan Strange (a.strange@damascus.vic.edu.au) or Rachel Beardall (r.beardall@damascus.vic.edu.au)



OUR REFLECTION ON THE YEAR THAT WAS - 2021 COLLEGE CAPTAINS

MAYA TOLLIDAY & SHAUN LEONARD

Well, we thought 2020 would be the last we would see of the lockdowns, but 2021 brought some familiar surprises.

We have both been through a rollercoaster this year, as COVID restrictions and lockdowns limited our leadership role as college captains. There were some events where we were lucky enough to attend and represent Damascus to the wider community, opportunities like ANZAC day ceremonies, an Ubuntu Breakfast, and many speeches for Opening Masses and Assemblies, which gave us experience as leaders before the lockdown began. However, we stayed resilient and strong. Our roles as leaders allowed us to take on more opportunities to not only communicate with the wider community but interact and encourage students at Damascus, to keep them connected in these difficult times. Even though we both had to get changed out of our comfy trackies and into our school uniform, we both loved to be on camera to reach out to everyone as part of the community and continue our role as captains.

Earlier on in the year, we were still able to cheer our houses along at Swimming Sports and Athletics Day, which was a highlight for our Year 12 experience. Unfortunately, we both missed out on being able to represent our school at BAS Athletics and Cross Country, but luckily, we have already done this so many times in the past.

Remote learning and lockdown may have limited our ability to do social activities, but we were still able to engage with our peers and the students of Damascus. A change in landscape from classrooms to Microsoft Teams allowed us to communicate easier with each other and work together to be creative, encouraging and determined to represent our school. A platform like this also allowed us to communicate with other teachers or other students, such as SRC members, to organise and plan when approaching learning and teamwork opportunities.

We have learnt how to be even stronger leaders than we already were, having to constantly adapt to always-changing circumstances. We have learnt how to stay strong and positive during adversity, which we hope has helped the rest of the Damascus community during these difficult times.

Every Year 12 student across Victoria should be proud of their work, their abilities, and their self-attitude in a year like this. We both, as leaders, wanted to not only lead our cohort but support and encourage our peers. We are so grateful we were able to experience a Year 12 retreat, our last carnivals and our last school formal, but COVID restrictions did change things. However, as a group, we were all able to support each other, bring some joy and come together once again for our final Damascus Day all dressed up! This was a heart warming experience to see everyone so keen to dress up and show off their wonderful costumes.

We, Shaun and Maya, have grown as leaders, and we believe COVID may have restricted some opportunities, but we continued to build our skills of communication, leadership and support to be our best as college captains, no matter what!

Shaun Leonard and Maya Tolliday, Year 12 students and 2021 College Captains

DAMASCUS COLLEGE ALUMNI ART PRIZE

**PSST... NOMINATIONS
ARE **NOW** OPEN!**

**THIS IS YOUR CHANCE
TO EARN \$2000 FOR A PIECE
OF YOUR ARTWORK.**

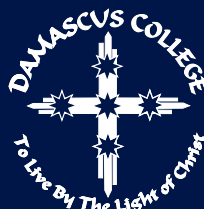
The Art Prize is open to Damascus College Alumni, including past students or staff from Damascus College, Sacred Heart College, St Paul's College and St Martin's in the Pines.

Your artwork might be a drawing, sketch, painting, photograph, sculpture, textile, glasswork, lithograph, screen printing, or even an etching but must explore the College motto 'To Live By the Light of Christ'.

Application deadline: 4pm Friday 1 July, 2022

Details and application form

damascus.vic.edu.au



connecting@Damascus



Kathy (in red) with SHC Classmates 2020



Kathy becoming a Mercy Associate 2021

IN THE MERCY TRADITION

ALUMNI STORY

On Saturday 20 March 2021 a small ceremony was held in the Mercy Chapel, where after a COVID enforced delay, I was finally able to make my commitment, and I am most excited to finally be a Mercy Associate!

