

The Road

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Spring 2022

OUR COVER

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Inside Cover: The front cover picture was taken by Year 12 student, Hamish Sainsbury.

Artist statement: "This photo is from my media narrative about a character going through the five stages of grief after losing a loved one. This specific photo is the last in my 10-piece narrative photography series and represents acceptance, hope, and the idea of looking into the future instead of dwelling on the past by using the metaphor "the light at the end of the tunnel." This inspired me to create a literal version that visualised the well-known metaphor".

Read his full reflection on page 8.

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IN REMEMBRANCE



PRINCIPALS WELCOME

STEVEN MIFSUD

Welcome to the Spring Edition of The Road. I have been humbled by my appointment as College Principal of Damascus College. I began this journey at the beginning of Term 3 and have been impressed by the welcome and hospitality I have experienced from the different members of our community. Our college has a beautiful setting enabling our learners and community to engage in the gift of creation and the joy of nature. The bushland enables all to feel the strong presence of our creator God. I have been struck by the rich and lasting charism of the Sisters of Mercy. In my initial meetings with the interview panel I commented on the strong sense of Mercy as one walks around the grounds. I can still see and feel the founding women who were pioneers in establishing St Martin in the Pines.

Our recent 140 Year celebration is a testament to our College's vision to be dynamic and evolving. We have so much to be thankful and grateful for, and I am proud to lead a school that has been established by the parishes of Ballarat, the Christian Brothers, and the Sisters of Mercy. It is in our humble beginnings that we can see that much has grown and flourished. From the establishment of Sacred Heart in Ballarat East, St Paul's Technical School, and St Martin in the Pines, we now have Damascus College – a school

of humble beginnings with a thirst to serve and lead the Ballarat community, enabling all to be their best.

The parable of the mustard seed resonates strongly with me as a leader of Damascus College. The parable is the story that from one seed, much will germinate, and others will flourish. But with all seeds, one needs to be patient, to guide and nurture gently. A Catholic education is one that celebrates the individual dignity of each person allowing all to flourish and grow in the image and likeness of their God. As educators and parents, we may not see the outcomes of our labours today, however time, learning and experience help each one of us grow and be witnesses of our faith.

It has been a busy first semester, with many people having the courage to lead. I would like to thank the following staff for their willingness to accept the challenge to lead, and to lead with courage and conviction; Chris Grant as Interim Principal, Ashwin Pillai as Interim Deputy Principal, Alysoun Smalley as Interim AP Learning & Leading, Daniel Jans and Hannah Keating in their respective roles of Acting AP Student Wellbeing, Karen Goonan and Karen Hocking as Acting House Leaders. The past six months have been a challenging time for our community with the passing of Jeff Simpson, and I acknowledge his work in our community.



This semester provides our community with an opportunity to continue to regroup and reset after the pandemic of the last two years. The community continues to support our learners in re-engaging with a rich and diverse learning program, co-curricular, and faith and wellbeing programs. After two years of interrupted schooling, both online and face to face, the challenge has been for each of us to regroup and find the new normal.

I am proud to say that our community has certainly demonstrated the skills being taught in our Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework. Our student's confidence, organisation, and resilience have grown, and we need to provide opportunities for our young people to exhibit and embed these skills. A key pillar of social-emotional learning is engaging relationships. Our experience of the many lockdowns has taught us the importance of relationships and the need to work in partnership. Unconditional positive regard is a concept explored in the world of social work and is used to describe the need to allow people to make mistakes, be forgiven, and know that we start each day afresh. Our young people need to be named, known, and loved.

As I reflect on this term, it has been a period of challenge and growth. Our young people have been participating in a myriad of experiences. Our continued participation in the Ballarat Associated Sports has enabled our young people to engage in physical sports and competition, and to form deep and purposeful relationships.

I was so delighted to view the drama performance of *Clue*, and during my induction to the College, I had the privilege of viewing preparations and rehearsals. The students were able to work both independently and interdependently. They were able to produce a stellar performance that demonstrated the gifts and talents of a cast of students from Years 7 – 12. As I write this, our Music students returned from our Music Camp at Daylesford, where students could perform and rehearse in ensembles and choirs.

The faith experience of our College members continues to be enriched by the opportunities provided by our Faith and Ministry

Team. In my short time at the College, I have been witness to these experiences for our Year 8 students and a youth ministry day for our Year 9 students that had Father Galea challenge and lead our students. The Year 11 students had an overnight experience exploring the gift of building and sustaining relationships in a respectful Christ-centred manner.

Within the teaching and learning spheres, we continue to ensure students participate in a learning program that challenges each student to grow and be their best. Our focus this term through our Teacher Advisor program has been on careers, the future of work, and subject choices, as students enter their senior years. An extensive subject selection evening with Information Sessions ensured our students were able to make informed choices about their future. We are proud of the College's careers team, who assists our Teacher Advisors and students to ensure they know who they are, what they need, and where they are going. To be my best simply means to be the best in whichever vocation, job, or career I choose. At Damascus, we are proud of the breadth of subjective offerings in the senior school.

As professionals, I have witnessed a staff that is willing to challenge, question, and reflect on their practice. This term, we began with an extensive recruitment drive for leaders for Positions of Leadership. As a College Leadership Team ably supported by our Human Resources Team, we appointed College leaders for the next three years. We are committed to enacting and embedding our strategic plan. We are a College that is yearning to lead, to be our best, work in partnership, and make an impactful difference to the community of Ballarat.

I have spent much of this term getting to know the staff and students, and I look forward to meeting you, our parents and alumni, as Damascus College is a gem that shines in the light of Christ.

With every blessing,

Mr. Steven Mifsud, Principal



Steven Mifsud and Damascus students

GETTING TO KNOW OUR NEW PRINCIPAL

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Growing up in the outer Western suburbs of St Albans, Steven knew that education was the tool for a better life. He is one of nine children of Maltese migrants who came out to Australia in 1956 during the Melbourne Olympics. The second youngest child, his siblings would argue that he was spoilt, as by this time his parents had money and the younger kids were able to enjoy life and have his four older sisters look after him. Being one of nine, there was lots of rivalry and competition. His passion for food, family, and humour was nurtured in this environment.

Steven attended the local Catholic primary school that was populated with many first-generation migrant children. Sacred Heart Primary School was a school established by the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, which introduced Steven to strong religious women who believed in education as a tool of empowerment, social change, and justice. Steven remembers the eclectic collection of languages and foods from far and wide being eaten. Celebrating one's individuality and identity, and differences were encompassed in this large, noisy school. The Sisters had high expectations, and he can remember the use of corporal punishment to manage the unruly young students. He has fond memories of Sr Moya, his grade 6 teacher, who modelled positive relationships and listened to others as being instrumental in being a better person.

Like many young people, Steven had many part-time jobs as he went through the state High School working in Coles Variety as a checkout operator. He can remember the craziness of serving customers before the shop closed at midday and having to calculate change, as the cash register could only add the costs of goods. Here he learned to think quickly, work with others and be grateful for the opportunity to learn. He had a brief experience working in

the local moccasin factory, making mocassins and ugg boots and gluing the sole of shoes.

During his university years, he was the Head Waiter at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, a ward clerk in the Emergency Department of a large public hospital, and had a brief stint at the Commonwealth Bank. His parents and life experience taught him that hard work and perseverance were needed to succeed.

Steven started his first degree at The University of Melbourne Institute of Education. He was so overwhelmed, as he was one of the few students from Melbourne's Western Suburbs. He loved meeting new people but quickly banded with those who had similar life experiences. He studied Literature, History, Drama, and Sociology. He was quickly placed on student-teacher placements, and his first placement was at Warrnambool Technical School.

When he graduated from University - during the Kennett Era, he found there was no work for teachers. Determined not to be unemployed, Steven began working at the Werribee Community Centre in Adult Literacy and Basic Education. He loved working with people who struggled with literacy and the newly arrived migrants who could not speak or read and write in English. He even taught literacy in factories in Williamstown and Brooklyn.

Steven met his wife Nancy in 1992 and quickly realised he needed a real job that would provide an income for the dream home. Working in the adult area did not have the same working conditions. He took his first position at Catholic Regional College Melton for a short five-week replacement position just before he married in 1994. The Holy Spirit provided providence, and Steven was given an ongoing job starting in 1995.



Steven Mifsud and his family

Steven loved his time at Melton and had made many long-term friends, learning how to teach and build relationships with young people and their families. He remembers being in awe of the family's generosity at Christmas time: driving home with car boots full of gifts. He still laughs when he thinks of the time he bought his newborn son, Anton, to school and his Year 7 English, RE, and Humanities class babysat his one-month-old son while he tried to compile the College's student reports. Steven was responsible for the College's reporting system and, unfortunately, could not master how to print the reports for the families.

At Melton, he learned that young people learn best when a teacher knows, cares for, and challenges their students to be their best. He had many roles at the College – Special Education Leader, Year 8 & 9 Level Leader, and then his love for Teaching and Learning came to fruition when he was appointed Curriculum Leader.

Having stayed at Melton for nine years, Steven recognised he needed a new challenge and moved to MacKillop College Werribee as Literacy Leader and Professional Learning Leader. Again, Steven was grateful for the generous spirit of the students and the unconditional love shown by the parents. He remembers leaving his Year 12 English class to be at the birth of his second son, Luca. Whilst at Melton, Steven completed a Graduate Diploma in Religious Education followed by a Master's in Educational Leadership.

Three years later, Steven was appointed as Deputy Principal of Learning & Life at Santa Maria College Northcote, affectionately referred to as Santa. Santa was an all-girls school in the inner northern suburbs with students from over forty different backgrounds. He learned so much about his faith through the Good Samaritan Sisters. The family then moved to Ascot Vale to live on the next street to his mother-in-law – Domenica, who was 80. Santa was a memorable time, as his boys loved going to the school productions and the musical performances.

At Santa, he learned to take risks in teaching and learning and to experiment with new curriculum innovations. Here he introduced the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program and the Duke of Edinburgh. He was so proud when the first student received the Gold Award and was presented to the Governor of Victoria at Government House. His passion for learning continued as he then

completed a Master's of Religious Education.

Steven saw a new role at Mount St. Joseph Girls' College in Altona – a school owned by the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart. Steven felt compelled to return to the religious women who were instrumental in his faith and love of the Church. Here, he was appointed to the role of Deputy Principal, Student Wellbeing, where he introduced two new Houses and a wellbeing program. He is most proud of the Chill Out Space and the Student Services Department that supported young women who needed additional care and challenge. He led a research project in partnership with three other secondary colleges and Victoria University, exploring how schools could best support students with mental health challenges. The thirst for personal learning continued, and whilst at Altona, he completed a Master's of Business Administration.

Steven is grateful for the love and support of his family, Nancy, Anton, Luca and Domenica who is now 95 and still living independently in the next street. Nancy continues to work for the Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic School, at the Werribee Office, as a Maths Consultant, Anton is studying Law at Melbourne, and Luca is completing Year 12. The cold weather of Ballarat has been a challenge for Steven, but the warmth of the people and the great coffee and cafes keep him energised and real.

