



# LEADERS 2011



Left to right: Joanna Casey (Cultural), Brittany Campos (BOT Rep), Emily Maguire (Service), Paulien Martens (Head Girl), Salome Lennon (Deputy Head Girl), Kaoru Hirano (International), Kimberley Noah, (Sports), Katie Fitzgerald, (Head Librarian).

## COLLEGE OPEN DAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MAY

SEE PAGE 13

THE NEWSLETTER FOR *Villa Maria College*

# EARTHQUAKE 2011

The February 22nd Earthquake will be remembered as the catastrophic event that changed the history of Christchurch. Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to all those who lost their lives and who are still facing uncertain futures. The Villa Maria College site incurred minimal damage from the quake and for this we are extremely grateful. Our College reopened on March 9th after being completely cleared by engineers.



## Rolling Earth

By Sophie Jordan (Year 11)

Dreams, such sweet dreams. A wonderful escape from the stress and reality. The whispered silence of night consuming all but the loudest of noises.

But something seemed wrong and the dreams melted into oblivion; a minute frown marring a smooth brow.

Reluctantly rising from a deep sleep ready to berate whatever it was that had banished dreams.

Then there was the loud rumble which the silence of the night couldn't muffle.

The light, blinding bemused eyes as dazed and half asleep, dragged from the warmth and comfort of bed; shoved unceremoniously under the doorframe.

Flurried exchange of questions, furiously demanding answers which are rapidly given.

The earth itself, the solid, stable earth was violently moving beneath the feet, rolling, jolting, shaking and shuddering.

As it did five months later.

There was laughter, music, singing and smiles.

The giggles and beaming grins from 11 and 12 year olds, for some their first year at high school.

There was happiness but within a split second there were screams instead of laughter, a searing nightmare brought bubbling back to the surface, only just locked away.

Then the silence, your stomach and heart dropping as one lies motionless on the floor, not inches from children pushed together under the doorframe, protected and safe.

And the panic as no one can be contacted.

The worry that something has happened and all that can be done is wait, fearing for the worst.

Both times, natural disasters.

But only once a warning.

Only once a killer.

# FAREWELL TO JOHN SCHREURS



*John Schreurs became the Principal of Mount Hutt College late last year. The staff and Board farewelled John in January and thanked him for his considerable contributions to the College. He will be remembered as a wonderful colleague and as a consummate professional. For this edition of Vmail we asked John to reflect on his ten years at Villa Maria College.*

I have been totally humbled by the response to me leaving Villa Maria College; the messages of best wishes and sadness at me going from staff, students and parents at first surprised me. However, when I took the time to reflect, I should not have been that surprised. That sort of response is part of the culture of the College. At Villa we "learn to prize what is of value" and what we value is the people, we value Catholic values. If I did not already know this, Villa has taught me that lesson. I have been very honoured to have the send off I have had and I thank you all.

**"At Villa we learn to prize what is of value and what we value is the people, we value Catholic values."**

*John Schreurs*

I started at Villa Maria College in 2001 and I remember in my first week a Year 13 student leader and during the rest of the year I had little to do with her. For her it was the right thing to do. At the end of that year I experienced my first Service Assembly which ended with the giving of the white rose awards. I was so impressed with these and the support the recipients had from students and the staff. I thought at the time, this is something that Villa has to offer the larger community - and it does. I have lost count of the number of times a past pupil has come back to the College having just returned from volunteering overseas and living the Mercy charism of service to others.

One of the Catherine McAuley quotes that was a theme for a year and I still use is: "Do ordinary things extraordinarily well". In our busy "wanna be famous world" it is the ordinary which gets no thought but is most important. It is the day-to-day; the classwork, the making of the school lunch, the homework, the asking "how was your day?" and listening to the answer. This is something I will take with me forever.

I have enjoyed working with the students, the parents, the staff, the Board and trustees, the PTA, the Whanau Committee, the Senior Leadership Team and in particular Mary Lynch the Principal. She has mentored me and I look forward to the challenge of being a full-time Principal knowing that Villa has helped shape me.

I am leaving one community school for another, Mount Hutt College. It is said that it takes a community to educate its children and I look forward to being part of the Mount Hutt community, knowing that I have Villa in my blood.

# PROPRIETOR PROFILE

In each issue of the Vmail we plan to profile members of our governing boards. For this edition we asked a Proprietor representative, Barbara Te Miha, Board Trustee Karen Hunt and Foundation Trustee John Ryan to tell us a bit about themselves.

## Proprietor Profile

Tēnā koutou katoa. Ko Barbara Te Miha tāku ingoa. No Te Tai Poutini ahau.

Ko Robert Te Miha tōku hoa rangatira. No Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu me Te Atihaunui-a Paparangi ia.

I became involved with Villa Maria College at the behest of the Mercy Sisters to join Villa Maria College Christchurch Limited and Board of Trustees, with a special request to raise the Maori perspective within the College. In that process, I've had the opportunity of working alongside the Catholic Education Office and the School of Maori, University of Canterbury, helping to meet the need for all local Catholic schools to recognise and apply the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in the field of education.

I'm inspired to continue that pursuit, by our students, teachers and the College Whānau Committee. My husband, though, provides my main inspiration. Carrying his surname, Te Miha, makes me feel especially Catholic, as this is the title given to the Mass. An amazing, wonderful, awesome name!!

I'm a supporter of the Faith & Light Movement and one of a small group who, in July 2010, published a book, "Uniquely Gifted" to raise the profile of the intellectually disabled.