Mercy Associates are women and men who respond to the Gospel invitation of Jesus, and the example of Catherine McAuley, to minister to God's children who are experiencing poverty, illness, or lack of education by living out the spiritual and corporal works of Mercy. We incorporate these values into our daily lives and share the unique mission of Mercy in our homes, workplaces, churches, and communities. While connected to the Sisters of Mercy, we come from many different faith traditions but are respectful of, and comfortable with, Christian symbolism and prayer.

Mercy Associates actively participate in the life of the Sisters of Mercy and share in the unique charisma of the Institute. Associates do not take vows (poverty, chastity, obedience, and service) as the Sisters of Mercy do. Instead, we make a covenant (commitment) to be partners with the Sisters of Mercy and to share in their spiritual life and in their pledge of service to others and to our world. We work to extend the presence of Mercy to our sisters and brothers through prayer, solidarity, and volunteer projects.

My Mercy formation began early, as my mother, Moira Lund, entered the Mercy Convent but did not take final vows – thankfully! Being the eldest of nine children, Mum was keen to ensure the education of her daughters was formed by the Mercys at St Alipius Primary School and then Sacred Heart. I remember these Women of Mercy as being at the forefront of educational practices, not afraid to try new ideas, engaged with the wellbeing of their students and as caring, intellectual, and strong leaders in their field – mostly!

Continuing my Mercy education, I graduated from ACU and spent many wonderful years in education, teaching from Prep to Year 12 both in Victoria and Central Queensland. Further studies found me in the role of educator at Centacare in Rockhampton for seven years working with families, couples and in the correctional centre. I was always amazed by where my vocation led me, especially working in a leadership role for 11 years in a presentation secondary college in Yeppoon. The local Mercy sisters and Presentation sisters had a close relationship, and I loved engaging with both the Nano Nagle and Catherine McAuley stories during these years.

Once our four children 'flew the coop' to the bigger cities of London, Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne, we too decided the call of our 'home country' of Ballarat had many riches to offer in terms of family and friends. Currently, we are settled back in Ballarat East and I am loving my role as Pastoral Carer at Mercy Place and National Formation Lead with Mercy Health. Keeping the Mercy spirit alive in the family, my husband also works as Maintenance Supervisor for the Sisters of Mercy in Ballarat East.

Now, as a Mercy Associate, I am looking forward to building closer friendships at local gatherings with others who share the 'Mercy Spirit'. I especially value the close contact and relationships I have with the Mercy Sisters at Mercy Place and in Ballarat. They continue to inspire, encourage and empower me in so many ways, and I am eternally grateful for their presence in my life.

Kathy Curran née Lund, Class of 1981





FREEZING FOR A CAUSE

DAMASCUS EVENT

Year 12 students Abbey Clark, Maddy Gass, Kaitlyn Keen, Liv King and Remmi Sheehan were excited to be part of the festivities planned for the 2021 Damascus Day celebrations. They had decided to organise and run the “Dunk Tank” as a fun way to raise money and awareness for Motor Neurone Disease (MND).

In 2020 Damascus VCAL students were inspired by Neale Daniher and the work of his FightMND foundation. The fund was founded in 2014 by Neale with the intent “to cure, to care and to make aware”. The students in 2021 were keen to again support Neale and hoped to exceed the amount raised last year, setting themselves the lofty goal of raising \$3,000 for the cause. Neale showed the Damascus students how much he appreciated their efforts when he responded to a Facebook post: “Well done to all staff and students of Damascus College ... once again you have stepped up to help us fight this ‘beast’. On behalf of those living with MND, their families, carers and FightMND .. well done .. much appreciated”.

The organising team worked hard and were well supported by Applied Learning Coordinator Belinda Dwyer and the VCAL staff in getting the Dunk Tank ready for Damascus Day, but then due to COVID-19 rules and restrictions, the College made the tough decision to celebrate in a different way, which meant no dunk tank. The team quickly decided that they would keep moving forward with their fundraising efforts and decided they would do the Ice Bucket Challenge.

The Ice Bucket Challenge would allow them to adhere to the COVID guidelines, while still having a ton of fun raising awareness and money.