Steven is excited to be at Damascus and feels at home being back in a co-educational school. He loves the strong sense of community, the students with their passion for life, friendliness, and openness to new people. He has been struck by the humility of the students and their strong connections. The staff are incredibly hard-working and want to challenge one another to ensure we provide the best for all our learners. He cannot believe the breadth of the curriculum and the opportunities available to all learners. We have so much to build on as the Strategic Plan is embedded.

He is grateful for the work of the founding Colleges and the Sisters of Mercy. He is in awe of the tenacity of Matt Byrne's leadership of the College over the past thirteen years. He believes that Damascus is a brilliant school that works with all members of the community to bring out the best in each person. The magnificent landscape promotes a deep connection to the land and our God.

Steven is looking forward to meeting the Damascus community over the coming years.



Dunk tank at Damascus Day



Steven and guests at the Archives Gallery Opening



Grade 5 guests visit to watch Clue



Year 12 Final Assembly



Steven with students



Hamish Sainsbury, Year 12 student

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

The photo featured on the front cover of this publication is part of a 10-photo narrative series for my School-Assessed task work and folio, part of Year 12 Media at Damascus College. The narrative is about Miles Barwick, a character I created who is going through the five stages of grief after the loss of a loved one. The image is of my sibling, the main character in my narrative. This photo is the last image in the photography series and shows Miles walking into a light at the end of a tunnel as he moves on from his past to look at the future and the 'bright things ahead for him'.

The image also represents acceptance and hope, acting as a message for anyone who sees it to look into the future instead of dwelling on the past. I chose "the light at the end of the tunnel" metaphor, because it resonates with me quite a lot, especially when I am approaching the end of my schooling in year 12.

During the pre-production portion of my folio earlier in the year, I came across a photographer by the name of Lucas Zimmerman, whose work heavily relied on light and colours to create meaning and emotions. This inspired me to use a similar style to express the stages of grief.

The production and post-production stage of my SAT took about two months of shooting, editing, getting feedback, and re-shooting. However, I have been working on my folio since early December last year during Early Start and have been working on it continuously, adding things throughout the year. It has been hard work, but very rewarding. I completed my folio on the 22 August with a staggering approximately 13,000 words.

I first got into photography in Year 6 when I was a part of the photography team at Buninyong Primary, where we would get

weekly lessons from a professional photographer on the basics.

Ever since then, my enjoyment of photography has grown as I was soon begging my parents to buy a better home DSLR camera. Thanks, Mum & Dad!

After Year 12, I am taking a gap year, where I plan to work to gain life experience and a little more freedom! I want to attend RMIT University in Melbourne, where I hope to study Computer Science. However, I will continue to enjoy and create photography as a hobby or maybe more than just a hobby; who knows? I have really enjoyed my time at Damascus, with an inclusive and supportive community throughout the school. I want to give a big thanks to all the teachers that have taught me throughout the past six years, especially my media teacher Mrs. Naomi Olthof.

Hamish Sainsbury, Year 12 student



FOLIO PIECES

HAMISH SAINSBURY





A PATHWAY DEDICATED TO HELPING OTHERS

ALUMNI STORY

With a passion for being of service to others and a desire to work with young people, Emily's path led her to a career in education.

Since graduating from Damascus College in 2001, Emily Clarke (nee Eltringham) had felt her purpose was to help the needs of others, enabling Emily to work in a variety of roles within her career, including her most recent appointment as St Alipius Parish School Principal.

Having worked at St Alipius for eight years, Emily took the chance and applied for the Interim Principal role in 2019, a role that she thoroughly enjoyed. When the opportunity presented itself to apply for the ongoing Principal role for 2023 and beyond, Emily did so and was again successful.

Emily said it was the alignment of her beliefs and the beliefs of St Alipius to provide a Catholic Education that educated the whole child, for them to be faith-filled, curious, and engaged learners with agency in their world, that motivated Emily to pursue this opportunity.

"Relationships are the core of St Alipius, and our commitment to welcoming and holding space for all those who struggle in education is our strength.

Walking with the most vulnerable in our community, not in front or behind, is why I love our school. It is not a job that I have always dreamed of, it is something that has come across my path now at the right time and for the right reasons," she said.

The opportunity has presented new learnings for Emily, and she has a great appreciation for her new role.

"It was quite surreal being appointed a Principal. I feel extremely privileged to be leading such a wonderful community.

I have really enjoyed the day-to-day challenges that come with being a Principal. There is an enormous amount of new learning for me, and it has been a wonderful experience being out of my comfort zone again.

The highlight every day, though, is working with amazing people. Our students bring me so much joy, our teachers continually inspire me, and our parent community is our true partner in this journey. It is a gift to work with these people every day."

Dedicated to fulfilling her purpose, Emily has gained vast experience in different sectors within her career.

After completing a Bachelor of Education at Australian Catholic University, Emily's career commenced in Mildura, where she taught in the state system at Mildura South Primary School, an experience she loved.

Returning to Ballarat to start a family with her husband Aaron, Emily decided to undertake further study. She gained a Graduate Certificate in Loss, Grief, and Trauma Counselling after welcoming their first child Evie.

Emily completed this course with the desire to learn and understand why students dropped out of the education system.

Literacy and Numeracy Coordinator at Centacare in the Ballarat Youth Justice Community Support Service was Emily's next role, gaining experience in the social welfare sector.

After Emily and Aaron welcomed their second child Charlie, Emily took on a part-time role facilitating pastoral care at schools in the Ballarat area, including St Alipius Parish School.

While facilitating pastoral care at St Alipius, Emily found a sense of belonging through the alignment of values and beliefs, and it was a school she desired to work with. Soon after, Emily commenced in the Wellbeing Leader role.

Now eight years on, Emily said her passion for the St Alipius community had afforded her this leadership opportunity.

"Being Principal was not something I initially 'set out' to do upon graduating back in 2001 from Damascus. I have found myself in this position because of my deep love for the St Alipius Ballarat East community and a deep desire to serve this community well."

Reflecting on her time at Damascus, Emily shares her experience and takeaways that she has incorporated into her teaching and now leadership.

"Damascus always held space for who we were as individuals. We were seen and heard, which is critical in education and working with young people. Damascus taught me a lot about students' voices, which is something that I am so appreciative of."

Some of Emily's fond memories during her time at Damascus were the lifelong friendships she made and her experiences of hanging out in the 'undercroft,' going on outward bound, participating in sports, and attending Mass at the Regent Cinema.

Emily is also thankful that Damascus initiated her interest in pastoral care and wellbeing.

"I was motivated by the approach at Damascus to holistically educate students. This lens of looking at students as whole beings rather than solely academic learners is something that has always felt right to me."

For current Damascus students, Emily reinforces the importance of not thinking too far ahead and enjoying the schooling years.

"Remain present as much as you can. It can be easy to wish for the next thing... university...work...The time you have now with your friends is something that is hard to find again as time and life gets busy! Enjoy and find gratitude in where you are at now."

Since graduating herself, Emily is proud that she has maintained her goal of being of service to others in each path she has taken and dedicated her career to 'looking at the needs of others and trying to be a part of meeting and serving that need so that they can breathe easier.'

MY LOVE OF HORSE RIDING

SAMARA MCLEOD

Horse-riding is a sport that I would often see photos of around our house, this being because my mum always rode horses, which influenced me to want my first pony at five years old, and my mum finally met me halfway, and I got my first lease pony, Chicky.

From there on, the nagging began of always wanting to go ride, which then turned into competing frequently. The thing I love about riding is that your personal life, societal status, and background do not have any influence on the sport; it's all on your ability. I always thought of riding as a way to spend my free time or relieve any stress that I had going on.

During my first year of secondary school in 2017, I experienced my first major fall, when I had a full rotational fall over a jump at a competition on 14 October 2017. I was beyond lucky to get out of the fall with only a fracture to my L4 vertebrae and my scapula. Then in 2019, on 14 October again, I was riding before school one morning, which led to me being injured again in a complete freak accident and fracturing my L4 vertebrae.

My recovery from these injuries was long, with months not riding and my parents being hesitant both times to let me go back to riding. I knew that I wanted to keep riding and represent my zone at the State competitions one day.

2022 was finally the year my hard work paid off. Just after the school holidays had ended in February, I was chosen to represent Barwon Zone at the State competitions, meaning I was riding against some of the best riders in my grade from across Victoria. The trip to Sale was long, with frequent breaks, but after a five-hour drive, we eventually made it, and with all of the hard work that my team and I put in, we placed 5th in Victoria.

As I continued my studies at Damascus College, I was fortunate enough to complete a Step-Up University course for sports and exercise science through ACU over my school holidays, which landed me an offer to study a Bachelor of Nursing/Paramedicine at the Ballarat ACU campus. I knew that this course had always been what I wanted to pursue for a career, so I have chosen to take the offer and study in Ballarat, meaning I can still live close to home.

Despite the undeniable fact that my life is going to get very busy, I still plan on riding for as long as I can. I plan to get a young horse in the near future to train and compete, though I will continue to compete with my horse Molly at the same time.

Samara McLeod, Year 12 student





FATHER'S DAY BREAKFAST

DAMASCUS EVENT

On Thursday, 1 September, we were thrilled to host the 2022 Father's Day Liturgy and Breakfast on campus, as it was the first time in two years that our fathers were able to gather, as a community, to celebrate this special day.

The liturgy by Fr Marcello Colasante was held in the John Shannon Centre, followed by a sit-down breakfast in the Damascus Events Centre.

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

A raffle was held during the breakfast that raised funds for the Bright Futures Scholarship.

Guests had the opportunity to meet our new Principal, Mr. Steven Mifsud, for the first time, and it was a special celebration for all involved.



2022 CITY OF BALLARAT YOUTH AWARD NOMINATIONS

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

This year, numerous Damascus College students were nominated for the City of Ballarat Youth Awards in various categories, held at the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts on Friday, 12 August.

In being nominated, the following three students received significant recognition for their contributions and achievements.

LEADERSHIP IN SPORT

MILAN PILMORE

Year 9 student Milan Pilmore was nominated for the City of Ballarat Youth Awards in the Leadership in Sports & Recreation category.

Milan was nominated in recognition for her contributions to the Buninyong Football and Netball Club. For two years now, Milan has generously volunteered her time to coach the Buninyong U/13B netball team, imparting her knowledge, skills, experience, and love for netball to the junior players.

Well done, Milan. We hope you had a wonderful time at the Awards ceremony. What a great accomplishment to be nominated for the Youth Award in recognition of your dedication and leadership towards the U/13B team.



AN INSPIRING YOUNG LEADER

ASHLEIGH KANOA

Year 7 student Ashleigh Kanoa is a proud Gunditjamarra, Bunitj Australian girl and was recently nominated for the City of Ballarat Youth Awards – in the Positive leader category.

For the last few years, Ashleigh has volunteered as part of an Indigenous Youth Group run by the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC).

As part of this youth group, Ashleigh said that she actively supports the group's younger members to help them feel at ease and relaxed.

"We learn about Aboriginal heritage and culture, participate in activities, support each other, and recently we have started a dance group (Baarlinjan Dancers) that performed at the Town Hall and BADAC Open Day during NAIDOC week," she said.

The group meets weekly after school, and there are approximately 20 students in the group from a range of ages and backgrounds.