For almost 12 years I was a presenter and programmer for the radio programme, "Catholics On Air." I enjoyed it immensely, from interviewing students about their achievements and dreams to looking at the wonders of the universe with the Vice-Director of the Vatican Observatory. Over the years I've spent many happy hours helping at the Mercy Library – my favourite place, as I simply love books!!! There's so much available there that enables a deeper understanding of being Catholic.

Bob and I have recently been appointed to the local Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, positions that carry the responsibility of knowing and understanding Catholic Social Teaching. I find relaxation in creative cooking – something some in the Diocese have discovered – and in working with fabric and thread and have had some pieces exhibited.

Ma te Atua koutou, e manaaki, e tiaki i ngā wā katoa.



## FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Karen Hunt has been a Board of Trustees member since 2005 and the Deputy Chair since 2008. It is a role she feels privileged to fulfil saying: "it's one way that I can support Villa Maria and all the positive aspects of Catholic education." Karen's first hand experience in education as a science teacher and a dean are greatly appreciated on the Board.

She enjoys the governance role and says the great thing about Villa Maria College is its commitment to excellence. "I'm always impressed by the staff at Villa who are continually looking for ways to improve and enhance learning experiences for our girls. I see my role on the Board as crucial in ensuring that we are able to resource and support this kind of ethos."

The holistic approach to education at Villa has also impressed Karen. "The Mercy traditions that pervade every aspect of the College add such richness to the girls' educational experiences." she says.

Karen and husband Simon have three children; one of their daughters graduated from Villa in 2009 and another is currently in Year 13. Simon, too, commits many hours to the College in his role as Chair of the Villa Rowing Club.

Our College is lucky to have such a strong parent body that is prepared to give of their time and expertise for the betterment of all students.



## FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

We began our year saying farewell to our Deputy Principal, John Schreurs, and also to our Executive Officer, Karen Gray. John and Karen contributed so much during their time with the College, and we wish them both well in their new endeavours.

### Capital Works

We are excited to see the new science block development making such wonderful progress. The new and refurbished laboratories will be a wonderful addition to our College facilities, and we hope will encourage even more Villa students to consider a career in science.

### Roll Numbers

Villa Maria remains a popular choice for students and their families as we maintain a waiting list for enrolments. The College has made a successful application to the Minister of Education for an increase in our allowable maximum roll.

We wish all our students the very best of luck for an enjoyable and memorable 2011.

# FOUNDATION PROFILE



John Ryan has been on the Villa Maria Foundation for the past five years. His association with the College began in the late 1950's when his sister started at Villa. More than 20 years later John's daughter, Elizabeth attended the College.

John and his family have lived and farmed in Tai Tapu for many years. He has a varied professional past that incorporates farming, property valuation, banking and his current farm consultancy business.

A belief in ensuring long term financial viability for Villa Maria College is what motivated his decision to join the Foundation.

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## THANKS TO FUNDERS

Our sincere thanks to the trusts and foundations that have made financial contributions to the College recently.

- The Canterbury Community Trust
- Air Rescue Services Trust
- Pub Charity Inc
- New Zealand Community Trust
- The Endeavour Community Trust
- The Southern Trust

## GROTTO DEDICATION

Nestled amongst established trees and surrounded by a small peace garden, the 'McLean Memorial Grotto' has provided a quiet sanctuary for many past and present Villa Maria pupils. Recently, members of the Sisters of Mercy and the Villa Maria community gathered to re-dedicate this special place and unveil its new prayer kneeler.

The McLean Memorial Grotto was built in 1950 in memory of Sister Marie-Rita's parents, Mary and Finlay McLean. "I was a student of Villa Maria College and wanted to create a place of peace and prayer for Villa Maria students and sisters," says Sister Marie-Rita. "It's a sacred place to which we come asking Mary, our Mother of Mercy to give us peace in our hearts, our school, our homes and the whole of creation."

Principal Mary Lynch welcomed guests to the re-dedication and spoke of the significance of the Grotto to the life of Villa Maria College. She acknowledged the importance of ceremonies such as this. "Today offers us an opportunity to honour the past and give thanks for the lives of Mary and Finlay McLean - that in their memory our young students can find a place of solace and reflection."

Past pupil Erin Lutton (nee Duffy) opened the ceremony with a prayer of thanks for the work of the Mercy Sisters. It was a special moment for Erin who, in 1958, was photographed kneeling in the Villa Maria Grotto

for the front page of the Tablet, The Catholic newspaper of the day. Further prayers were offered by Sister Mary Hanrahan, Sister Marie-Rita and Villa Maria's Director of Religious Studies, Ronel Moore. Sister Kath Fitzsimmons unveiled the kneeler and plaque before Sister Marie-Rita lit a candle of remembrance. Sister Anna Clarke read from the book of Matthew, and Board of Trustees' member Hector Matthews concluded the ceremony with a traditional Maori blessing.

We are privileged to have such a beautiful place of prayer at Villa. Next time you visit the College, take a few moments to wander over to the Grotto which is situated next to the auditorium.



*"It's a sacred place to which we come asking our Mary of Mercy to give us peace in our hearts, our school, our homes and the whole of creation."*

*Sister Marie-Rita*



# PTA REPORT

## Greetings Villa Maria Community!

We were delighted with the amount of money we raised in 2010 and the number of projects we were able to contribute toward. Our small but committed band of parents helped fundraise for equipment in the new science facilities, four active whiteboards and a new sound system for the Hall. During 2011, we plan to organise opportunities for parents to get to know each other and organise a College fair.