After several date changes due to snap lockdowns, the event finally took place on Thursday 7 October. The sun was shining, but deceptively so, as it was a very chilly Ballarat day. There were no worries that the ice would melt before the challenge started.

Staff participants in the challenge this year included Matthew Byrne, Principal, Assistant Principals Tony Haintz and Ashwin Pillai, as well as Belinda Dwyer, Simon Carroll, Karen Goonan, Gayle Haintz, Sharon Hayes, Adrian Lane, Martin Ryan, Rachel Wallbank and Hamish Walsh. The event was also supported by the Year 12 VCAL students.

Abbey, Maddy, Kaitlyn, Liv and Remmi wish to thank all the brave volunteers who took part in the challenge, and the generous people who donated to the FightMND cause.





THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC

ALUMNI STORY

One of the highlights during 2021 in Ballarat was the BLOC Music Theatre Company's production of Mamma Mia!. The sold-out ABBA musical ran from the 12th to the 23rd of May at Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat.

Mamma Mia! is a jukebox musical written by British playwright Catherine Johnson, based on the songs of ABBA composed by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, members of the band. The plot follows a young bride-to-be who invites three men to her upcoming wedding on the fictional Greek Island of Kalokairi, each one with the possibility of being her father.

The 2021 BLOC production was a joyous presentation that had many in the crowd humming along, and on their feet for the finale.

Many of the cast and crew for this musical have ties to Damascus College or one of our three foundation colleges, Sacred Heart College, St Paul's Technical College or St Martin's in the Pines.

The production team for Mamma Mia! included choral director Majella Muller, musical director Geoff Martin, Class of 1996, and

assistant director and choreographer Natalya Munro, Class of 2017. Natalya said the process of choreographing was exciting yet challenging. 'It really pushed me as a creative, but I always felt so supported.'

“ It was an experience of a lifetime ”

Natalya said she enjoyed reuniting with other Damascus alumni and reflected fondly on her time at the college.

'It was whilst I was a student at Damascus that my love and appreciation for theatre began,' she said.

'Knowing that so many other past and present students and staff of Damascus were a part of the production, just goes to show the incredible influence the performing arts at Damascus has.'



On stage, BLOC President Jason Muller, Class of 1990, dazzled as principal cast member Sam Carmichael. Cooper Guinea, Class of 2022, shone in the ensemble, and Damascus' First Aid Officer Simon Carroll played Father Alexandrios. Simon said performing with BLOC felt like an amazing expression of community.

'I was welcomed into an established cast and production team that had the bonus of including work colleagues both past and present,' he said.

'All of us, including the people I knew as students at Damascus and their family members, were privileged to be on the receiving end of amazing audience support with well over 7,000 people dancing in the aisles.'

Backstage crew roles for this production also starred a significant contingent of Damascus alumni. Sound engineer Aaron Andrew is a past student and staff member. Sound technicians for the production were Daniel Gay, Class of 2015, and Matthew Gay, Class of 2017. Matthew Heenan, Class of 1979, Aaron Rivett, Class of 2007, and fellow alumni Megan Poynton worked on sound and lighting for

the show, while Chelsea Bosworth, Class of 2020, was part of the props team.

Damascus staff who participated in the musical included guitar teacher Harry Dale and teacher Vicki Rowe performing in the orchestra, while Humanities and Indonesian teacher Brendan Bawden was part of the two-man fly crew who moved scenery in and out from above the stage.

Drama is offered as a subject from Year 7–12 at Damascus College, with an annual school production offered to interested students.

Damascus College congratulates all cast members on a fantastic show.

Note: Thank you to our Alumni Community for your support in making this a more comprehensive and correct article.

Photos are courtesy of Nigel Stevens Photography



CLASS OF 1980 REUNION

ALUMNI EVENT

It's all over for another 10 or 20 or 30 (less 1) years!