"It is an honour to be nominated for this award, and if I do not win, it is still really exciting to be recognised in this way."

Earlier this year, Ashleigh was also recognised for her advocacy and positivity when she was awarded the Miss Naidoc honour through BADAC for 2022.

"I received a sash, and I proudly wore it during NAIDOC week, where I raised the flag at BADAC and participated in the NAIDOC community awards," she said.

Being this year's Miss NAIDOC means that I have been recognised by my peers as a leader in my community.

As part of Ashleigh's commitment and passion to her Aboriginal culture, earlier this year, she wrote a letter to the Damascus College Principal, asking why the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags were not flying next to the Australian flag. The principal asked Ashleigh to be part of the College's Reconciliation Action Plan, where they could discuss this specific action along with other items that focus on reconciliation.

Ashleigh now meets monthly with staff and the community to develop the first Reconciliation Action Plan for Damascus College.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

LUKE BORG

Year 12 student Luke Borg was recently nominated for the City of Ballarat Youth Awards – in the Personal Growth category.

Luke seizes every opportunity presented to him with a positive attitude and is well on his way to achieving his Foundation VCAL Certificate upon the conclusion of his final year of Secondary Education.

Luke has been an active member of the Ballarat Foundation 'Youth Collective' over the past 18 months. He has been part of this group who have impacted the community and made valuable changes for young people, including a change for Public Transport in Victoria.

Luke is kind and compassionate to those around him. He is accepting of others and genuinely cares for people. His passion for making a change to the health and nutrition of young people has seen the idea of creating a breakfast program start with a small idea, and develop into reality.

Luke has worked tirelessly with the Ballarat Foundation to plan, create, pilot, and implement a breakfast program for the students of Damascus College, two days a week. He has been involved in meeting with key stakeholders to assist in obtaining a grant to start the program, whilst building positive relationships with local

businesses to try and sustain donations and food items. He has met several times with the College leadership team to identify key areas for improvement and has developed his skills in understanding policies and procedures. He has had to challenge himself and improve his literacy, numeracy, and oracy skills to enable him to convey his message of passion and desire to help young people.

Luke's dedication to the project is inspirational and will empower those around him to volunteer their time to assist in a long-term project.

Damascus College is very proud of Luke, and we are excited to see this initiative take shape.



DAMASCUS DAY

DAMASCUS EVENT

Damascus Day was held on Wednesday, 14 September, and commenced with a Mass with all students and staff in attendance.

The annual celebration exists to provide a vibrant and living expression of the Christian faith that is at the heart of Damascus College, and allow time to engage in community activities together.

The College theme provides a more specific focus for the Eucharistic Liturgy and this year's theme, 'Abide in my love, and you will bear much fruit,' enabled a journey into the mystery of God's gifts that we receive in Spirit.

In religious education classes leading up to the Mass, students were asked to identify gifts they could recognise in others and themselves.

Centred on the College theme each year, the Mass is the clearest articulation of what is essential – our hope in God's vision for a world of justice and peace.

The communal lunch that followed Mass led into a time where students and staff members shared each other's company in

challenging and enjoyable activities around the campus.

This year's theme for the afternoon of fun activities was 'Lights, camera, action!' where students and staff dressed up as a movie character.

There was a lot of fun enjoyed at the many activities, including the jumping castle, petting zoo, escape room, neon disco, dunk tank, and plenty more!

Overall, it was a great day celebrating Damascus!







Patrick Western and his family

A NAVY GAP YEAR

ALUMNI STORY

Patrick (Pat) Western, Class of 2021, found a gap year opportunity that worked for him when he joined the navy.

When past student Andrew Marriott, Class of 2017, received the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) Education Award, Pat became intrigued at the thought of joining the military in one of the defence forces. However, the extended return of service commitment made him hesitate in enlisting. Instead, he researched and found a solution that worked for him.

In 2019 he attended the ADFA open day and learned that there were gap year opportunities, but only the Navy offered both Officer and Engineering training. As he completed his studies at Damascus College, Pat earned a scholarship to Federation University (FedUni) to study engineering, but also moved forward with his application to undertake the Navy gap year.

The application process was "rigorous but well supported," said Pat. He worked with a recruiter and a mentor who helped him prepare his application for the Officer Selection Board interview, which happened in Canberra. His family was very supportive of him applying and thought it was a great idea.

Pat signed his contract for his Navy gap year on 23 July 2021, after he had completed his first semester of engineering at FedUni and deferred university for a year.

The New Entry Officer Course (NEOC) is conducted at the Royal Australian Naval College, HMAS Creswell at Jervis Bay, NSW, and training began immediately. As soon as he stepped off the bus, he contacted his parents to say he had arrived and goodbye before his phone was taken for four weeks, and the 19-week course got underway. Pat was one of the 130(ish) who commenced training in July. There were 16 others undertaking a gap year within this group. At the end of the course, only seven had dropped out (for various reasons).

"It was hard. You are tired. You start your day at 4.30 am and do not finish until 10 pm, but I got through it because everyone was

going through the same thing. We all have our own room with a bed and a desk but have communal living and bathrooms. There are 20 of us in a division, so you make new friends, but you also have Chaplin's who act as counsellors, who are there to help you," explained Pat.

Once he had completed his NEOC training, Pat began training as a mechanical engineer with the Australian Navy. During this time, he had some genuinely memorable opportunities. He was given a leadership role, assisting with logistics for Operation Flood Assist, providing much-needed help in NSW during the February/March floods.

Major General David Thomae, in a daily briefing on 8 March 2022, said the "ADF is ramping up sharply its support to Operation Flight Assist 2022 with 5,000 personnel on task or available for tasking over the coming days, particularly as water levels recede and access improves for us to get our people and equipment into those locations. Moving this many people into small townships is a big task, one which comes with logistical challenges that we are prepared to overcome." Pat played a significant role in answering those logistics challenges.

Pat has been able to visit various bases and ships during his Navy gap year, traveling to Sydney, Cairns, and Canberra as part of an East Coast tour. He relished the opportunity to be on the flight deck of the HMAS Choules, as the blades of Chinook helicopters created wind that was powerful enough to knock you off your feet.

Pat is unsure what he will do when his gap year is up. He is intrigued by the work being done through the Defence Science and Technology Group, is excited by the aviation field, and is a self-proclaimed nerd who enjoys the discipline of physics. He has a spot and scholarship at FedUni waiting for him, and the choice of remaining in the Navy or joining the reserves. By undertaking the Navy gap year, Pat has enjoyed grand adventures, gained valuable experience, learned new skills, provided service to his country, and created new opportunities for himself.



RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

After the 2007 election of the Rudd Government, Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd led parliament in making a formal apology to Indigenous Australians. In this apology, he guided all Australians to believe in a 'future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve, and mutual responsibility. A future where all Australians, regardless of their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

This apology provided the impetus for a structured and measured approach for all Australians to embrace a culture of reconciliation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples. Reconciliation Australia has enabled organisations to sustainably and strategically take meaningful action to advance reconciliation, based on the core pillars of relationships, respect, and opportunities. Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) provide tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, increasing economic equity and supporting First Nations' self-determination.

They also provide an opportunity for communities, workplaces, and schools to articulate their own structured response in acknowledging their commitment to reconciliation.

Damascus College has commenced the process of establishing a reconciliation action plan. The first step in creating this plan has been forming a working party of key stakeholders who can provide wisdom and input in developing a plan. In the Damascus working party there are local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, students, parents, business managers, assistant principals, and school counsellors. The breadth of experience in the working party will allow for a response that is reflective of the vision of the school and the local community.

The agreed vision in the formation of the RAP developed by the working party is for Damascus College to immerse staff, students, and families in acknowledging and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture as the oldest living culture in the world.

Damascus will provide a safe environment to learn about the past and present journey that has impacted the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community by committing to all actions of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).



The Damascus RAP will provide the College with opportunities to listen, learn, and act while moving forward together as a Catholic Education community and for student voices to be heard.

The next stage of the RAP will involve Damascus surveying the current state of reconciliation at Damascus College. The Reflection Survey is divided into three areas: in the classroom, around the school, and within the community. The questions' answers will never be public, as they are only for the RAP Working Party.

This will provide a snapshot of what Damascus College is already doing in acknowledging a commitment to reconciliation and opportunities to further demonstrate growth in the RAP. The Working Party will be required to complete the reflection survey each time the RAP is refreshed. As a Damascus College community member, you may be called upon to complete this survey.

The RAP will continue to evolve as the working party uses the survey responses to establish Actions and Commitments that demonstrate relationships, respect, and opportunities for reconciliation, as they play out in the classroom, around the school, and within the Damascus College community.

Damascus RAP Agreed Vision

Damascus College is to immerse staff, students, and families in acknowledging and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture as the oldest living culture in the world.

We will provide a safe environment to learn about the past and present journey that has impacted the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community by committing to all actions of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Our RAP will provide us opportunities to listen, learn, and act while we move forward together as a Catholic Education Community and for our student's voices to be heard.



BUDDING COUNTRY MUSIC ARTIST

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Year 9 student Cassidy Jewell has written and recorded a development single with country singer and songwriter Shaza Leigh, at the Lindsay Butler studios in Tamworth.

Kassidy's talent for singing had recently been affirmed at The Man from Snowy River Bush Festival in Corryong, where Cassidy overcame her nerves and spontaneously entered the Aussie Bush Idol competition.

Kassidy said she came across the singing competition when they arrived in Corryong.

"At first, I was hesitant about entering as I get nervous singing in front of a large group of people. Mum and Dad encouraged me to have a go, and Dad told me don't let your nerves stop a good opportunity," she said.

Singing two favourite country songs, Cassidy soon turned heads and won not only the junior section of the competition but was also awarded the overall major prize winner across both the junior and senior divisions of the Aussie Bush Idol. Cassidy was awarded a guitar and a 3-hour recording session with Flying Fox Studios.

Following this achievement, Cassidy signed up for The Academy of Country Music Junior Song Camp in Tamworth to follow her passion for music and desire to learn how to write songs. The camp, unfortunately, was cancelled. However, still eager to explore the country music capital, Cassidy and her family continued with their holiday to Tamworth, where Cassidy was unexpectedly presented with a rare opportunity.

"We were in a shop just outside of Tamworth where my parents and I were talking to the mother and daughter working there, and my love for singing country music came up in conversation. Then the next thing I know, they were writing down the details of a local country singer to contact," she said.

Kassidy was provided the contact details for the notable country music singer and songwriter Shaza Leigh and her husband Lindsay Butler, an award-winning record producer.

"We got in touch and met Shaza and Lindsay at their house. We instantly befriended each other, and I had a good feeling as soon as we got there. Shaza told me we are going to write a song together, and gave me some homework for the night to help me make a start. That night while mum and dad went out for dinner, I stayed back and worked on my song. It was really exciting," she said.

Kassidy had the opportunity to go to the Lindsay Butler studio to write and record a radio-ready song with Shaza Leigh.

"Shaza helped me create a development single, and it was amazing! After recording, Shaza asked if I would come back to Tamworth for next year's Country Music Festival to sing a couple of songs during her shows."

Kassidy aspires to follow her passion for a career in country music and is excited at the prospect of what this opportunity may bring.