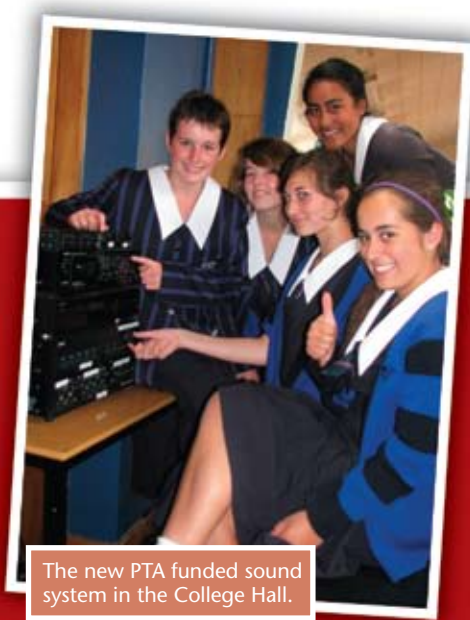
Our aim is not simply to raise money; we are also keen to continue providing opportunities for parents to meet and listen to educational speakers.

## Join us...

If you would like to find out more about your PTA and ways you can get involved, come along to our regular meetings on the first Tuesday of each month in the College Meeting Room, near the Main Office, 7:30pm. We could do with a few more Dads to keep me company!

We are always open to new ideas and offers of help so please contact me directly if you are unable to come along to our meetings.

PTA Chair  
Maarten Loeffen  
P: 355 7750  
E: maarten@traiteur.co.nz



The new PTA funded sound system in the College Hall.

# IT'S HISTORY

Late last year, Jessie Smith (Year 12) was awarded third place in the Year 11 category of the NZHTA Young Historian Competition. She was the only South Island recipient of an award. This is a nationwide competition based on an internal assessment research assignment. Jessie designed a Time Magazine article and front cover based on the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbour.

Jessie says she loves history because it explains how such things as foreign policy, international relations and attitudes to other races have developed over many centuries. "I enjoy learning about the major characters in history and how their actions and views inspired or, in some cases, lead nations astray. History has shown me that what is done in the past sets a template for the future."

*"History has shown me that what is done in the past sets a template for the future."*

*Jessie Smith (Year 12)*



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# ACHIEVERS ASSEMBLY

At the High Achievers Assembly in February we recognised pupils who have excelled in NCEA. In front of their peers and parents the students were presented with Villa Maria College Gold or Silver awards.

The following students are again congratulated for their academic achievements:

## **Level 1 Gold : (80 + credits at excellence)**

Sophie Crews, Caitlin Pugh, Bridget Thomas, Laura Maskill, Jessica Smith, Ellie Davison, Eliza King, Sarah Thwaites, Emily McGeorge

## **Level 1 Silver: (50 – 79 credits at excellence)**

Kate Oorschot, Louise Yates, Alison Tier, Min Jung Kwon, Lexi Ratcliffe, Anna Greenlaw, Breanne Ealam, Sarah Hudson, Victoria Steel, Elizabeth Viteetarm, Tess Maitland, Emma Maslin, Sophie Hale, Klaudia Krupa, Holly Hill.

## **Level 2 Gold: 66 + credits with excellence**

Salome Lennon, Paulien Martens, Georgia Bell ett, Tess O'Malley, Amy Rice, Lucy Watt, Kimberley Noah, Rachel Brown, Joanna Casey.

## **Level 2 Silver: 50 – 65 credits with excellence**

Seonaid Espiner, Grace Clendon, Lucy McCrossin, Caitlin Sisson, Tessa Brownlee, Rebecca Chapman.

## **Level 3 Excellence Certificates: 50 credits with excellence**

Michelle Doherty, Clare Latimer, Ella Lynch, Haley Mercer, Rachel Piper, Bethany Entwistle, Kim Moodie, Amy Rose Pfeifer.

## **Scholarships**

Salome Lennon, as a Y12 student, was awarded a Scholarship in English.



**Back Row (L-R)** Grace Clendon, Paulien Martens, Lucy Watt, Salome Lennon, Caitlin Sisson, Joanna Casey  
**Front Row (L-R)** Tess O'Malley, Seonaid Espiner, Amy Rice, Nicole Radburn, Kimberley Noah, Rachel Brown

## MĀORI ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

This year, Eliza King (Year 12) received the Iho Pūmanawa award for academic achievement by a student of Māori ethnicity. The award was presented by Bob Te Miha. Iho Pūmanawa refers to a gifted person of great talent and cleverness, this comes from one's ancestors and can be passed on to their descendents.

Eliza was also awarded a Villa Gold award for her success in gaining 80 plus credits at excellence in Level 1 NCEA.



# A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

Villa Maria College has recently purchased new Video Conferencing equipment that is set to further enrich learning at the College. With the click of a button, experts from around the world can become part of a classroom lesson. In the photograph, Years 7 & 8 students are linked to Te Papa Museum in Wellington and communicating with a scientist who is performing a dissection of a giant squid!

This form of two-way, ultra-fast communication has a multitude of applications that the College intends to use to its full potential. Students can link up with other classrooms from around the globe and collaborate on common topics while also immersing themselves in another culture. Live talks, experiments, speeches, lectures and presentations are just the beginning for the modern learning era.

Video Conferencing equipment also allows schools to deliver quality learning to other schools. Many primary and intermediate schools do not have specialist staff to deliver some subjects, particularly in the field of languages. A teacher of German or science can now teach a class via video link without leaving her/his own classroom. The possibilities are endless.