On Saturday 1st May 2021 our Class of 1980 finally came together to celebrate our 40th (+1) reunion. The celebration kicked off at Damascus College with a wonderful welcome reception. As guests, we enjoyed the wonderful amenities on offer in the new Damascus Events Centre before exploring the campus on a guided tour. The afterparty was held at our old stomping grounds, The Golden City Hotel.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended the Class of 1980 reunion and helped make it such a success. It's hard to believe that 19 months have passed since I volunteered to take this on. At times it seemed like a never-ending project. I am quite sure I would not have persevered without the support of our Facebook group; it kept me focused and motivated.

From my perspective, the event made it all worthwhile.

Some special mentions...

The girls who were unable to attend for personal reasons but shared some of their life stories with me – you inspired me to keep going as well.

A fantastic effort from the girls who travelled from Mullumbimby, Port Macquarie and Sydney.

To the girls who had to make the difficult decision not to attend, due to prior commitments or circumstances beyond their control: Our thoughts were with you in some shape or form.

Those who had to put up with my annoying texts and emails asking endless questions about spelling of names and event dates etc. It was appreciated.

And Korina, for welcoming us and for facilitating the tour of the amazing Damascus campus. I think we were all somewhat awestruck. Korina also had the unenviable task of resolving last-minute hitches at the venue, and believe me, there were quite a few.

Kim Parkinson Class of 1980, Reunion Organiser



CLASS OF 1990 REUNION

ALUMNI EVENT

Our 30+1 Class reunion was finally celebrated on Saturday 15 May 2021.

It seems like old news now that we have lived through two years of dealing with the stops and starts and disappointments of a world with COVID, and dealing with this global pandemic, but when we had to reschedule our much-anticipated reunion, not once but twice, it felt devastating. But when it was all said and done, and we finally got together, it was a fantastic time for old friends to get together like we had never been apart.

Rescheduling the date did mean that some people who had wanted to attend one of the previous dates now couldn't because of circumstances beyond our control. This was balanced out by other members of our class being able to attend the new date. It was a good example of what the world was facing.

The school was generous and provided us with the new event centre as a place to meet and have a drink and a chance to say hello and get to see some familiar faces. We had a chance to reflect on some of the members of our class who had passed, memories from our time together as students, and to see a slide show of pictures. Not as many people as were expected were able to attend the school tour, but the get together later that night at Oscar's had a large attendance.

Thank you to everyone who made the effort to attend our reunion, it was great to see so many familiar faces and to have the chance to catch up as a big group.

Aleceia Gason, Kara Linayao and Danielle Skewes Class of 1990, Reunion Organisers



CLASS OF 2000 REUNION

ALUMNI EVENT

On Sunday 18th April at 2pm the Class of 2000 were able to come together to celebrate their 20-year class reunion.

Guests arrived at Damascus College, where they were greeted to a small welcome reception in the College's newly completed gathering space, the Damascus Events Centre. The reception was an opportunity for those in attendance to come together, reconnect and enjoy a drink and some yummy nibbles, and reminisce and look at old pictures and yearbooks from the archives.

The assembled past students were led on a tour of the College. They enjoyed seeing the new amenities that current students enjoy, including the John Shannon Centre, the new chapel and the Mercy Wing Administration building. Attendees were also impressed with the recent renovations to the St Martin's Resource Centre, and the science building and music rooms.

It was a wonderful celebration and chance to reignite old friendships.



CLASS OF 2010 REUNION

ALUMNI EVENT

The call went out to our class at the end of 2019 to get ready for our 10-year reunion. No one could believe that it had already been 10 years since we left high school, but we were massively excited to catch up with old friends. We planned to get together on Friday 20th March at Damascus and then go out to a pub afterwards. Well, weren't we all surprised when suddenly the world seemed to stop, and we found ourselves in a very different world? Now we had to deal with COVID-19 and no one really knew what that meant.

After a topsy turvy year, we got the green light and could finally have our reunion.

The date was Friday 16 April and a HUGE group of us met back on the school grounds. The College hosted a welcome reception for us, a few drinks were enjoyed as we looked at old photos, listened to familiar tunes and caught up with old friends. Mr Byrne was even there to say hello and show us around the school so we could see what changes had been made in 10 years.

