

ACADEMY OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

# Lauralton Hall



*Congratulations Lauralton Hall swim for being the 2021 Class S Runner Up finishing with a solid 2nd place finish behind Weston. Claire Kehley is the state champion in the 500 freestyle and our 200 freestyle relay broke the school record. Swimmers for the relay were Ashlyn Blessey, Cee Begg, Jaiden Johnson, and Claire Kehley.*





## A LETTER FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL

At Lauralton, we take pride in giving our girls more and—in turn—witnessing them becoming so much more! For example, we’ve rolled out new signature programs for four consecutive years:

- [2018 First Year Experience](#)
- [2019 Math Center](#)
- [2020 Financial Intelligence](#)
- [2021 the Publications Suite—see story in this issue.](#)

As I like to say, we may reside at 200 High Street in Milford, but Lauralton truly lives at the intersection of tradition and innovation.

We are grateful for the generous support of Jen and Peter Harding P’21 of Fairfield, without whom we could not have completed the Publications Suite so quickly and beautifully. We continue to focus on utilizing our unique spaces while maintaining historic integrity, and in this issue you’ll see what we’ve been doing to make Lauralton Hall’s original late Victorian character shine.

Speaking of shining, please join me in giving an enormous LH cheer to our faculty and staff for their magnificent job bringing the educational resources of Lauralton Hall to our students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you, LH faculty and staff, for helping our students learn and achieve at their highest potential during very challenging academic years! You are superstars!

LH was in the spotlight October 20 when we welcomed the Mercy Education Visiting Team whose role is to observe the ways we integrate core values and the Mercy Mission in our programs and curriculum. During this once-every-six-year event, the Mercy visitors met with faculty teams, student leaders, parents, alumnae, and trustees--exchanging ideas in what was a very positive and productive multi-day visit.

In this issue, you’ll also read about other ways the LH community excels:

- Our 6th Annual Daisy Run was held October 22 at the end of Pink Week, a strong LH tradition highlighting breast cancer awareness. We are #LHproud of our students for their engagement in promoting this year’s theme of Courage & Faith to Hope & Strength.
- New to Campus Ministry this year is the Mission Team, whose goal is to shine a light on the worldwide crisis of potable water and raise \$5,000 to construct a well in a needy community.
- LH’s Jill Waldron has been an inspiration to our students for 30 years as a math and business teacher and three-season coach.

Finally, we’re proud of our Budget & Finance committee of the Board of Trustees for their careful stewardship holding tuition increases to 1.1% this year and less than 1% for 2022-2023. This is a school record — even more impressive given the rising costs of labor and pandemic-related supply chain issues. Responsible planning and management of resources is every family’s concern. And, it is of great concern to those of us as stewards of Lauralton Hall that we manage our resources so that families can continue to afford a Lauralton Hall education.

We do not make up the difference with athletics fees, National Honor Society fees, and the like. In fact it’s the opposite. We’re thrilled to have been able to offer sophomores and juniors extra ACT and SAT prep over four Sundays with a Carnegie Test Prep course saving families over \$1,000. We partnered for this opportunity with our unofficial brother school, Fairfield Prep, whose sophomores and juniors were also invited to the course as our guests.

And, just a note about our 50-plus-year relationship with Fairfield Prep. Lauralton Hall is a Mercy School, Fairfield Prep is a Jesuit school. Lauralton Hall will always be a school inspired by the Mercy Tradition, empowering young women to pursue their highest potential through lifelong learning, compassionate service, and responsible leadership in a global society. This unique Order, affectionately termed “the Mercies,” began as a group of “walking nuns,” formidably trodding the mean alleys of the socially alienated of Ireland. Their radical espousal of women’s potential was—and remains—selfless, visionary, and indefatigable! Lauralton Hall is committed to the Mercy Mission and to being an all girls’ school.

Combined with your generous support of the LH Annual Fund, we are thriving.