Villa Maria College would like to thank the Canterbury Community Trust for their donation toward this equipment.



## HANDS ON SCIENCE

A group of budding Villa scientists used their January holiday time to travel to Otago University for a feast of science. Each year, Otago University organises the 'Hands on Science' programme which aims to demonstrate, in a friendly and interactive environment, some of the activities that scientists are involved in. They hope to encourage talented young New Zealanders to consider science as a career.

Over 244 young people from around New Zealand attended the programme and were treated to practical sessions ranging from anatomy through to zoology. Jane Smith, a Villa Year 12 student was excited about the possibilities the 'Hands on Science' programme gave her. "I'm now able to see the opportunities available for a career in science. It also helped me to narrow down the areas that interest me, and above all it was so much fun!"



Left - right: Olivia Dixon, Kate Radburn, Caitlin Pugh, Lucy Watt, Nicole Radburn. Front: Elizabeth Viteetarm

Special thanks must go to the Riccarton Rotary Club who funded a proportion of the girls' travel expenses. We are most grateful for their continued support of this fantastic opportunity for our students.

## BLOOMING BIOLOGY



In a first for Villa Maria College, Lucy Watt (Year 13) has studied her way to the final round of the prestigious New Zealand International Biology Olympiad.

The Olympiad aims to identify and support New Zealand's most talented young secondary school biologists, and foster academic excellence in Biology.

The programme runs over 11 months and involves an entrance examination from which the top students participate in online training with a team of experienced biology educators. Another exam follows and a select group of students are invited to a 10 day residential training camp.

The programme culminates in the selection of the top four secondary school Biology students who are the winners of the National Competition. These four students represent New Zealand at the International Biology Olympiad (IBO) which will be held in Taiwan this year.

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## DANCING WITH THE STARS

Lauralee Mather (Year 11) is Villa's very own 'Dancing with the Stars' extraordinaire. Late last year Lauralee and her ballroom dance partner won two national titles at the NZ Youth Dancesport Championships. This is no mean feat for such a young dancer competing against 55 other couples!

Such success doesn't come without many hours of practice. Lauralee is under the watchful eyes of three coaches, one for each of her specialty dance genres: Ballroom, Latin and New Vogue. She practises five times a week for up to 2 hours a night but says she never tires of dancing. "I just love it," says Lauralee. "It's so much fun as well as great exercise and it gives me an opportunity to dress up in beautiful gowns and dresses!"

Who knows, it might not be long before we see our own Lauralee Mather 'Dancing with the Stars'.



# SPORTS SUCCESS

## ROWING

The Villa Maria College Rowing Club had a very successful 2011 Maadi Cup campaign. 17 of our 18 rowers, who were selected to compete, progressed to A finals. We congratulate all these crews and in particular our Silver and Bronze medalists. The Under 17 coxed quad won silver and the Under 17 coxed four won Bronze. Both boats were made up of the same crews – see photo.



Left to right: Tess Maitland, Simone Woodford, Sophie Shingleton, Tara Moore, Katie Middleton-Tansey (cox) and Duncan Holland (Coach).



**Sophie Shingleton (Year 13)** was accepted into the Academy Canterbury Talent Xcelerator Programme which aims to support and enhance performance for aspiring and elite athletes.

## FOOTBALL

**Mikayla Wieblitz (Year 10)** has been selected in the Mainland Pride Senior Women's Football Team, which competes in the National Women's Youth League. The team is predominantly made up of Under 20 year olds with Mikayla being the youngest member of the squad. This is a fantastic achievement and we wish Mikayla well for the rest of the season.



## ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Laura Smith (Year 11)** performed exceptionally well at the New Zealand Secondary Schools' Athletics Championships in Hastings in December 2010 – she was placed 2nd in the Junior 800m with a time of 2.17.10. A fantastic effort!



## BASKETBALL

**Beth Wyatt (Year 13)** competed in the New Zealand Koru Development Basketball Team in January this year. We are very proud to announce that she has now been named in the New Zealand Under 18 Team. They are to compete in the Australian Junior National Championships in Tasmania. This is a wonderful achievement and we wish Beth all the best for this tournament!



# CLASS OF 1980 REUNION

*"Life had taken us in different directions; some had travelled, some had married, some had fabulous careers, some had sad circumstances, so many differences and yet in essence we were just the same." Leanne Brookes (VMC 1980-1984)*

After walking out the gates of Villa Maria College for the last time almost 30 years ago, Leanne Brookes and a group of her school friends decided to rekindle memories and organise a reunion.

"We started planning a year ago," said Leanne. "Our small committee (aka Villa wine group) would meet monthly and enjoy a meal together before getting down to business."

After 30 years it was a challenge to track down the class of 1980.

Trying to find past pupils was like being on a 'Sherlock Holmes' case. Progress was made through existing contacts along with the Villa Maria Past Pupil database and Facebook. "We ended up having a fantastic turnout with 45 joining us for a weekend of laughter and reminiscence," said Leanne.

The reunion began on Friday night of Labour Weekend and involved a mix of socialising together throughout the weekend. A real highlight was the tour of Villa Maria College conducted by Sr Maureen George. "She was

fantastic and we had so much fun going back through old haunts and sharing stories," said Leanne.

The class of 1980 reunion was a great success and as Leanne comments, "there is something to be said for the special character of Villa Maria College. After many years apart from those we went through the teenage years with, friends we shared so much with, we realised that these are lifelong friendships made at school."