After we had a good look around we made our way to the Freight Bar for more chats and pictures.

It was great to see everyone and to visit the old school.

Sophie Burzacott class of 2010, Reunion Organiser



It's time to come together to celebrate your class reunion

RESCHEDULED 2021 'CLASS OF' REUNIONS

Class of 1971	Sunday 24 April	Lunch
Class of 1981	Saturday 9 April	1pm – 3.30pm
Class of 1991	Saturday 7 May	1pm – 3.30pm
Class of 2001	Saturday 7 May	3.30pm – 6pm
Class of 2011	Friday 6 May	6.30pm - 9pm

2022 'CLASS OF' REUNIONS

Class of 1972	Saturday 23 April	Lunch
Class of 1982	Saturday 30 April	1pm – 3.30pm
Class of 1992	Saturday 9 April	3.30pm – 6pm
Class of 2002	Saturday 30 April	3.30pm – 6pm
Class of 2012	Friday 8 April	6.30pm - 9pm

RECENT GRADUATES GET TOGETHER

Class of 2020 & 2021	Saturday 19 February	5pm - 7pm
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You are invited to join with your cohort to celebrate your **'Class of Reunion'**.

Your **'Class of Year'** is the year your cohort completed Year Matriculation/HSC/Year 12.

For example, if you left school in Year 10 in 1980, you would still be a part of the Class of 1982.

All of your **'Class of Reunion'** details can be found at damascus.vic.edu.au/community/alumni/alumni-reunions-events

ALUMNI & COMMUNITY 2022 EVENTS CALENDAR

Damascus College is pleased to invite you to join us for the following events and activities.

*You're invited
to save the date*

FEBRUARY

- 3** Open Morning
- 4** Enrolments Close

MARCH

- 26** 140 Year Anniversary Gala

APRIL

- 7** Bright Futures Breakfast

MAY

- 26** Shining Light Award - Nominations Close

JUNE

- 14** Former Staff Luncheon - Celebrating Damascus Education

JULY

- 1** Alumni Art Prize - Applications Close
- 23** Archives Afternoon Tea

AUGUST

- 26** Bright Futures Luncheon

SEPTEMBER

- 7** Information Evening
- 13** Open Morning

OCTOBER

- 5** Catherine's Cuppa - Afternoon Tea
- 18** Information Evening
- 26** Open Morning

NOVEMBER

- 5** Friends of the Bush - Working Bee and Luncheon

*We hope you
can join us*

* Please note information is accurate at the time of publication, but subject to change.

ARCHIVES CENTRE

DAMASCUS ARCHIVES

The new Damascus Events Centre (DEC) is a great resource for our college, providing a wonderful setting for functions. The view from the top floor is hard to beat, however, there is more to the building than meets the eye – it is also home to several other departments within the college. On the bottom floor, we now have a purpose-built archives facility to house our collection safely and securely, which includes items such as photographs, film, student records, uniforms, memorabilia, event programs, publications and artwork.

The Damascus College archival collection celebrates the rich history of Damascus College and its foundation colleges Sacred Heart College, St Paul's Technical College and St Martin's in the Pines, creating a link between the College as we know it today and its early origins. As we further develop our Archives Centre our aim is that it will become a hub for staff, students and alumni to visit and interact with our College history in person and be inspired by those who walked the halls before them.

We are always looking to expand our collection, so if you have any items of interest you would like to donate, we would love to hear from you.

Enquiries can be directed to archives@damascus.vic.edu.au





SUCCESS IN SAYEMBARA LISAN COMPETITION

MEGAN O'BEIRNE

Recently, I was fortunate enough to compete in Sayembara Lisan, an Indonesian speaking competition that is open to all students across Victoria.

Indonesian has become one of my favourite subjects at Damascus College, and I intend to study it as a 3/4 VCE subject next year, as well as post-high school (in some capacity).