Kassidy's development single is expected to be released for radio soon.



Madison Rosenhart (on left) and her family

INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION TO DAMASCUS COLLEGE

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

My name is Madison Rosenhart, and I am currently in Year 10, Xavier House, at Damascus. Attending Damascus College since 2019, I have forever felt a strong connection to this school. I have a younger sister that also attends Damascus in Year 8. Surprisingly enough, I have had three aunts and two uncles that have been part of the Damascus community in past years, along with my parents, Kerryn and Shaun, who graduated in 1991. My sister and I are now the second generation of my family to have the pleasure of joining the Damascus community. The more time I have spent here at Damascus, the more enjoyable the journey has become along the way.

Meeting at St Martin's in the Pines, my parents highlighted that their time there was enjoyable and created many lasting memories. My Mum attended Sacred Heart from Year 7 through to Year 10, then transferred to St Martin's in the Pines from Year 11 to 12 when Sacred Heart and St Pauls joined. My Dad attended St Pauls from Year 7 through to Year 10, then St Martins in the Pines for Years 11 and 12.

Mum enjoyed the lifelong friendships she made and the opportunities provided to her. Dad enjoyed that St Martins in the Pines was a co-educational school and the campus landscape. They both still have memorabilia from their time, Dad with a wooden space shuttle he made in wood class and his graphics folios, and Mum with canvases from Years 8 and 9. Furthermore, the things Mum learned during her time at school proved to be useful for her career in nursing, setting her up for it. Values she gained and the importance of empathy and thoughtfulness of others were instances where St Martins in the Pines helped her in life now. Reflecting on this, I am excited knowing that my schooling experience is setting me up for my life after school by providing

resources that I will use in the future.

I was surprised to find out that teachers that have taught me in the past at Damascus had also taught my parents. Tony Haintz taught both my parents and I Religious Education, Gaven Walsh, who taught my parents P.E Health, also taught my sister and I, and David Boadle, who taught my Dad wood, was my wood and metal teacher in Year 7. Ivanka Saric taught Mum science, and Patricia Rowe taught her humanities, but I am yet to have the pleasure of being taught by these teachers. In addition, Mum had the chance to travel to Indonesia on the Indonesian Trip, the same trip that I will be going on next year. It is nice to have Mum to talk to about what to expect for the trip, as she has previously experienced it.

Experiencing a long line of family education at Damascus encourages me to feel more connected. I feel that sharing the same experience is special, and I am very proud to share a similar education with my family. My favourite differences that Damascus holds from other schools in Ballarat include the fun atmosphere and school education, the elective choices provided, the teachers and their teaching styles, the environment it sits in, and, as all students can agree with, DMAC Day. The connection I feel between myself and Damascus has only grown with the family members who have attended it in the past. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Damascus community.

Madison Rosenhart, Year 10 student



1977

WONDERFUL MEMORIES OF SNOW DAY IN 1977

ALUMNI STORY

In June this year, the Damascus College Alumni Facebook page posted these fantastic snow pictures from 1977. The post elicited a slew of comments from past students who remembered this day, friendships made, and being a student of St Martin's in the Pines. Past student Rhonda contacted Damascus to share with us how much seeing these pictures meant to her and the wonderful memories she has of that day.

Looking at the pictures, you would be forgiven for thinking that you were looking at a scene from Mt Hotham or the parking lot at Falls Creek. It was the winter of 1977, and for one glorious morning, the Sacred Heart senior campus at Mt Clear, St Martin's in the Pines, had been transformed into a winter wonderland.

I do not remember anyone saying, "let's go outside." We just did.

Teachers, the sisters and of course all the students made snow ladies (not snowmen), tossed snowballs at each other, and frolicked in the icy cold. The snow had worked its magic, wiping away all our worries, erasing the years, and letting us all act like children. We all felt incredibly young at heart.

Seeing these pictures on Facebook and reading the comments took me back to my time as a student. My time at St Martin's instilled in me a love of nature that endures to this day, over 40 years later.

Rhonda Hogan, Class of 1978



Snow balls 1977



Megan O'Beirne



Maya Tolliday

TOP CLASS SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON DAMASCUS CAPTAINS

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Damascus College Class of 2021, College Captain Maya Tolliday, and 2022 College Captain Megan O'Beirne took to the Playhouse stage at the Arts Centre Melbourne as part of the Top Class 2022 concert series, with performances on Monday 28 March and Tuesday 29 March 2022.

Maya and Megan were invited to audition for Top Class based on their 2021 VCE Drama performance examination score. Both students received outstanding scores of over 40. Based on their audition, they were two of twenty students from the whole of Victoria to secure a coveted slot on the stage.

Damascus College Performing Arts Co-ordinator Mr. Andrew Seary said this is a fine example of our students being their best.

"Our school is being represented at a state level not once but twice in the Melbourne Arts Centre, in front of sell-out crowds who are there to witness the "best of the best" in VCE Drama excellence."

"Being invited to audition for Top Class is an honour that only a small percentage of VCE Drama students experience. Gaining a spot on the stage is an even rarer accomplishment, especially considering the number of state students vying for a slot. However, to have not just one but two students excelling in this way, and for them both to be leaders within our College community, is a one-off honour that we are not likely to see again."

The Top Class audience will enjoy original solo performances, scripted dramatic monologues, and production design demonstrating the imagination and originality of emerging actors and theatre makers.

Maya and Megan have been enthusiastic and outstanding actors on the Damascus College stage in various productions, while also finding time within their busy academic schedules to take on the significant duties of being school leaders.

Since graduating from Damascus College, Maya has begun studying Biomedicine at Deakin University. For Year 12, Megan is undertaking subjects in English, Science, Maths, Religious Education, and Languages.

Top Class highlights the creativity and sophistication of VCE performing arts students across Victoria.

SURREAL EXPERIENCE

MEGAN O'BEIRNE

A few months ago, I got the amazing opportunity to perform my Unit 4 solo in the Top Class Drama Concert for 2022. This honour was not one I was expecting at all, but I am so grateful that I got to show my work again, and the fact that it was to hundreds of drama students and teachers from across Victoria still blows me away when I think about it.

I performed my solo on the Playhouse Theatre Stage in the Arts Centre, Melbourne, and the entire experience was surreal. From navigating the backstage area and meeting the other invited creative minds, to performing, it has been one of my most memorable experiences to date.

After I entered and got to one of the dressing rooms, I got back into my costume (which somehow STILL held the pungent fumes of paint), covered my neck, ears, and hands with silver body paint, and got to meet all the other performers. Hearing about their processes and solos was insanely interesting and reminded me of why I love drama so much. Everyone can tailor the subject and the performances to suit their background, interests, and strengths.

When I was on stage, doing my solo for the last time, I felt an incredible sense of pride in myself for accomplishing this feat which, to be honest, I never thought I would be able to do.

I have missed doing my solo (and drama as a whole), but finishing it off in such an incredible way is something I will forever be grateful for. I want to thank Mr. Andrew Seear for encouraging and teaching me throughout this process, as I would never have had this chance without his support.

Megan O'Beirne, Year 12 student





Sunbeams - Autumn Gold 1933

PERFORMANCE OF THE AUTUMN GOLD OPERETTA 1933

BLAST FROM THE PAST

In 1933 much was expected of the Sacred Heart College (SHC) girls. The compulsory curriculum at the time consisted of English, a foreign language, two Sciences, two mathematics, history, music, and drawing, with the expectation that students put the same amount of effort into each subject they undertook, regardless of where their talents lay.

In December each year, SHC students celebrate their successes on the Annual Prize Night with performances that would rival the greatest legends of the stage. A particularly triumphant concert event was held in 1933 when students performed 'Autumn Gold,' a three-act operetta, to critical acclaim. The costumes were detailed and exquisite, the dancing was energetic, and the singing sublime. Newspapers at the time reported that the performance "surpassed in spectacular effect and general excellence anything before staged at the college...no mean praise when one remembers the unusually high standard expected at all times of the Sisters of Mercy and their students" (The Advocate, 4th January 1934).

The cast of 'Autumn Gold' was beautifully photographed for the college annual. While the performance is now remembered only in the history books, the characters live on in the images so carefully captured in days long before digital technology took over the world.



Mary, 1933



Angela La Gruta, 1933



Paige Shaw

BUSINESS VENTURE ENABLES DREAM CAREER

ALUMNI STORY

Paige Shaw (née Fawcus), Class of 2008, was just 22 when she embarked on a business venture and purchased Inhabit Homewares, located in the Ballarat Bridge Mall.

Having worked in retail after graduating from Damascus College in 2008, Paige had experience in the industry. However, she was unsure if owning her own business would be the career pathway she would follow. Now nine years later, Paige has not looked back.

Paige said it was the encouragement from her parents that helped her make the decision to take on the proprietorship of Inhabit.

“At the time, I did not think owning my own business would be my path. Now in hindsight, I am very glad that dad pushed me to go for it because I have loved it!” she said.

In 2014, Paige’s parents owned both the local House stores in Wendouree and Central Square and had done so for many years prior. Knowing they would soon close the Central Square store, Paige’s dad was concerned when he noticed another key kitchenware store had been listed for sale.

“Dad saw that Inhabit came up for sale and thought it would be a big loss to the Ballarat community to lose two kitchenware stores and so close together in time, so he suggested I purchase Inhabit.”

The shift from working in a store as an employee to working in a store as the owner was an entirely new concept for Paige. Although the progression took some adapting, it provided many new opportunities.

“Everything you purchase for the store is your choice, and it comes with the responsibility of choosing stock that will sell – all the weight is on your shoulders.”

“I knew about cookware having worked at House, but giftware was totally new for me, and opposite to cookware, giftware is seasonal, so it is important to keep up with the current trends.”

“Although it comes with uncertainty, one of the things I enjoy most about my job is the opportunity to go to trade fairs and suppliers to choose new stock for the store.”

An enthusiast for cooking and baking herself, Paige enjoys choosing quality products and sharing her knowledge with her customers.

“The customer base is one of the best things about having a local business. It is lovely to see and develop relationships with regular customers, either helping with any enquiries or just having a chat.”

“We are the only independent kitchenware store in Ballarat now, and customers know that and support our local business, which is really nice.”

Reflecting on her time at Damascus, Paige was thankful for the senior school campus that empowered her to gain independence and maturity.

“I really liked being at the senior campus from Year 10. You felt more grown up. We had great teachers who respected us as young adults whom we could call by their first names. It was an environment that I felt set you up for life outside of school.”

After graduating, Paige knew that university was not something she wanted to pursue. Using the skills gained throughout her education, Paige found her desired career pathway and has now run a successful business for nine years, which is a favourite amongst the Ballarat community.



CLUE PRODUCTION

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

As part of the Performing Arts events program, every year, Damascus College presents a dramatic play or musical, and this year we were excited to present 'Clue' on Stage. This inventive stage production was based on the iconic 1985 Paramount movie, inspired by the classic board game Cluedo.

The performances ran from Wednesday 20 to 23 July at the Valda Ward Auditorium.

Mr. Andrew Seeary, Performing Arts Coordinator, Drama and Program Director, said that the production featured students from all year levels of the college.