## PAST PUPILS SNIPPETS

**Kathy Bell (nee Brunel – VMC 1970 - 1971)**

Kathy is the Principal of Weedons Primary School in Selwyn, Canterbury. After leaving Villa, Kathy trained as a primary school teacher at Christchurch Teachers' College. She taught at Twizel Primary School before marrying and moving to a farm in Kirwee. She left teaching and began a family of four boys. "There was no chance of re-connecting with Villa through my children," she says.

When her sons were school age she taught in country schools around the Malvern, Ellesmere area. Kathy taught the new entrants at Weedons Primary School for 12 years and absolutely loved it! She became deputy principal of the Junior School, then acting principal and then four years ago was appointed principal.

Kathy says that her fondest memories of Villa include the Masses held in the hall. "I recall the beautiful singing of the sisters and funnily enough the cleaning of the windows with newspaper and vinegar has stuck with me! Looking back, I believe some of my success can be attributed to my time at Villa. I felt a real sense of comradeship; the teachers instilled a feeling of self-worth in us and crafted a caring community."

Kathy says it is lovely to send some of her Weedons Primary School students off to Villa and know that the things she cherished under the care of the Sisters of Mercy are still a large part of the school.

**Hannah Blair (VMC 2005 - 2009)**

Hannah Blair never dreamed that she would be the recipient of a \$25,000 scholarship to pursue a career she adores.

During Hannah's last year at Villa she joined the College Gateway Programme and was placed at the Copthorne Hotel Commodore for eight weeks work experience. "I'd always loved the idea of getting in to the hospitality industry but I didn't know where to start." Hannah proved herself to be a valuable staff member at the Copthorne Hotel Commodore and was offered work there when her placement ended.

It was during this time that her manager suggested she apply for a new hospitality based scholarship called SixStar. SixStar provides scholarships to people passionate in the industry who are wishing to further their skills and knowledge. After successfully securing the scholarship, Hannah enrolled in the Queenstown Resort College; a renowned training provider for those who want to prosper in the hospitality industry.

"Without the Gateway Programme, I would not be here in Queenstown and fulfilling my dream," says Hannah. "I am very grateful to Mrs Macquet, Carmel, Tegan and Sonia who worked hard to get this programme up and running."



# PAST PUPILS



## Dr Rebecca Warr (VMC 1993 - 1997)

Rebecca is a successful and respected research scientist. Upon leaving Villa she studied at the University of Canterbury gaining a B.Sc (1st Hons), majoring in Chemistry. Her impressive academic record did not go unnoticed and in 2002 she was the recipient of an Australian National University scholarship; this enabled Rebecca to complete a PhD at the Research School of Chemistry in Canberra.

Following her PhD, she worked as a Postdoctoral Scientist at the University of Nottingham, U.K., leading a team of scientists developing reagents for the transport of precious metal chlorides for industrial applications.

Rebecca has been the recipient of a variety of scientific awards including the Don Stranks Award for outstanding performance in research with a PhD candidature. Her academic research has resulted in publications in both Angewandte Chemie and Inorganic Chemistry.

At present, Rebecca is the Research and Technical Support Manager for Izon, a company that provides the world's most comprehensive nanoparticle analysis system in a single instrument.



## Julia Rutherford (VMC 2002 - 2008)

Julia has recently returned from an exchange to the University of California in San Diego. She swapped her studies in Media, Communications and Political Science at the University of Canterbury for a four month American adventure.

The sheer size of the University of California struck Julia when she first arrived. "It was at least five times the size of Canterbury," she says. "On the whole I found American students very hard working due to the more competitive environment of the university over there and the shorter semester time."

Julia lived with five American flatmates who had fun trying to copy her Kiwi accent and like most other Americans, only knew about New Zealand through Peter Jackson, Lord of the Rings and Flight of the Conchords! While studying at the University of California, Julia completed an internship at the renowned La Jolla Playhouse working in the Public Relations Department. "I had a great time and was privileged to be part of the early progress of the work being done on the debut of the Little Miss Sunshine musical they are performing there this year."

At the end of her four months of study, Julia planned a trip around America visiting Disneyland, San Francisco, Omaha, Chicago and New York. "These places were all amazing," she says. However it was New York that stole her heart. "The culture, the vibrancy of the city and every neighbourhood's individual style definitely makes it the city that never sleeps and the city that I didn't want to leave."

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# A TREASURED LEGACY

At prize giving each year, a Villa student walks proudly across the stage to accept the Mary Ryan Memorial Prize. The prize is reserved for a diligent, cheerful, willing student who makes the most of her ability.

This is a particularly special prize that has been gifted by the family of Mary Ryan; a popular student at Villa Maria College and boarder between 1959-62. Mary was completing her nursing training when she was killed in a car accident in 1966. Her family wished to recognise the significance that Villa Maria College had played in Mary's life and as such, donated the Mary Ryan Cup and prize.

*"Everyone loved Mary, and those who knew her more intimately admired her deeply as well. Words are poor currency for paying tribute to the girl that she was. How can they convey that gaiety that bubbled over so often into laughter, the courage that carried her so gallantly through disappointment, the gift of friendship, the value she placed on people for their own sake, the taste for good order and the thousand other intangibles that made Mary Ryan 'someone special' always."*

Villa Maria Magazine 1966



Mary was a treasured member of the Villa community. Those who knew her often speak of her warm, generous personality that captured their hearts. She excelled academically and was a top netballer, swimmer and athlete. Mary's obituary in the 1966 Villa Maria magazine offers readers a glimpse of the huge influence she had on others.