My Indonesian teacher, Pak (Mr) Brendan Bawden mentioned the competition in class and asked if anyone would like to participate. I put my hand up, despite not being the most comfortable or confident with speaking in a different language, but I thought

“Doesn't hurt to try, right?”

For this competition, I had to engage in a general conversation that included questions like, “Why should Australians learn about Indonesian?,” “Describe your family,” and “What aspects of Indonesian culture have you already learned about?.” After this, I had to do a presentation based on a topic I could choose myself – for the first round I did a presentation on the movie ‘Brave’, and for the finals, I did a presentation on climate change and its effects on Indonesia.

When entering, I did not expect I would end up placing (let alone get into the finals in the first place), but I was ecstatic when I was told I had placed joint third in the state.

I liken this experience to be similar to what the oral exam in Year 12 is meant to be like, so having this experience has given me a lot more confidence in my abilities and skill in Indonesian – though I will not get cocky! I know so much can change in a year, and I still have much to improve upon.

I encourage all language students to put their hands up for opportunities such as these, as they really show you what you're capable of and provide you with great experience in speaking a foreign language.

Megan O'Beirne, Year 11 student



HELEN HANDBURY LEADERSHIP AWARD

MAYA TOLLIDAY

Damascus College Year 12 student and College Captain Maya Tolliday was awarded the Helen Handbury Leadership Award, as part of the Future Leaders Awards, for her strong leadership and potential. The awards aim to inspire others to engage in environmental and community issues and make a difference.

This award recognises Maya's commitment to her school and community and her growing leadership qualities. Throughout her time at Damascus, Maya has represented students as an SRC member and as a Year 10 peer mentor.

Maya said that the position of College Captain has strengthened her leadership skills and qualities, and she is very grateful for this opportunity.

“Outside of school, I volunteer my time at Mercy Place, the Salvation Army Op Shop and am a keen volunteer as part of the Aussie Action Abroad program”

“This overseas program involves fundraising, organisation and development strategies to help those living in remote villages in the third-world country Nepal. Being a part of this team motivated me to travel and volunteer in Nepal in 2019.”

The Helen Handbury Leadership award marks the outstanding contribution that the late Mrs Helen Handbury has made to community development in rural and regional Australia. The Awards recognise Year 12 students in rural and regional Australia who have shown outstanding community leadership.

“I was very excited to receive this award, it brought me much happiness and joy but also my success made me feel deep pride. My hard work and dedication to my role as a student leader has shaped the person I have become, and to be formally recognised for this, is wonderful.”

As part of the award, Maya will receive \$5,000 towards an international trip to experience community development in another culture.

“At university, I plan to continue to work in countries that need our help. As soon as the borders open up and I have a COVID vaccine, I am grabbing my things and flying back over to my community in Nepal.”

“My dream is to lead an expedition team through helping Nepali families, working with Nepali school children and providing access to healthcare for those that need it. I believe this award will enable me to pursue this dream.”



2000



2019

A PAST STAFF REFLECTION OF DAMASCUS

ALUMNI STORY

I began my teaching career at Sacred Heart College in 1977 and I can honestly say it was a wonderful experience. I had some great mentors and the girls were fabulous. They were so easy to teach because they wanted to do well. Our biggest discipline problem was those tricky students who tried to sneak to the corner shop during recess and lunch! The thought of amalgamating with two other schools, which included boys, was rather terrifying. However, when the principal, John Shannon, was appointed it became a very real situation. It was time to roll up the sleeves and embrace the changes.

I joined the Student Transition Committee, which was one of many committees operating for the amalgamation to be successful. I became interested in taking on new challenges and developing my leadership skills, so I applied for a House Leader role, at the senior campus. I am not sure that I thought I would ever get the position, but I did. My move to the senior campus was real. It was also scary to know that only one other colleague from SHC was going to be moving with me on a full-time basis. That staff member was Ron Matthews, and I will be forever indebted to him for his support.