"Traditionally, our year 12 students fill the more challenging roles in our productions, but our youngest featured cast member comes from Year 7, and a talented Year 8 student is featured in a leading role," he said.

Clue is a hilarious farce-meets-murder mystery. It was a classic whodunit, where the audience tried to figure out through the laughter and mayhem ...WHO did it, WHERE, and with WHAT!

The show featured an elaborate set that moved and turned to create the iconic locations of the traditional board game. This was complimented by an atmospheric soundtrack and lighting design.

"Murder and blackmail were on the menu when six mysterious guests assembled at Boddy Manor for a night they will never forget! When their host turned up dead, they all became suspects. Led by Wadsworth – the butler, Miss Scarlett, Professor Plum, Mrs. White, Mr. Green, Mrs. Peacock, and Colonel Mustard raced to find the killer as the body count stacked up," he said.

"Was it Mrs. Peacock in the study with the knife? Or was it Colonel Mustard in the library with the wrench? The possibilities were endless, but you needed to see it to find the culprit and solve the mystery."

MY PASSION FOR DRAMA

DANA REYNOLDS

Hi, my name is Dana Reynolds, and I am in Year 8.

I first got into Drama when I was six years old at the BCMA in a musical theatre class, and I have loved every experience they have provided me since. I have most recently performed the role of 'Campbell' in BCMA's Bring It On, and it was awesome to take to the stage again after COVID.

I love theatre because it is such a positive environment, and I can learn so many new skills. I enjoy being surrounded by like-minded people, and the sensation of stepping out onto the stage (or into Boddy Manor!) is a timeless, wonderful feeling that I will always cherish.

The thing I enjoyed most about being in Clue was the relationships and bonds we created. I often like to say that Clue was a family, and the Audi was our home. We always had each other's backs and could learn through each other. After my fantastic experience in Clue, I will most certainly be trying out for future productions to come.

To be picked as a lead character among these talented senior students has been an absolute privilege, and I am eternally grateful to Mr. Seear and Ms. Burness for providing me with this amazing opportunity.

Along with school and rehearsing, I love reading, writing, spending time with friends and family, movie nights, and practicing wellbeing. I love Damascus because it is such an encouraging, neighbourly community, and my favourite subjects would have to be English and Drama because I love thinking creatively!

When I finish school, I would love to continue performing, as well as pursue my dream of being an author. While these are my main aspirations, I am also very interested in psychology and teaching. So, as you can see, I am still very young and yet to make up my mind!

Dana Reynolds, Year 8 student





Q&A WITH ANDREW SEEARY, PERFORMING ARTS COORDINATOR, DRAMA

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

1. Was there a particular highlight from this year's production? And why?

One of the standouts for me was the value of getting the casting right. Each performer totally emersed themselves in the role that they were given. The production of this play requires rapid-fire delivery incorporating dialogue, action, sound, and lighting. This was another standout in its presentation.

2. Where did you get the idea for Clue as this year's production?

It was simply one that we had always wanted to do. We have never attempted a 'whodunnit' before, and 'Clue' was a classic of this genre. We were slated to do something a little more serious this year, but with what had been going on over the past two years, we went for something that we knew would be fun for an audience.

3. How long has the cast and crew been rehearsing and developing Clue?

We began with the cast in February, with the crew joining us later in the process.

4. Did you have a favourite scene from Clue? If so, which one and why?

There is a scene in Act 2 where Wadsworth the butler recaps in a mad solo montage all the events of the play. This was so fast-paced and funny.

5. What range of year levels were represented across the cast?

We had the whole gamut this year, with every year level represented. Fun fact was it was the first time we had ever cast a Year 8 in a leading role. That, of course, is the amazing work of Dana Reynolds.

6. Was the amazing set for Clue built in-house? If so, how long did it take to build?

We have a tradition of trying to make a lot from the little we have. Much of our set is recycled from bits and pieces from previous productions we have staged. We are very restricted with the space we have due to the lack of backstage areas, and no fly tower. The set was mainly constructed over the holiday period. The design was challenging as we had to find ways to depict the various room of the mansion.



7. Do you have a regular line or saying that you say to the cast before each show?

Focus, concentrate, energy, pace, and have fun!

8. How long have you been the Performing Arts Coordinator at Damascus College?

About 33 years. I was there at our first one, 'Animal Farm,' in 1999 and have been involved in every production since.

9. During your time at Damascus, how many productions have you Directed?

Out of 22 school productions, I have directed 12 of them.

10. What do you enjoy most about directing a production and working with the cast and crew?

The joy is always watching young performers grow and develop. They gain soooooo much from the experience, both as performers and people.

11. Did you work in Performing Arts before you came to Damascus?

I have been involved in theatre and design for most of my life. Prior to teaching, I was a political cartoonist, an illustrator, and a set designer. I spent a few years teaching improvisation to schools around the region before shifting into teaching. Much of these skills are still useful to me today in the classroom

12. Have you ever been a cast member of a production?

Too many to count. Over the years, I have performed in a myriad of community straight plays and musicals. I am a firm believer in practising what you preach. While I have a habit of popping up in cameos within our school productions, I have only once played a featured character in a Damascus show. That was 'Foreigners from Home' back in 2003. I played an aging grandfather who was losing his mind. (Type casting, I know)

13. What advice would you give someone thinking of auditioning for next year's production?

Carpe diem or "seize the day." There is so much to gain from involvement in Performing Arts on and off the stage. How will you know what you are capable of if you do not give it a try?

14. And finally... Whodunit?

They all did!



James Endicott

I AM A SCIENTIST

ALUMNI STORY

Whilst my secondary education at St Paul’s Technical College gave me an excellent grounding for study and life, at the end of Year 10, I was far from career-focused. I completed my high school years at East High before travelling for a few years and earning some money. I was a terrible travel agent, and hospitality was not for me. I eventually listened to my parents and enrolled at Monash University. Even then, I was far from career-focused, and it was not until several years later that I decided on a path that was right for me.

Technically, I am a scientist.

I completed a Bachelor of Biomedical Science in 1990 and began work as a Research Assistant, even though I rarely wore a lab coat. Most of my time was spent chatting with people, taking medical histories, and performing blood pressure measurements.

At this time, my younger sister died from an undiagnosed heart condition. It was her death that made me very interested in cardiovascular disease and other chronic conditions, and it was this interest that persisted through my undergraduate studies. I was not a qualified health professional, so research seemed to be the best way to gain work experience in this area of health. I sought out researchers and health professionals working in this area and spoke to as many of them as possible. I even applied for a position at Monash University that I was completely underqualified for in

the hope that I would get to speak to the Professor who was hiring. Surprisingly, he did interview me, and while I was clearly never going to get that job, he kept me in mind and referred me to an opportunity that he had become aware of in Canada.

It was a wonderful opportunity – co-ordinating clinical research for Health Canada, a most highly regarded research institute. However, I was almost disappointed in the beginning because while working in my chosen field of research, I did not feel like I was making a difference. So, my first year involved a whole lot of learning – learning to prepare ethics applications, learning to perform clinical test procedures, and learning to record data.

I settled into my new life in Regina, the capital city of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. I battled homesickness but soon discovered other Aussies. We formed a cricket and footy club, which was just an excuse to get together, talk about home, have a few drinks, and even share a recipe. I met my partner Andy at this club, another Aussie from just down the road in Donald (it makes coming home to visit easy).

I am more enthusiastic than ever about the area I work in. I hope our research will contribute to improved healthcare for those who experience chronic conditions and that globally, conditions like my sisters will not go undiagnosed and, therefore, untreated.

James Endicott, Class of 1982



MASON SELECTED FOR THE STATE HOCKEY TEAM

MASON SUTTON

Year 7 student Mason Sutton was recently selected to be a member of the U13 Victorian State Hockey Team.

Mason attended the Hockey academy in July, which ran for six weeks in Melbourne, and was then selected to trial for the state team over several training selections.

Mason travelled with the Victorian team to Hobart for the National Championships in September and trained in Melbourne twice a week with the state team.

Mason said he is excited to be a part of the state team.

"I am looking forward to going to Hobart with the team for the tournament and excited about what I will learn from other hockey players and coaches from all over the country," he said.

Mason was one of only three country Victorian players to be selected, from Ballarat, Hamilton, and Bendigo, with the rest of the team being Metropolitan players.

Mason recently returned from Tasmania, with his team winning the tournament and becoming the U13 Boys National Champions. They played 11 games of hockey over the week, winning nine and drawing two, well done to all the students involved in this team.





ANNE FORBES - SR MARY STANISLAUS (STAN) 1929 - 2022

DAMASCUS SISTER OF MERCY

“Our life like a breath, then, a give and a take, a bridge, a central movement, between singing a separate self and learning to be selfless.”

Anne Therese Forbes was born in Ballarat on 25 May 1929, the third daughter of Anne and Stanislaus Forbes, and grew up in Bungaree, in the Morning Star Hotel. Anne’s family shared a long association with the Sisters of Mercy, beginning with her great-grandfather, who hosted the Sisters when they first arrived in Ballarat in 1881. All the girls in the family received their secondary education at Sacred Heart College, while her great-aunt, Teresa Hogan (the first Sr Mary Stanislaus), had joined the Ballarat East Congregation in 1890. Anne’s sister Clare entered the convent in 1943, and Anne was to join her in 1948.

Anne was professed as a Sister of Mercy on 21 December 1950, and those early years in the convent proved to be busy ones. From 1952 until May 1967, Anne taught secondary students, studied herself to gain qualifications (first from Aquin Teachers’ College and then from Melbourne University), and supervised boarders at Sacred Heart College, Ballarat East. When St. Martin’s in the Pines opened in May 1967, Anne moved to Mount Clear, where she remained until the end of 1984. She continued to upgrade her qualifications, combining full-time work with part-time study for a theology degree from Catholic Theological College. Her year at the National Pastoral Institute in 1976 marked a significant and timely hiatus and provided an opportunity for the forging of lasting friendships. Two years at St Aloysius College in North Melbourne, followed by two years at St Patrick’s College in Ballarat, marked the final phase of Anne’s remarkable ministry as a secondary teacher.

Anne was, with few exceptions, every student’s favourite teacher. She knew her subjects, and she loved her students. She treated all with the same respect and love, and her only bias was in favour of those who were dejected or in trouble. Former students reflect on her ability to listen deeply and with respect, the incredible luck they felt at being in her classes, and their sorrow that not every teen can have a ‘Sr Stan’ in their lives.

Anne was responsible for enrolling the first male students at St Martin’s in the Pines, four mature-aged students studying Year 12 Australian History with her one night per week. A past student and close colleague remember her with deep affection,

“she was kind, empathetic, funny, charming, and courageous, a model of how to teach. Seemingly casual and easy-going, able to laugh at herself, very aware of the importance of relationships, enjoying the classes, and being well prepared.

I taught with her and saw the passionate rebel and the outspoken opposition leader. We talked of books and plays and life itself.”