Elizabeth Miller, Head of School



Head of School Elizabeth Miller



*Inspired by the Mercy Core Values, Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall endeavors to create, nurture, and sustain an inclusive culture that inspires all members of our community to share life experiences from their own diverse perspectives and to gain a deeper understanding of people from different races, cultures, religions, and backgrounds.*

*Faculty and staff embrace practices that inspire young women to open their minds and hearts to others during their time at Lauralton Hall and as they embark on their journey to find their place in the world beyond our campus; we strive to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion for all and empower young women to pursue their highest potential in our global community through lifelong learning, compassionate service, and responsible leadership.*

## TOWER LEGACY SOCIETY

Signature  Program



### Have You Considered Planned Giving?

There are many different ways that you can make a planned gift. While a bequest is the most common, other options include gifts of retirement accounts, life insurance, or personal property.

Planned giving allows you to direct the allocation of your assets as you wish, in line with your personal values and interests. It can provide a legacy of ongoing income to support a variety of needs including our core academic programs and/or financial aid and scholarships.

A planned gift to Lauralton is simple, flexible and will remain confidential if you choose. In addition, planned giving may result in considerable tax advantages. We recommend that you seek counsel from your professional advisor to choose the plan that is right for you.

Donors who make a planned gift to Lauralton Hall are invited to become members of the Tower Legacy Society. Lauralton Hall began this Society to honor alumnae and friends who value our past and are committed to a partnership going forward. By including Lauralton in their estate plans, this generous group of people enables us to continue our strong tradition of academic excellence and service to others.

When you make a gift to Lauralton Hall, you become a part of a long tradition of helping to ensure the school remains in the top tier of independent schools.

Every gift matters and makes a difference in the lives of our students, each and every day. Whether you contribute to the [Lauralton Annual Fund](#), or choose to make a [Planned Gift](#), your generosity touches the entire School. From the classroom to the lacrosse field and all across campus, your gift fuels excellence at Lauralton. For more information contact:

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Photo Courtesy: Jill Waldron

## Jill Waldron is Always in Season

Jill Waldron went to an all-girls, Catholic high school, Notre Dame Academy in Waterbury, then to Stonehill College, majoring in Business Management and Computer Information Systems. She was ready for business! But coming from a family of educators she felt a calling. She went back to school to earn a Masters of Art Degree in Teaching from Sacred Heart University. After graduation, Jill was offered a permanent sub position at Lauralton Hall. And that summer she was asked to become a full-time faculty member.

Jill was hired as a business teacher, teaching accounting and typing at a time when paper and reports were done on typewriters. In her 30 years at Lauralton Hall typing morphed into “Keyboarding,” floppy discs gave way to “the cloud,” paper yielded to the digital world of Microsoft, Desktop Publishing and Access. Jill stayed current with these advances in technology to help students utilize new tools.

Certified to teach both math and business, Jill gradually absorbed math classes and currently teaches three freshmen Algebra classes, a Jr/Sr elective (Intro to Business) and senior Applications of Math and Personal Financial Literacy when she is not in the Math Center.

Being the person who “knew how to use video editing software,” Jill became the editor of the Christmas and Spring Concert videos and creates DVDs of the shows. Still serving as the videographer, the pandemic year was by far the most challenging. Yet, she continues to compile humorous and touching videos for the retiring teachers with tributes from their colleagues.

Then there were the years Jill was the yearbook moderator—1995-2003 and then again 2008-2011. That process went from cropping black and white photos with a grease pencil, to digital photos and desktop publishing with full color.

Jill was also the moderator for MSG Varsity for a few years. She ran a weekend ski trip to Sunday River for seven years. She was the moderator of the LH CARES Club (Lauralton Hall Cares And Respects Every Student) for about five years.

And when the faculty leaves for summer break, Jill serves as Summer Camp Director—a co-ed camp for kids going into K-8th grades with some programs only for Lauralton Hall incoming freshmen. It is also a great opportunity for students to earn service hours.

Jill is a three season coach currently guiding Varsity Golf, Varsity Ski Team, and JV Field Hockey, having also had previous coaching stints with Volleyball, Tennis, and JV Softball. “You can list the teams I have coached,” she says, “but when someone asks me what I coach, I say, ‘I coach young women athletes.’” Jill’s only break from coaching came when she had her first son, Collin, in the fall of 1993 and her second, Brendan, in the summer of 1996.

Finally, Jill leads The Sunshine Club for the LH faculty along with Tracie Serio and Melanie Woods. With her commitment in the classroom, on the fields, the fairways and the slopes, Jill Waldron exemplifies the Mercy mission to empower young women to pursue their highest potential.