My first meeting with students as the House Leader of McAuley was during an orientation day at the senior campus in November of 1994. I was very nervous, and as I introduced myself as Mrs Simpkin, I heard a staff member mumble in the background, "We use Christian names out here". I realised that the changes were going to be a battle for all concerned. I found the year of amalgamation very challenging. Not only did I have a very new role to fulfil as House Leader, but I was also teaching a new subject of VCE English and the students were, how shall we say, rather

lively! There were times when I did think about changing jobs, however, obviously, I stayed, and I am so pleased that I took that decision.

As I became more confident in my leadership role and the students settled into working comfortably with the opposite sex in the classroom, and the senior teachers accepted that Year 10s were on campus to stay, teaching once more became very enjoyable. I have been offered so many varied experiences in my time as a teacher at Damascus College and that is something for which I am forever grateful.

Karen Simpkin, Staff 1977–2019

About Karen Simpkin: she retired at the end of Term 1, 2019, after more than 40 years of dedicated service to Damascus College and Sacred Heart College. Karen started teaching at Sacred Heart College in 1977 and was in her 41st year of teaching at Damascus College. Karen's passion was RE, English and Humanities, and she held numerous roles throughout her career, including Sports Coordinator, Connell House Leader, Transition Coordinator, McAuley House Leader, Senior School Coordinator and Campus Coordinator (for a 12-month maternity leave position). Karen made long-lasting friendships throughout her time at the College. She is genuinely a woman of Mercy and has been a great servant of Catholic and Mercy education.



Maureen's Sacred Heart Matric Class 1964

FROM SCHOLAR TO TEACHER

ALUMNI STORY

Maureen Donnellon née Giles, Class of 1964, remembers her time as a boarder at Sacred Heart in the mid-'60s with fondness. She grew up in Kerang, and later Donald, as the daughter of a Catholic school teacher who felt that his children would need the ability to attain a higher education than was offered in the smaller country towns they lived in. To accomplish this the Giles girls were sent to board at Sacred Heart in Ballarat with the Sisters of Mercy.

Maureen is the oldest, with five younger sisters. She completed Year 11 in 1963 and Year 12 in 1964 but was offered a scholarship to return in 1965 to improve her grades to attend University in Melbourne.

As a boarder at Sacred Heart, Maureen remembers feeling detached from the Sisters, "Sr Andrew ran the dormitory, and she was nice, but I never really knew her." With many teenage girls boarding for the first time when they came to Sacred Heart College the rules for behaviour were strict and the girls didn't have many personal freedoms. Boarders were only allowed one hour of radio time per week, on a Sunday. No access to the small store that was located on the adjacent corner, and absolutely no Beatles.

"The more taboo they made something, the more enticing it was. I had a drawer with pictures of the Beatles stuck on the underside. I couldn't see it. But knowing they were there was very exciting."

At the end of 1965, Maureen decided that she in fact would follow in her father's footsteps and become a teacher. Teacher training was conducted at Aquin College, which was also known as Sacred Heart Training College due to its proximity to the high school. Many of the students would continue to board, and in July 1963 Patrician House was opened officially. Maureen continued as a boarder with the Sisters for two years until she had her teaching qualifications. Maureen went on to teach for almost 50 years, only fully retiring at the end of 2015.

Maureen's connection to Damascus continues today as her sister is Carmel Giles RSM, an active and vibrant member of the Sisters of Mercy Ballarat community. In these COVID times, Sr Carmel enjoys performing babysitting duties for her great-nephew so her niece, Maureen's daughter, can perform her front-line work providing critical care as a nurse.

Past students and community members
are invited to

AN EVENING OF CELEBRATION & ENTERTAINMENT

at the Damascus College

140 YEAR ANNIVERSARY GALA

Saturday 26 March

6pm - 10pm

Damascus Events Centre

tickets now on sale
trybooking.com/BTQJX

Tickets are \$80pp, this includes canapes on arrival,
a sumptuous main meal, dessert and all drinks are included
(champagne, beer, wine and soft drink).

140 years

OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION



1881
Sacred Heart
College



1948
St Pauls
Technical College



1967
St Martin's
in the Pines



1995
Damascus
College



Be. My. Best.

damascus.vic.edu.au