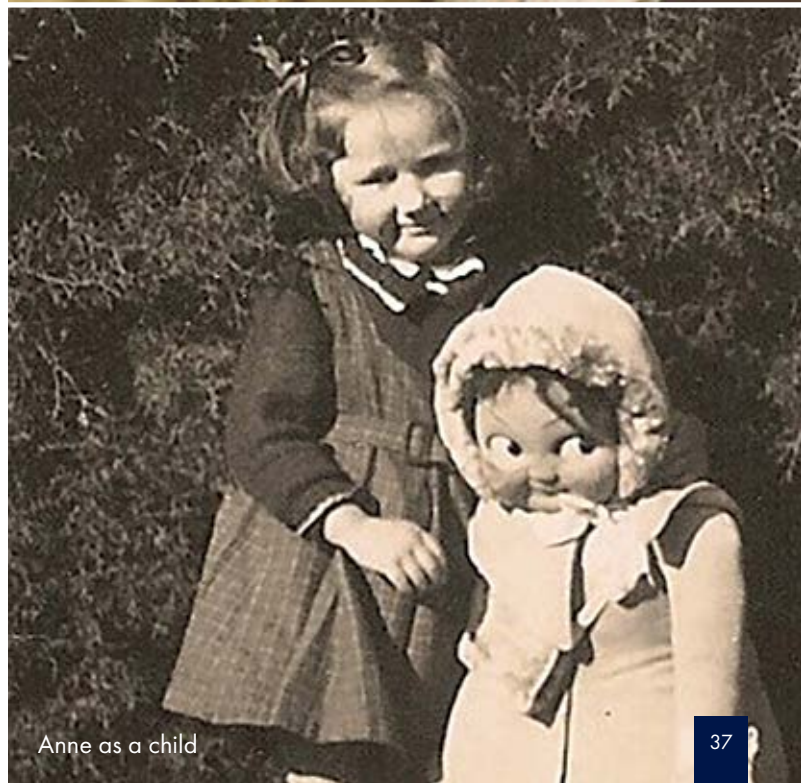
In her 71 years as a professed Sister of Mercy, Anne has lived several remarkable lives. During the 1980s at St Aloysius’ North Melbourne, Anne supported Vietnamese refugees in the high-rise units that received such publicity during the pandemic. In 1985, she undertook intensive Vietnamese and Tetum language courses at the Australian National University. Three years spent as a pastoral worker in Timboon, and then six in Wendouree gave Anne time to make new and lasting friendships and to exercise her role as Ballarat Diocesan Director of Caritas (1987-1995).

1998 was a defining year in Anne’s life. From 1998 until 2006, she provided a home for seven Timorese students who, in turn, became her second family. Anne had been a long-time supporter of Timor Leste, attending the inaugural meeting of Christians in Support of East Timor in 1984 and becoming a founding member of the Ballarat Branch of the Australia East Timor Association. In 1999, the Governor-General of Australia, Sir William Dean, presented her with the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal for her work as a volunteer in Timor in the months leading up to the independence vote. In an interview with Kerry O’Brien on the 7.30 Report on the day of her evacuation from Dili, this woman of mercy and justice revealed the depth of her selfless commitment to the suffering of our world.

Anne was a fierce and passionate advocate for justice. In her first degree, she studied political philosophy. The wisdom Anne acquired from that study enhanced her capacity to act for justice - for First Nations Peoples, refugees and asylum seekers, aged care workers, and all. Some years ago, she met in Catherine King’s office with the then Shadow Minister for Immigration, not hesitating to share her thoughts regarding the Federal Labour Parliamentarians’ failure to speak out about the cruel treatment of refugees. “Where is the Light on the Hill? Why don’t the Labour parliamentarians protest?” she asked. The Shadow Minister replied, “Sister, we need you in Canberra!”

Mercy Place was Anne’s home for her final year. Her companions and the wonderfully caring staff were as important to her as everyone else who had crossed her path in her long and fruitful life. Without a doubt, Anne was the shining light that Catherine McAuley wished us all to be. No one could say that Anne was someone who simply visited this world. She contributed so much of life to life, and she knew what it was to sing her own song and be selfless. Anne was a person who truly integrated her faith into daily life, who lived with the reality that “Earth was crammed with heaven and every common bush aflame with God, but only she who sees takes off her shoes” (Elizabeth Barrett Browning). Anne took off her shoes to live and was loved for it.

With thanks to Veronica Lawson RSM & Adrian McInerney for providing the story of Anne’s life.



Anne as a child



2022 DIOCESAN CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP AWARD

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Each year the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCCEL) recognises and celebrates outstanding leadership and service within our education community.

One such award is the Catholic Leadership Award. The Catholic Leadership Award is awarded:

- For leadership that provides active witness to God's presence in the education/parish and /or diocesan community and that enhances the education community's Catholic Identity.
- For excellence in leadership around Religious Education, spirituality, liturgy, religious art, social justice, the founding charism, evangelization and /or ecology.

This year's recipient was Martin Ryan, who is currently the Learning Area Leader: Religious Education at Damascus College, Ballarat.

The following is a reflection Martin prepared in response to receiving this year's award.

Being nominated and then receiving "The Catholic Leadership Award" is both humbling and overwhelming, and I am enormously appreciative for both the honour and the recognition. Teaching is a vocation – it is something you are, not what you do! I consider myself to have been very fortunate, and I am grateful for the many, many students, colleagues, and mentors who have inspired, collaborated, encouraged, and respected me throughout my career. Teachers show their resilience and adaptability every single day, juggling both the rewards and challenges, and the many friendships I have from teaching are my tribe!

I grew up on a dairy farm in a little place called Lancaster outside Kyabram in the northern part of Victoria. Being Catholic and

following the strict ways of the Catholic Church was integral to who we were and how we lived. I attended the small state school up the road where the local priest would come and take the Catholic kids out of class into the corridor, where we would go through the Mass book and the Catechism. At home, mum would always find time in her very busy life to prioritise the strict adherence to following the Church's teachings, sitting with us and studying the "My Way to God" books, daily prayers, the rosary, and then culminating with the weekly Mass. This was interspersed with the enormous daily grind of both domestic and farm jobs. Mum's dedication and commitment have influenced my faith today.

This year is my 40th consecutive year of service to Catholic Education; I have worked in primary, secondary, tertiary, and systemic sectors and have incorporated many formal leadership roles across those 40 years. It remains a driving passion for me to ensure that high-quality Religious Education remains a primary focus in our Catholic Schools. I have worked with so many amazing people and have been mentored by incredible, innovative, and hardworking leaders.

In 1990, Maree and I made a sea change from Brunswick to Buninyong, and I became the principal at St Michael's Springbank. I would drive our old Torana out in all weathers, and it was not unusual for snow to fall at the school! These were busy and exciting times! We had a great Small Schools Network out on that side of town where the local Catholic small schools would collaborate and share their expertise to provide a breadth of experiences for the students in these vibrant and active communities, and I remember this time fondly.



During this time, I recommenced my studies, which would go on for some years, incorporating a Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership, a Graduate Diploma in Religious Education, a Master's in Religious Education, and a Master's in Theology. During these years of study, my love for learning, my passion for exploring new or more contextually appropriate ways of doing RE, and my curiosity for new theological understandings were ignited and fuelled. With a young family, there was not much time for the draft writing of essays!

From St Michael's Springbank, I went to St James' in Sebastopol, where I worked under Sr Maureen Connelly and the amazing Sr Kate McGrath, who fostered a great sense of community. I had eight wonderful years at St James', working with a great team of educators and families.

My next career move would then take me in a completely different direction, but one that was enormously satisfying both professionally and personally. I successfully applied for a position at the Catholic Education Office as an Education Officer in Religious Education. I began this job with Fr Kevin Leneghan, who inspired everyone who had the very good fortune to work with him. Fr Kevin was a democratic, respectful leader who combined his phenomenal intellectual and academic prowess with true humility, inclusion, and kindness. Under his leadership, our small, hardworking team became involved in the Inter-Diocesan Project that led to the development of the first version of the Ballarat Diocesan Religious Education Curriculum of "Awakenings." This project successfully gathered all stakeholders across the Diocese to work on a shared project of renewal, content-wise and pedagogically, in the quest for a Religious Education Curriculum that was right for the people of its time.

I am very proud of my contribution to the development of "Awakenings" and the work that was done by our team in the schools of the diocese, supporting its implementation. During these years, I had the privilege of working with many dedicated school and parish teams on many projects. There were years of delivering

Sacramental information night meetings, curriculum planning days, school reviews, whole school professional development days, and staff meetings supporting the communities of our Diocese in their amazing efforts to do what they do and to help them in their desire to do things even better.

Whilst at the Catholic Education Office, I was also very involved on the College Board of my children's school, Damascus College. About ten years ago, when I was Chairperson of the College Board, I was encouraged to apply for the role of Learning Area Leader: Religious Education. Mr. Matthew Byrne and Sr Marie Davey took a risk with an untried secondary school teacher at the time, and I am so glad they did. They have provided constant care, innovation, and leadership to me and many others, which is reflected in the outstanding community Damascus College is today. Over the last ten years, I have utilized my skills and knowledge in this role and worked with our RE team to develop their knowledge, skills, and capacities to ensure the College has a contextually appropriate Religious Education curriculum that is dynamic, engaging, and always evolving.

I recently attended a talk in Melbourne by the great American Benedictine nun Joan Chittester. She concluded her presentation by saying there is no point in being a prophet in our time unless we can do it with joy and happiness. People who know me, know that I have always worked hard, but they also know that I have always still enjoyed a laugh and can appreciate the humour in many situations!

In conclusion, I hope that our Catholic Schools will continue to be authentically inclusive and welcoming communities that acknowledge that we are all made in the image and likeness of our loving God; and that our schools can be places where people of all faiths, genders, and sexualities are therefore welcomed and respected equally.

When I reflect on my career, the connections and relationships are most important to me, and I have a lifetime of memories of interactions to be grateful for.

Martin Ryan, Learning Area Leader, RE

HONoured FOR HER SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

ALUMNI STORY

Congratulations to Margaret Addicoat, née McDonald, Class of 1952, who was recognised with an Order of Australia medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List this year for her service to the community through volunteering.

Margaret was a boarder at Sacred Heart College between 1941 - 1952, where a sense of social justice was instilled in her. Margaret's daughter Lee Ahrens née Auchettl, Class of 1973, says that her mother always considered the Mercy Nuns as her family, "in fact, she was pretty much raised by them."

Margaret was a founding member of the auxiliary for Peplow House crisis accommodation in Ballarat in the late 1970s. Not only was she on a committee that helped raise valuable funds, but she also volunteered one night a week of her time to the facility.

Margaret has also provided support at Lakeside Hospital for dementia or Alzheimer's patients and, most recently Knit One, Give One (KOGO). KOGO enhances social inclusion through volunteering and providing hand-knitted items of warmth and comfort to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the community. In addition to knitting herself, Margaret coordinates 50 volunteers among her neighbours in the Balmoral Gardens Retirement Village in South Wantirna, Victoria.

"If you can do something to keep somebody warm, you do," says Margaret.

"Every time you finish a knit, you know someone will be very grateful for it."

To date, Margaret and her knitting neighbours have donated more than 5,000 items, and she has no plans to slow down.

Margaret is doing great work in the community, and it is wonderful to see her good works acknowledged with the Order of Australia award..