It is a privilege to be able to remember Mary Ryan each year at our College prize giving. Her legacy of service, kindness and excellence lives on in the new generation of Villa Maria girls.

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# VILLA GIRLS FOR WORLD CHANGE

A desire to give to others inspired Nicole Smit and Jess Orpwood to embark on an adventure that would change their world view forever.

April 2010 was an extremely hot one for the two Villa Maria College leavers who ventured to Samoa as volunteers. Their mission was to help Sister Anna (Villa's past Head of Religious Studies), at Paul VI College in the village of Leulumoega, approximately 45 minutes from Apia.

We asked Nicole Smit to share some of her experiences with us for this edition of VMail.

## What were your first impressions of Paul VI College?

The facilities were very basic, just the necessities, and sometimes not even that. We were lucky to have flushing toilets at school although whenever the power went out (which was quite often, one week it went off between 9am and 1pm everyday), it meant the toilets didn't flush. The children were absolutely lovely, and they were all so welcoming towards us. Everyone was wearing a uniform, but you could see that some of the students had only ever had one uniform - very worn and often too small. There was quite a good range of subjects taught.

## What were you required to do each day?

The days started off with Mass at 5:30am, apart from when it was at 8am on a Sunday! Then after breakfast it was time to go to school. To start with we just helped the teachers in the classrooms explaining things to students who didn't understand and needed help. By the end of our stay we were taking classes on our own, it was lots of fun! During the day, if we weren't in the classroom, we were doing odd jobs around the school like organising the sports cupboard, creating an electronic copy of the school role, making ID cards for all the students and creating a database of everything the school owned.

## What were some of the special moments during your stay?

A few weeks after we arrived, the school celebrated 'English Day.' This is where all the school Houses did a performance in English. It was great to see them all on stage having a fun with their friends. Another joy was being there for the Independence Day celebrations and seeing how much pride everyone has for their country. Going to the airport to welcome the Sevens Team home after they had won the world championships was fantastic, it was packed with supporters and everyone was so incredibly proud of them. I was also fortunate enough to be able to join the choir and have the opportunity to sing at a traditional Samoan wedding.

## On reflection, what were some of your greatest realisations?

Knowing that material possession mean absolutely nothing. The people in our village had hardly anything and have an incredibly hard life, but they are definitely the happiest and friendliest people I have ever met in my entire life. I never saw anyone without a smile on their face and they were always waving and smiling at you, even when you were just driving past them on the road and you have never seen them before.

## Do you want to encourage other Villa Girls to take up this opportunity?

I 100% encourage anyone who ever has an opportunity like this to take it without a second thought. I had such a wonderful time.



## VILLA MARIA COLLEGE OPEN DAY

Tuesday 17th May, 9:00am – 3:30pm, 21 Peer St, Christchurch, Ph: 348 4165, [www.villa.school.nz](http://www.villa.school.nz)

LEARN TO PRIZE WHAT IS OF VALUE

Villa Maria College is a decile 9 Catholic girls' college.

We extend a warm invitation to prospective parents and students to join us throughout the day and see our College in action.

Meet our staff and students and find out what makes Villa Maria College such a special place.

Mary Lynch (principal) will address visitors in the College Auditorium at 9:30am, 11am, 1pm and 2,15pm.

We look forward to seeing you.



# CREATING HABITATS

Villa Maria staff member Kate Watson had an unconventional summer holiday. She seized the opportunity to serve others and work for Habitat for Humanity in Fiji. Habitat for Humanity is a Christian non-profit organisation that works to eliminate sub-standard housing on a global scale.

Kate spent two weeks in a small village called Wailevu on Vanua Levi which is on one of the two main Fijian Islands. After flying for an hour to the Island, the Habitat for Humanity team, made up of seven other Kiwis, drove 4.5 hours in an overland truck on a gravel/mud road.

## The Work

“Our task was to build small houses for the families worst hit by cyclone Tomas in 2009,” said Kate. “Habitat was working with the Fijian government to complete very basic structures with corrugated iron roofs and no lining or internal divisions inside. The homes had no toilets or showers and yet the families of the village were overjoyed. On completion of one of the houses we named it “Kia Kaha” and presented the keys to the family – this ceremony was quite emotional for them and us. They were so grateful and a feast of pork was to be had – pig heart and pork with skin and hair still attached!”

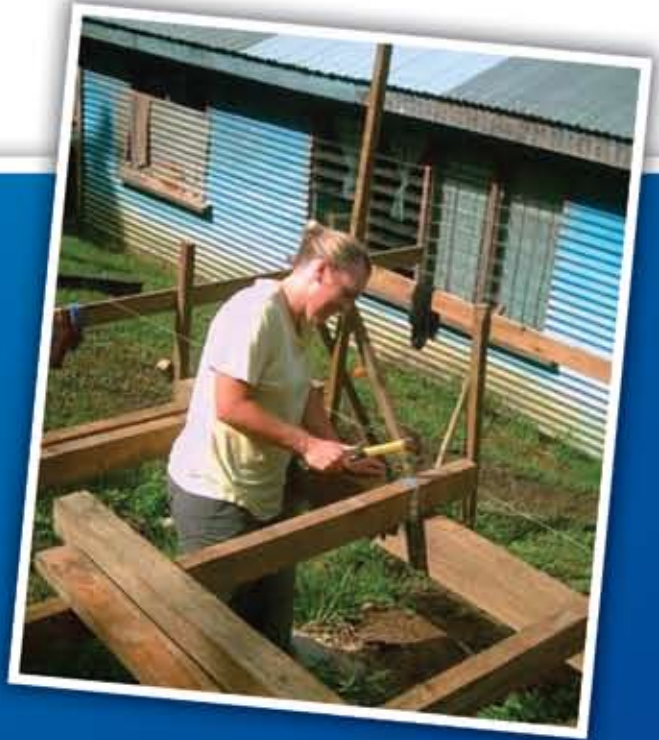
The Habitat team worked from 8am-5pm each day and were housed in the local hall. They were the lucky ones with running water and flush toilets along with a cook who fed them lovingly. Even though the days were long and the accommodation rudimentary, Kate was humbled by the generous spirit of the Fijians who never seemed to stop smiling, and yet they had so little.

