

March 22, 2016

### Mount Mercy Academy: Successfully Preparing the Healthcare Professionals of the Future

As society continues to age and live longer, there is a pressing need for people to join the medical field. There are many areas in the medical professions that are in desperate need of people to fill positions but many are not aware of the plethora of options for careers in the medical field. Six years ago Mount Mercy Academy recognized this and established a program to fill that void.

During the 2010-11 school year Mount Mercy Academy established a partnership with Mercy Hospital and Catholic Health to offer its students a unique career experience. Students have the opportunity to gain exposure to many medical fields as well as the chance to interact with professionals in the field of their choice. Students join the Health Care Career Club as freshmen and sophomores and then as juniors and seniors they have the opportunity to continue on to the Academy of Science and Healthcare (ASH).

The Healthcare Career Club attends various field trips which expose them to many of the different medical career paths that are available to them. Among the sites that students have visited are dental offices, Mercy Flight, UNYTS, Mash Camp and the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus. During the junior year interested students participate in a shadowing program of approximately 16 hours. Students are able to shadow in the fields of Radiology, Anatomy, Maternity, Nursing Units, Respiratory Therapy and more. The program concludes with an internship during the senior year. Students take part in an internship in the field of their choice, either at Mercy Hospital or another approved location. Students must complete a total of 50 volunteer hours, create a log of their participation and then research colleges that offer majors in related fields.

Since the inception of the program, approximately forty young women have “graduated” from the program and received their white coats. Most of the students have continued their pursuit of a medical career in college.

Kelly Hess of West Seneca and a 2012 Mount Mercy graduate was a member of the first graduating class of the Academy of Science and Healthcare. She is well on her way to a successful career in medicine. Hess is currently completing her first year of medical school at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine after graduating from Mercyhurst University in three years with a biology degree.

“Being able to participate in the Academy of Science and Healthcare helped me in college and medical school. Being able to write on a resume that I had multiple years of experience in a hospital setting helped me not only to be accepted into college but it made me a more competitive applicant for medical school. Not many others can say that they got such valuable experience in high school. Also having previous experience in the health care setting from ASH, I was able to easily get a volunteer position in a health care facility close to my university, which helped me complete my Biology practicum,” Hess commented.

Janelle Lauciello of Orchard Park is also a 2012 Mount Mercy alumna and a graduate of the first ASH class. She feels that the benefits she received as a member of this program were pivotal in her career choice and her success in college. She is graduating in May from Geneseo University and plans to pursue a career as a Physician’s Assistant. “The main benefit I received from ASH was definitely the early experience. Many people in college end up changing majors or changing career paths, but I had a very good idea of how I wanted to spend the rest of my life. I really believe that the ASH gave me priceless experience that really put me on the specific and correct career path. It has also been a resume booster that has gotten me various local medical positions,” Lauciello stated.

The opportunity to experience and learn about the various fields has been invaluable for members of the Academy. Erin Kelleher of Buffalo completed the program and graduated from Mount Mercy in 2014. She currently is pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree in Health Care Studies with a

specialization in health and fitness at Daemen College. She will then continue in the five year program to obtain a Masters degree in Athletic Training. Kelleher commented "Participating in the Academy gave me through the shadowing rotations a broad overview of various jobs/departments in the medical field. I was able to meet and talk one on one with people and ask questions. I got a brief understanding of how their day goes. Through my internship I had the opportunity to meet and talk to a physical therapist who is a professor in my athletic training program. I also received exposure to the hospital and its surroundings." All of these experiences have convinced Kelleher that she was heading to the correct career path.

Shannon Moran of Buffalo, another 2014 graduate of Mount Mercy, is currently in her second year at Oswego University and is majoring in Human Resource Management and plans on becoming a part of a human resource department. She was able to gain a different experience and perspective through the ASH. "ASH benefited me by allowing me to have internship experience before college. I interned in the human resource department at Sister's Hospital. I then decided to major in human resource management from my internship experience. The ASH helped me create an academic advantage because my internship exposed me to things that are now being taught in my classes. I have a prior knowledge of the topics brought up in classes which gives me an edge over other students. The ASH program is great for people who want to go into the medical profession, but also for people who want to be on the business end like me. It allowed me to have experiences and allowed me to be more confident about my future career choices." Moran remarked.

Annie Barnes of Fredonia, a 2013 graduate of the ASH and Mount Mercy, is currently pursuing a career in dental hygiene. She is convinced the being a graduate of the ASH has played a vital role in her life. Barnes aspires to one day work in a specialized dental unit in one of the many Children's Hospitals around the country. "The benefits and experience that I received from the ASH immensely exceeded my expectations. I learned the importance of integrity, responsibility and professionalism, which is essential in healthcare. These kinds of lessons and experiences cannot be found in a book, which is what makes the ASH so extraordinary for high school students," Barnes asserted.

All of the ASH graduates mentioned the value of hands on experience in high school. "I gained the benefits of getting hands on experience in the health care field. It was amazing to already have my foot in the door with such a great healthcare system, while only in high school. The CHS has rotations with my medical school, so I am hoping to be able to return home for my 3rd and 4th year medical school clinical rotations," Hess stated. "Being able to get hands on experience so early on in my education helped me to reaffirm that the medical profession was right for me. With so many years of school ahead, it is so reassuring to know that all the hard work is worth it!"

Lauciello also extolled the value of the Academy of Science and Healthcare. "Learning to be professional and being tossed into the real world at a young age gave me a distinct advantage in college. I am able to speak confidently to authority figures and handle spontaneous situations that spring up. The ASH has been a continual part of my life and the relationships and contacts I made continue to be an asset today," Lauciello said.

Mount Mercy Academy is the only school for young women to offer this partnership and is one of just a few in Western New York to allow its students to gain invaluable, practical and hands-on-experience in the medical profession while still in high school.

Catherine Rogers of Cheektowaga and a senior at Mount Mercy recognizes the value of her experience in the ASH. "'The Academy of Science and Healthcare has expanded my boundaries and led me to strive for a career I never considered-engineering. It is more than a way of becoming involved in the healthcare field. It captures all aspects of STEAM. As a young woman this Academy has empowered me to reach for positions conventionally held by men and utilize the most of my intellectual abilities.'" Rogers stated.

Megan Fabian of West Seneca and another senior at Mount Mercy concurs with Rogers. "Before joining the Academy of Science and Healthcare I never imagined that I would one day be working towards a doctoral degree. My internship at the MACC assured me that physical therapy was the career for me as I received invaluable, hands-on learning experiences by interacting with patients and assisting the physical therapists. The Academy of Science and Health care inspired me to set larger, more challenging goals for myself, and I will continue to grow in knowledge and understanding of all aspects of STEAM as a college student, due to the background this club has provided."



Mount Mercy sophomores Emily Lewandowski, Mary Bala, Olivia Cudney, Claire Hildebrand and Mary Barnes pose with Doctor Catherine Gogan at her dental practice.

### **Mount Mercy Academy**

A Catholic College Preparatory High School for Young Women

88 Red Jacket Parkway | Buffalo, New York 14220 | [www.mtmercy.org](http://www.mtmercy.org) | T (716) 825-8796 | F (716) 825-0976