YEAR 9 REFLECTION DAY

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

It was an honour and privilege to host Fr Rob Galea and members of his ministry team for the Year 9 Reflection Day on Friday, 19 July. The Reflection Day is designed to provide the Year 9 students an opportunity to learn more about Youth Ministry and consider how their faith can help them overcome difficulties.

The Year 9 students were challenged by the honest and raw presentation Fr Rob provided about his life. He presented the message of hope by speaking about his journey to faith and the hard road to get to where he is now. Fr Rob was supported by Zeb Fernandez on Drums and Tim Chan on Keyboard. The students were astonished and in awe of the skills of these musicians and quite enjoyed the different songs they performed for them as part of the story telling.

Organised by the Youth Ministry team, Sally Murphy, Martin Ryan, and Jazz Kirkham, this event provided opportunities for students to engage in ice-breakers and movement sessions, where they were required to share their thought processes on different topics. In addition, students from the current Year 10 Youth Ministry class assisted in different roles in the morning, including participation in a panel discussion about Youth Ministry. The Year 10 students addressed some frequently asked questions and expressed why they enjoyed the subject.

To finish off the day, students joined Fr Rob in a teaching Mass, where he celebrated the Mass while explaining why certain components occur during the Mass. This was important to assist students in understanding the significance of the Mass for the Catholic Church.

Overall, students were provided an experience where we hope they could see that no matter how challenging life gets, they can overcome this with courage and the help of God to turn their life around.

One thing that I enjoyed was his singing. My favourite part of the story was the story about when he stole a hat and his friends beat up the guy that he stole the hat from, it was just interesting to see how hard and dangerous his life was. One thing that surprised me was that he had such a rough childhood and to turn it all around was such an inspiring thing. The reflection day has helped me to see how much of a good life I have and how lucky I am to live how I live. (Cooper Russell, Year 9 student)

The thing I enjoyed about the day was the games such as heads or tails and this or that. The thing that surprised me the most was how full-on his life is now, travelling all over the world. The Reflection Day made me think that there is always someone to help or talk to. (James Gunn, Year 9 student)

The Youth Ministry Team



SOUND OF SUCCESS

ALUMNI STORY

Michael (Mick) Allan did not graduate from Damascus College in 2010 with the rest of his cohort. Instead, he left at the end of Year 10 to pursue an apprenticeship with a local builder.

After two years, he had become disenchanted with this career choice and knew he wanted something different. He moved around Australia, trying different pursuits from a coffee barista in Melbourne, lighting engineer in Sydney, and potato harvesting in Tasmania before he made the big move and relocated to Liverpool in England.

Not long after arriving in England, Mick decided to follow his passion for music and enrolled at Perth College, the University of the Highlands and Islands. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Audio Production, and since then, his career has grown in leaps and bounds. He has watched his recording studio expand and is making a good name for himself in the business. Mick writes:

Before I started university, I knew that I wanted to work in a recording studio. I loved recording my own music at home. I can remember being happy with the results, but I have come a long way

since then when I listen back to those recordings!

I first decided to open my own recording studio while in my second year at college, when I realised that there were not very many recording studios in my area and not many jobs in that sector.

I started on a part-time basis with a friend from college, while continuing my studies, and when I finished my degree started to do it full-time. In August last year, I moved on my own to much bigger premises in Cowdenbeath, Fife, and now have a fully operational building with two studio rooms and two practice rooms.

I have worked with many bands from all over the UK, with people coming from Europe to work with me. I have primarily made a name for myself in the metal community but have lots of experience recording many other styles of music and even film and voiceover projects.

Michael Allan, Class of 2010



RUNNING IS MY FUEL

GRETTA ASHLEY

Three years ago, I attended the YCW Harriers little athletics and realised I enjoyed running the longer distances. Since then, I have been running with the Ballarat YCW Harriers, where I joined the training group, and I now train five days a week.

Our training group is very social, which is great, and I also love the competition with the other members. The group offers a range of experiences depending on the weather. In winter there is cross country, and in summer I compete in track, with steeplechase being my favourite.

The steeplechase is 2km with five jumps (including the water jump) every 400m lap.

I enjoy competing locally and at country and state championships, where I qualified for the Nationals and travelled to Sydney for these in March.

Recently I qualified for the Victorian team to run at the National Cross Country at Oakbank, SA, with fellow athlete and Year 8 student Lucy Jones.

Recently I enjoyed campaigning for the marathon to be held in Ballarat, for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, where I was part of the promotional video developed by the City of Ballarat.

Throughout this unique experience, I met one of my idols, Steve Monagheti.

It would be amazing to have the marathon in my hometown, as it would be a dream to see the athletes that inspire me running where I train.

In the future, I plan on continuing with my running with the hope and dream of one day representing Australia at an international level.

Gretta Ashley, Year 9 student



St Vincent de Paul Winter sleep out

A COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE THIS YEAR

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

After a couple of years where the capacity for community engagement was severely curtailed, the social justice agenda at Damascus College began to hum again. It was a return to some tried and true initiatives and movement into new areas.

The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) project found legs this year as associations with the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative were forged. More details on this are on page 20.

The Year 11 Sleepover returned on 9-10 September with a focus on supporting the St Vincent de Paul Society's Winter Appeal. This appeal is an annual feature of the social justice agenda at the college, and the sleepover added to our efforts, and collectively the group raised \$600 for the cause. During the night, students learned about the reasons that lead to homelessness, and throughout the sleepout at various stages in the night, the students were moved on and had to find another place to sleep, just as if they were homeless in the city. The morning reflection process was profound. Students were pleased to be collected by their families, knowing they are well looked after and had achieved hours toward their Christian Personal Development Awards for Community Service / Action for Mercy and Justice.

The annual Term 3 effort for Catholic Mission was aided by the Justice Action Group (JAG) Winter Warmer held on 23 August. The event raised almost \$350 for needy people around the globe. The Catholic Mission contributes funding and provides project support to critical church-run initiatives in over 160 countries worldwide, spreading the faith and providing initiatives to the less fortunate. The Casual Day raised an additional \$1,300 for this important work.

The Christian Personal Development Award (CPDA) was back on track in 2022, with the Year 10 Introductory Program returning with an adapted format. At the heart of the process are the scriptural texts concerning mercy and justice, especially the account of judgment day found in Matthew 25:32 ff. This is the basis of the two-day retreat, including the "Experience of Volunteering Day," which focused on land care and opportunity shops in the Ballarat area. The "Knowing Our Neighbours: Melbourne Experience" lands in Footscray, noting cultural differences and community responses to human needs, before heading into the Melbourne CBD, where the group spent time with The Big Issue organisation in order to understand one significant response to poverty.

The Sustainability Committee was reconstituted in 2022, and work began in the middle of the year to focus on renewing connections with Sustainability Victoria through ResourceSmart schools. Work began in earnest on the plans for enviro-week activities as well as some planning around better waste management processes at the College. An enthusiastic group is meeting fortnightly, gaining inspiration from Church statements that insist that we must care for our common home.

The Timor Leste Immersion is still on hiatus in 2022, but discussions with Santa Maria Escholae's new principal, Padre Eugenio, have been very positive. For over ten years, the relationship has been formative for both schools. Damascus College has established a group of interested staff members to maintain our support of our friendship school in Ainaro. A fence for the school is on the agenda as it will protect the planned vegetable garden that will be tended by the students in East Timor, to support food security for them.



KNOWING OUR NEIGHBOURS

MELBOURNE EXPERIENCE





Submissions are open for the
DAMASCUS COLLEGE ALUMNI ART PRIZE

*This is your chance
to earn \$2000 for a piece of your artwork*

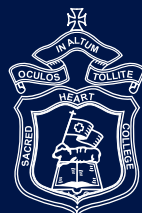
The Art Prize is open to Damascus College Alumni, including past students or staff from Damascus College, Sacred Heart College, St Paul's College and St Martin's in the Pines.

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 30 June, 2023

Details and application form

damascus.vic.edu.au



connecting@Damascus



STILL STUDYING AND LEARNING

ALUMNI STORY

After spending time abroad volunteering, enrolling in nursing at university seemed to be the natural next step for me. I always enjoyed human biology and medical sciences while at Sacred Heart College and St Martin's in the Pines. However, I had no intention of pursuing it at university.

After I completed Year 11, the family moved to Broome. I was going to try and stay in Ballarat, but the need to be with my family was too strong, and I ended up making the move with them. I ended up taking a couple of years to finish high school finally, and then I became qualified in early childhood studies and worked in that industry for a few years. I then did some travelling, and gained experience doing health work as a volunteer in India and Africa. I enjoyed every aspect of it and decided to enroll in nursing the moment I arrived home from Tanzania.

After completing my Bachelor of Nursing at Notre Dame in 2018, I worked for the Department of Health in Western Australia, specialising in Child and Adolescent Community Health services.

The work has proven rewarding, enabling me to make a difference in the lives of young Western Australians. Working in the community and schools allows me to be a holistic practitioner, and you can prioritise your time and schedule based on individual needs.

I love school health so much because it avoids a tick-box approach to care, and you can really support a child and their family. I am currently completing my graduate nurse program through my work at the Department of Health while also studying for a postgraduate qualification in this specialisation at Notre Dame.

Tracey Howard, Class of 1994

BRIGHT FUTURES BREAKFAST

DAMASCUS EVENT

On Wednesday 5 October, Damascus College welcomed students, staff, alumni, and community members, including Ballarat Legacy and Federation University to the Bright Futures Breakfast. The event was also well attended by various Sisters of Mercy, Priests of the Diocese, the Ballarat Diocese office, and members of the Damascus College sub-committees.

The Bright Futures Breakfast is held each year to support the Bright Futures Scholarship, which supports students and families experiencing financial or personal disadvantages. It is awarded annually to one incoming Year 7 student for 50% tuition relief and for the duration of a student's enrolment at Damascus College (maximum of 6 years).

Guests were welcomed to the Damascus Events Centre, where they enjoyed hot drinks on a cold Ballarat morning before hearing from Year 11 student Kaitlyn Handreck about the impact of being the recipient of the Diocese of Ballarat scholarship. The Diocesan Scholarship made a difference not only to her family and her life financially but also built her confidence and empowered her in ways we do not always see or appreciate.

The guest speaker for the event was Samuel Rizzo, Class of 2018. Sam shared his inspirational and motivational personal journey from being born with the congenital condition Spina Bifida to representing Australia as a world-class T54 Para-athlete, and the impact his Damascus College education has made on his life. It was a delight to hear his very personal reflections, his appreciation for the educators in his life, how they have supported him along the way, and the love and appreciation he has for his family and friends.

Guests enjoyed a delicious buffet breakfast before departing to enjoy the rest of their day, hopefully filled with the knowledge that by attending, they had shown their support for Damascus College and the Bright Futures Scholarship. At Damascus, we believe that a brighter future starts with schooling, and giving a child the opportunity to thrive at Damascus College is the aim of the Bright Futures Scholarship.

More information and an application form can be found at <https://www.damascus.vic.edu.au/enrolment/scholarships>





BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

The annual Bright Futures Scholarship is now open for 2024 commencement.

Established in 2018, the Bright Futures Scholarship sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy (John Thirsk Estate), Fr Brendan Davey, and Damascus College is for the purpose of supporting students and families who are experiencing financial or personal disadvantage and who demonstrate a strong commitment to social justice activities and contribute to their local community, but may not otherwise be able to access a Catholic education.