## A School Visit

While in Fiji, Kate was taken to visit a local school; an experience she will never forget. “The stark contrast between their school and ours was quite overwhelming,” comments Kate. “I saw a photocopier and very little else; there wasn’t a text book in sight. The rooms had concrete floors, minimal displays and chalk boards. The Principal mentioned the one thing they would dearly love is a computer. Some children had never heard of the internet! The Government allocates \$30 per student per year in funding. How privileged we are and yet we take so much for granted.”

## Life Learning

Kate is truly grateful to the Riccarton Rotary Club for so generously and kindly donating money to support her trip. She says that volunteer work is something she has always wanted to do. “We could all learn a great deal from this beautiful group of people who are our neighbours. I felt more self-worth in two weeks than a life-time here in NZ!”



“We could all learn a great deal from this beautiful group of people who are our neighbours”

*Kate Watson*

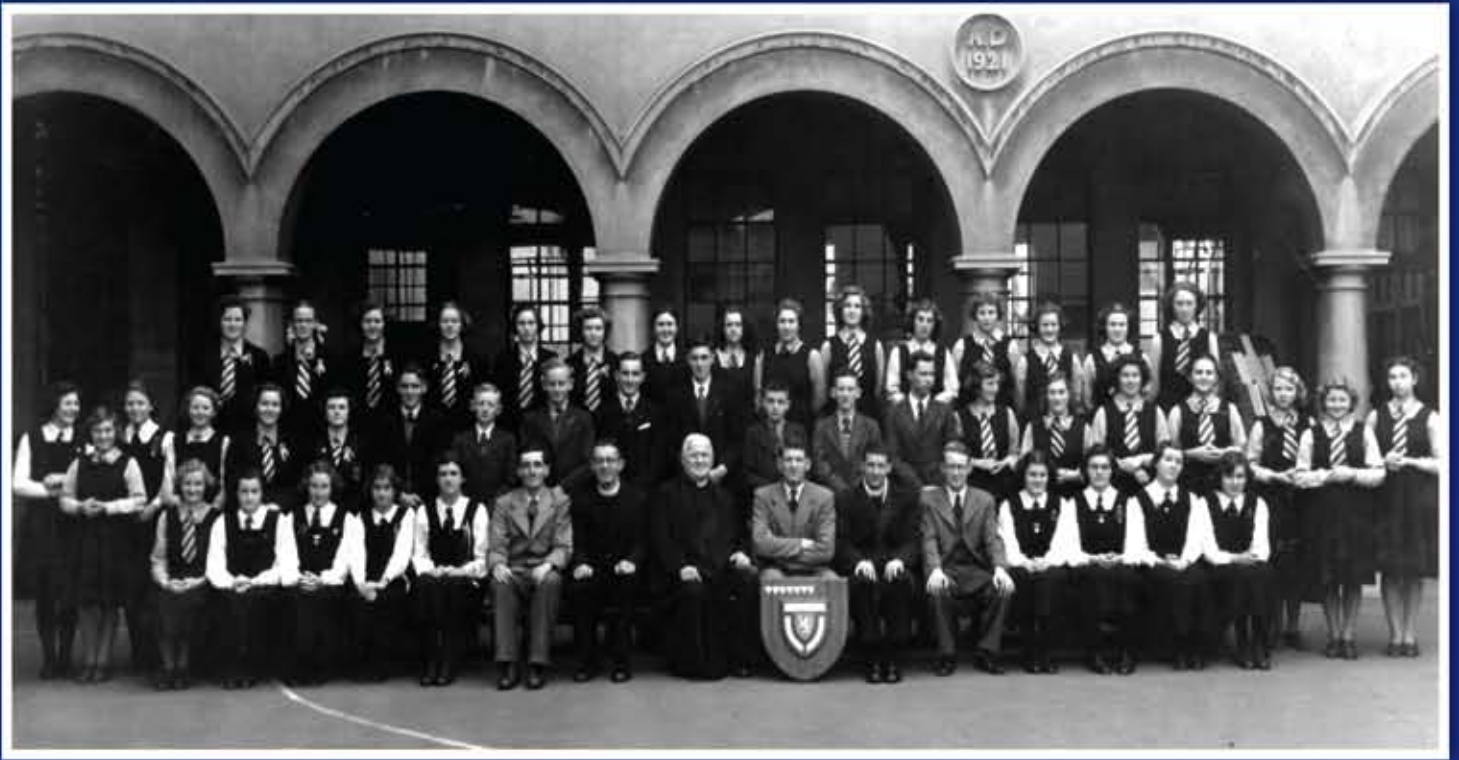


# MEMORIES...

We were delighted to receive a series of photographs from Mary Stuart (nee Flanagan) who is a past pupil. Mary is now 76 and attended Villa Maria College between 1945 and 1950.

