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### Mount Mercy Art Class Uses Its Talents to Gift Others

This year Mount Mercy Academy added a new type of service to its vast repertoire of community service. Mount Mercy Academy students are known throughout the local community for their service projects. The majority of these projects are coordinated through the students' theology classes or the Campus Ministry Office. This year a new class designed by Mount Mercy art teacher and artist Jacqueline Welch created hand-made projects to benefit local ministries.

"The impetus for this class was my desire to make students aware of the need in our immediate community for goods and services that the Arts could provide. I wanted to teach them a new arts skill that would be useful throughout their lives and that they could teach others. I also hoped to promote an empathic spirit in the class and a cooperative working atmosphere," Welch commented.

Eight students enrolled in the "Studio Arts & Community" class. Welch expected that the students would engage in a variety of art media and techniques to create large and small artworks to serve the Western New York community. The course encouraged creative thinking, good design practices, collaboration, community engagement and entrepreneurship.

Bella Longo, a junior from Buffalo remarked, "At first I took the class because I was unable to fit another class into my schedule. I had no idea that using my talents in art would end up being so beneficial to others out in the community. After taking this course I have become a person more involved and interested in helping others."

Those expectations were successfully met when the eight students combined to make 51 hats, three headbands and 16 baby blankets for premature babies and the Vive La Casa Refugee Program. In addition, the students made eight pet dishes for the SPCA.

"This course exceeded my expectations in the number of projects completed successfully and in the enjoyment and camaraderie that I saw my students experience in this class," Welch remarked.

"It was rewarding to do something I enjoy and then also to have it benefit others," Senior Taylor Hoch of East Aurora said.

Welch herself had been making preemie hats for Mercy Hospital and knew that there was a definite need for more. She is also a big animal advocate and shared her enthusiasm with her class. The students discussed several options for projects and they chose the Preemie Project and the pet dishes. Welch said that once they learned how to crochet, they enjoyed it so much that they wanted to continue making hats and blankets.

"I really enjoyed the course! It was incredible knowing that I was able to help people in need," junior Clarity Eron of Buffalo stated.

Welch is already making plans for next year's class. "Next year I would like to use more recycled and donated materials in some of the projects that we make, such as using plastic bags to weave roll up sleeping mats for the homeless and pre-used or donated yarn for woven goods," Welch concluded.



## Mount Mercy Academy

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