This scholarship is awarded annually to one incoming Year 7 student for 50% tuition relief and is awarded for the duration of a student's enrolment at Damascus College (maximum of 6 years).

To be considered for this scholarship, applicants must be a Grade 5 student studying at a Primary School in the Ballarat area, and does not have to be a Catholic Primary School. Applicants must also have submitted an Enrolment Application Form to Damascus College by the advertised deadline. Applicants will be selected in adherence to the selection criteria listed here:

Selection Criteria:

- Family is experiencing financial and/or personal disadvantage.
- Student demonstrates involvement in volunteer, social justice, fundraising, and leadership activities within the Primary School or broader community.
- Student demonstrates involvement and commitment to a faith tradition.
- Students are to choose two values to describe and give examples of how these values relate to them. Values: Compassion, Justice, Respect, Hospitality, Service, and Courage.
- One written reference is to be obtained from a community member to support the scholarship application.

Applications for the Bright Futures Scholarship opened on Monday, 3 October, and will close on Friday, 3 February 2023, the same date that enrolment applications close.

For further information, the scholarship flyer and application form can be downloaded from the Damascus College website: <https://www.damascus.vic.edu.au/enrolment/scholarships>

ARCHIVES GALLERY LAUNCH AND EXHIBITION

DAMASCUS EVENT

On Saturday, 6 August, Damascus College welcomed a small group of art enthusiasts to join us for morning tea to celebrate both the artistic works of Sr Margaret Mary Batros and the opening of the Damascus College Archives Gallery.

The cold and wet weather did not deter our guests, who enjoyed a warm welcome from Principal Steven Mifsud. College Archivist Natasha Adam then spoke about the importance of the collection in preserving and promoting college history and invited guests to enjoy a cup of tea and a bite to eat while taking in the displays set out around the gallery.

The main feature was an exhibition of the work of Sr Margaret Mary Batros. The college was fortunate enough to show a wide range of pieces in various mediums spanning her artistic career.

Olga Batros was a student at Sacred Heart College before entering the Ballarat Convent of Mercy herself and taking the name Sr Margaret Mary. She was a much-loved art teacher at SHC and created several sets of Stations of the Cross, some of which remain on display in buildings and churches around Victoria today. Included in the exhibition was a remarkable set of stations created through images burnt onto recycled ladder steps kindly loaned to the college for the occasion by the Ballarat Sisters of Mercy. We want to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful community supporters who have loaned their precious pieces to Damascus for display over the exhibition period.

An early pioneer of recycling, Sr Margaret Mary was known for her ability to incorporate unwanted items into her pieces, and guests spoke fondly of the inspiration and freedom they were encouraged to bring to their own work as students in her classes. The morning was made more special when former students shared their stories and special memories of Sr Margaret Mary. Dr. Joanne Reidy (1969) brought along a piece of her own artwork that had been displayed in the Art Gallery of Ballarat under the watchful eye of her proud teacher, while Colleen Bourke (1971) donated to the gallery a sketch of herself drawn by Sr Margaret Mary during a Year 12 Art class in 1971.



The morning also marked the launch of the Damascus College Archives Gallery. Some of the many interesting pieces from the college archive collection were exhibited alongside the works of Sr Margaret Mary. It is the intention that the gallery will become a space for reflecting on the path taken on the journey to becoming Damascus College. Each foundation college is represented, and items displayed include school uniforms, college annuals, photographs, boarding house memorabilia, and classroom equipment.

It is hoped that the gallery can inspire a sense of pride and belonging within our current staff and student population through engagement with the long history of the college. The gallery will be launched to staff with a welcome event in term four, and interested alumni should keep an eye on our social media for the opportunity to join a tour of the campus and gallery, also scheduled to occur during term four.

For information regarding your time at Sacred Heart College, St Paul's College, St Martin's in the Pines, or Damascus College, or to donate items to the Damascus College collection, please contact archives@damascus.vic.edu.au





IT ALL ADDS UP

ALUMNI STORY

Hi, my name is Anna Trounce from the Class of 2020. At the end of 2021, I completed my first year of a Bachelor of Professional Accounting at Federation University.

While I was a student at Damascus College, I was lucky enough to have Alan Archbold (Archie) as my accounting teacher in Years 11 and 12.

PPT is a financial company in Ballarat that employs more than 50 accountants, tax specialists, business advisers, financial planners, insurance advisers, and lending specialists. In 2019 Archie contacted them to enter his students in a competition that awarded the highest scoring accounting student a cash reward.

I won!

As the winner, PPT not only rewarded my achievement with cash, but they also recognised my hard work, and I was now on their radar. They were keeping an eye on me as a potential member of their team.

Some time passed, and in 2021 while I was studying at FedUni, I was contacted by a PPT HR Manager, who explained that they had learned that I was studying accounting and wanted to offer me a traineeship. I would be working and learning as part of the self-managed superannuation team.

Due to the challenges that COVID imposed (lockdowns, etc.) I could not start working with PPT until mid-September 2021. While I was maintaining my studies at FedUni, I worked part-time. As soon as I finished my exams, I could start working full-time until university started again, then I went back to part-time.

Without a doubt, I could not have achieved what I have so far without Archie and our little accounting class. I thank them dearly!

Anna Trounce, Class of 2020



YOUTH MINISTRY

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Damascus College now offers students in Years 10 and 11 the ability to undertake Religious Education studies in the field of Youth Ministry.

Youth Ministry will play a significant role in providing focus, direction, and role-modelling student engagement in faith and ministry, inviting students to discover God's presence in their daily lives and engaging them in a dialogue between their life experiences and Catholic teaching.

Staff member Sally Murphy is the Damascus College Youth Ministry Program Coordinator. Sally began with Damascus College in 2016 and, during that time, has undertaken her Master's in Religious Education. Sally says that students will find the Youth Ministry classroom to be a safe space for the exploration of their faith journey.

"I hope to equip students with the tools to be able to share their faith in a natural way," she said.

"It is different from Religious Education, which is the theory, and Youth Ministry is the practice."

Other members of the Youth Ministry team include staff members Martin Ryan, Religious Education Learning Area Leader, and Pastor Jasmina Kirkham.

Providing our students with the opportunity to study Youth Ministry at Damascus is important because of its experiences of encounter and the action of God in their lives," said Tony Haintz, Assistant Principal, Catholic School Culture.



Class of 1972

ALUMNI REUNIONS

ALUMNI EVENT

In 2022, Damascus College was privileged to host 10 "Class of Reunions." A mammoth undertaking indeed, but extremely satisfying to be able to celebrate with Damascus alumni after having to reschedule many events due to COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns.

This year Damascus welcomed the Class of 1971, 1981, 1982, 1991, 1992, 2001, 2002, 2011, and 2012.

The College wishes to thank all past students for attending these reunions, as it was wonderful to celebrate and re-connect, and for each alumni to feel a sense of pride and belonging to the Damascus College community, even if they attended one of our foundation colleges, as together, we are Damascus.

Reunions are a great way to engage with alumni, allowing them to remember where they came from, reminisce, reconnect with old friends and reflect on their life's journey so far.

Reunion groups are named by their final year, which is the year a student did or would have completed Year 12 or equivalent. For example, if you left SHC in Year 10 (Form 4) in 1980, your graduating year would have been 1982 - therefore, you are part of the Class of 1982.

While each event was unique and special, they follow a similar format. Reunions commence with a Welcome Reception held at Damascus College in the luxurious and well-equipped Damascus Events Centre. Alumni are greeted by staff and enjoy drinks and light refreshments while they mingle and enjoy a chance to catch up. After some quick formalities, there is a group picture before being led on a campus tour. Many reunion groups head off from the campus to enjoy an afterparty or dinner at a local venue. Those reunion groups celebrating their 50-year Class Reunion enjoy a longer event that includes a catered lunch.

We are looking forward to celebrating the Class of 1973, 1983, 1993, 2003, and 2013 in 2023.

If you are thinking of or planning a reunion or a get-together of your cohort from Sacred Heart, St Martin's in the Pines, St Paul's, or Damascus College, please let us know. Damascus College is committed to supporting our alumni, and we can assist you with planning your event, providing support in contacting alumni, and offering Campus or Commemorative Walk tours.

Please contact your Alumni Officer, Korina Hegert, at k.hegert@damascus.vic.edu.au



Class of 1971



Class of 1981



Class of 1982



Class of 1991



Class of 1992



Class of 2001



Class of 2002



Class of 2011



Class of 2012

IN REMEMBRANCE

JEFFREY SIMPSON

On Monday, 23 May, the Damascus College community received the sad news of the death of a long-serving staff member, Mr. Jeffrey Simpson.

The Damascus community is deeply saddened by Jeff's death and offers his family sincere sympathy, support, and prayers at this difficult time.

Jeff has been an incredibly talented teacher at Damascus for the last 27 years. He was a generous, skilled, and passionate teacher and Technology team member. Throughout his time at Damascus, he taught wood, metal, electronics, and systems engineering.

His engagement with young people was truly extraordinary. Jeff loved his teaching and the educational journey of young people. Jeff was a passionate Geelong Cats supporter and used this as a bridge in building relationships with those around him. Jeff was a true character with an extraordinary capacity to engage all through story and humour. He was quick-witted, and his sense of fun endeared him to all.

Jeff was an Australian Defence Force returned personnel and greatly respected the ANZAC tradition and Remembrance Day. Amongst the student and staff community, he took great pride in instilling a sense of tradition and respect for those who fought for the freedoms we all enjoy today.

Jeff's Teacher Advisor group and the students he taught regularly, continue to be supported through this challenging and tragic time.

The College has assisted Jeff's family in any way possible throughout this difficult time. Damascus College conducted a memorial service to remember Jeff towards the end of Term 2, to express our love for him as well as an extraordinary sense of loss within the community.

At such a difficult time of grief and sadness, as a Catholic school community, we turn to our faith for solace and strength. Our prayers continue to be with Jeff's family and friends, and we ask that the community keep them in their thoughts and prayers.



Our Alumni are the wind beneath our wings.
 Let us **celebrate** and take **inspiration** from
 the **achievements** of our **past students**.
 Empowering our current
 students to **soar**.



SHINING LIGHT AWARD FOR INSPIRING ALUMNI

The Damascus College Shining Light award celebrates the outstanding achievements of extraordinary Damascus College alumni in a diverse range of fields and areas of endeavour. The award recognises alumni whose service has made a significant contribution to the local, state, national or global community.

Bestowed biennially, the Shining Light Award enables Damascus to celebrate and recognise the contributions of alumni who have shined bright in their chosen field. Damascus alumni includes past students and staff of Sacred Heart, St Paul's St Martin's in the Pines and Damascus College.

CATEGORIES FOR NOMINATIONS INCLUDE:	
SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY	STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) ACHIEVEMENT
SPORTING ACHIEVEMENT	ACADEMIA OR CAREER EXCELLENCE
FAITH DEVELOPMENT	YOUNG ACHIEVER

PLEASE NOMINATE A PAST STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER

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

Nominations Close: Friday 9 December 2022 at 4pm.



damascus.vic.edu.au

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