In her 3rd form year Mary boarded at Villa and slept on the outdoor balcony in the old Boarding School. "I can remember pulling down the canvas blinds in an attempt to keep some of the chill out at night," she recalls.

One of the photos sent to us by Mary Stuart is the 1949 Bishop Lyons' Shield Challenge. The Villa Maria Debating Team won the shield this year. Other schools featured in this photo include: Sacred Heart Convent, Timaru; St. Patrick's High School, Greymouth; St. Bede's College, Christchurch; Xavier College, Christchurch; Sacred Heart College, Christchurch; St. Mary's College, Christchurch.



## **Villa Maria Team Members**

*Back Row on right hand side with blouses and ties out – Left to Right: Alice Gordon White (Verse Speaking), Margaret Stopforth (Table Tennis), Beth Lennon (Religious Questions & impromptu Speaker), Mary Flanagan (Leader- Debating), Jennifer Wills (2nd Speaker- Debating), Judith Lattimore (Oratory).*

## **Supporters**

*Middle Row on right hand side with blouses and ties out – Left to Right: Helen Robinson, Gwyneth Hawker, Annette Robinson, Mary McGarva, Jennifer Forbes, Marie Hawker, Eileen Flannigan.*

## **CAN YOU HELP?**

There are ways that the wider community of Villa Maria College may like to help build the College archives. Perhaps you have memorabilia in the form of old uniforms, badges, magazines, or formal photos (with names if possible) that you would be prepared to donate to the College. We can scan photos and return them if you would prefer. We would also appreciate your help in identifying past pupils in photos that we print in each edition of Vmail.

You may also like to tell other past pupils about the archive project and the VMail newsletter. Please encourage them to make contact with the College.

Sister Maureen George is in charge of the College archives and can be contacted by email – [mge@villa.school.nz](mailto:mge@villa.school.nz) or by phoning the College Office – (03) 348 4165

# PAST PUPILS' ASSOCIATION

## DEAR PAST PUPILS

Dear Past Pupils

A new Committee was elected at the Biennial Meeting held October 2010. This Committee is: **Secretary:** Joan Maria Peoples **Treasurer:** Mary O'Brien, Mary Lynch, Janice Torrance, Clare Yardley, Nicola Anthony and Debbie Franks is back with her valuable skills and myself as **President**. Thanks to all for their continued support.

Our Leavers' Breakfast was a great success; our 140 guests tell us it is a lovely part of their year. The committee do a wonderful job.

2009 Leavers' Dinner was a change this year- less formal with a pizza meal, because of the 'good turnout', we could manage 2 Study Grants, congratulations to Amy Morahan and Louise Densie.

Good luck girls, I am sure you will use them well.

We have had several 'Class Get Togethers' since last Vmail.

Labour weekend 2010 saw Leanne Brooks' team enjoy a super weekend as you will read in this edition. Class of '54 had a lovely day with Sister M. Leonie on the occasion of her 80th Birthday – eating, praying and celebrating. Happy Birthday Sister, God bless you. This Class also hosted a lunch when many, including girls from overseas, met 61 years after Form 3. Lovely, keep it up girls. These reunions are wonderful; the memories so special, we are making history, and our grandchildren love to hear about these and know their Nanas and Grandmothers were special- Villa Girls, Mercy women. So make the effort, keep the spirit alive, enjoy life and talk about it.

Finally, thank you to my committee for your past 2 years and beyond and here we go again.

Please remember our sick and dying in your prayers.

God Bless you all,  
Madeleine Hoadley-Currie



## PAST PUPILS' ASSOCIATION

President - Madeleine Hoadley-Currie (03) 548 1331

Treasurer - Mary O'Brien (03) 332 1582

Secretary - Joan-Maria Peoples (03) 339 4161

Address for all correspondence:

c/- 21 Peer St, Upper Riccarton, Christchurch 8041

E-mail: villa@villa.school.nz

## 2011 DATES TO REMEMBER

**Please include these dates into your diaries.**

### Mid-Winter Luncheon

Christchurch Casino Sunday 19th June, 12noon

RSVP 13th June to Villa, ph. 33484165 or

Email: villa@villa.school.nz

### Mercy Celebrations Top of the South

Nelson this year. 17th-18th September

If sufficient interest the College mini bus is available, please contact the College for details.

### Leavers' Breakfast

To be Confirmed

### Committee Meetings

College Staffroom 7pm

25th May, 27th July, 26th October

All members welcome.

### Fifth Fridays at Chateau on the Park

5pm onwards, a time to catch up with old friends, partners welcome.

Come for a drink or stay for dinner.

**Dates:** 29th April, 29th July, 30th September 2011



## OBITUARIES

We would like to honour our past pupils who have passed away and especially think of Helen Chambers (nee Johnston) VMC 1980 - 1984 who was killed in the February earthquake. We also remember with fondness our College Kaumatua Ramari Brennan who passed away in April. Please remember those who have lost loved ones and pray for our sick, especially our Sisters of Mercy who have been associated with Villa Maria through the years. Our thoughts are with the Sisters as they mourn the death of Sr Akanete, Sr Mary Rose, Sr Teresa O'Connor (Sr Francesca) Villa Maria Principal 1967 - 1972.



Sr Teresa O'Connor

## Subscription for Villa Maria Past Pupils' Association

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Christian Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Started College: \_\_\_\_\_ Finished College: \_\_\_\_\_

SEND TO: The Treasurer, VMPPA, 21 Peer Street, Christchurch 8041 | ENCLOSE: Annual subscription: \$15 • 10 years: \$70 • Life Membership: \$130