Shades Shutters Photography

## Ministry with a Mission

Lauralton Hall has seen a busy and fruitful start to the academic year! We began with a special visit from His Excellency Archbishop Leonard Blair, celebrating our Opening Mass and ever since, LH has been bustling with service opportunities, liturgical events, and more.

New to LH this year is the Mission Team. This grew out of the Mercy Girl Effect Conference this past summer. Five students across three grade levels attended the conference in late June 2021, and were provided the opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills, network with students from other Mercy schools across the globe, and learn more about this year’s mission project—water.

Worldwide, 2.2 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water, and more than half the global population does not have access to safe sanitation. Three billion people do not have access to hand-washing facilities with soap, which is a major concern, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this year’s mission campaign, Lauralton students will explore how girls have become the water carriers for their families, which often necessitates missing school or being targeted by gangs to make the journey to the well (which can be several miles away). Students will also be invited to explore water as a human right— the Venerable Catherine McAuley herself knew the value and sacredness of water when she said “Water is a free beverage.”

The Mission Team’s five student leaders will spearhead awareness, activism, and fundraising efforts. Students from all grade levels have been invited to join the Mission Team, and over forty students have already signed up. Working in collaboration with UNICEF and Mercy sisters throughout the world, the team’s goal is to raise \$5,000, the cost to construct one well. The students are excited to make a tangible difference in the lives of young women internationally!

In addition to the Mission Team, there have been several other new initiatives this academic year, including increased student leadership in Mass. Students have been trained to be lectors, sacristans, gift bearers, and music technicians. All school liturgies are largely driven by student efforts, and involvement continues to grow.

Mercy Associate and Religion Department Chair Erin DaCosta shared, “To see our department grow and develop in light of the Mercy core values is a blessing. The spirit of Mercy is alive and well at Lauralton Hall, and our students bring life to Catherine McAuley’s mission and ministry.”



## National Honor Society: Not Just a Certificate, but a Call to Leadership

Induction into the National Honor Society acknowledges a student’s scholarship, service, leadership, and character. On October 6th, 53 Lauralton Hall juniors and seniors were recognized with induction.

At some schools, the certificate would end up in a frame and reference would appear on college applications—end of story. At Lauralton Hall, it is the beginning of story. Members are expected to be peer leaders—resourceful, good problem solvers, idea contributors, cooperative, honest, reliable, spiritual with concern and respect for others. Membership is an opportunity to hone all of those qualities.

National Honor Society girls are spearheading the Student Support Squad in the First Year Experience room after school to assist peers, especially underclassmen, with organizational skills, study skills, and communication skills. NHS girls run the Stocking Stuffer Drive and Luvs & Hugs Diaper Drive to benefit the Mercy Learning Center in Bridgeport. They run the *Food Drive* for Bridgeport Notre Dame later in the year and organize many community building events and more.

At Lauralton Hall, being inducted into NHS encourages members to take risks and forge enduring friendships, and demonstrate leadership. It is yet another step in a journey that empowers a young woman to excel in any endeavor, to find her own voice, and to be a bearer of Mercy to those in need. Many thanks to co-moderators Theresa Napolitano and Erin Pinsince.





## Preserving Our Past, Linking to Our Future

In keeping with our listing on the National Register of Historic Places and with the support of the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office ([SHPO](#)), Luralton Hall is in the process of making significant facilities upgrades. But first, some “place” history.

Originally built in 1864 as an early Victorian farm, The Pond-Taylor Mansion was known as “Island View” as it had a then unobstructed view of Charles Island from its only tower. In 1889, the property was sold to Henry Augustus Taylor, a New York financier. He added a round tower and grand veranda, richly carved Brazilian mahogany spiral staircase, massive Corinthian columns and stained glass skylight—transforming the farm into the residence of a wealthy family. Mr. Taylor renamed Island View “Luralton Hall” after his mother and deceased daughter, both named Laura. He adorned the building with laurel wreath motifs etched in glass and plaster with the Taylor family motto: “*Consequitur quod quonque petit*,” or “He attains whatever he seeks.”

In 1905 the Taylors sold the estate to the Sisters of Mercy of St. Bridget’s Convent who retained the name “Luralton Hall” at the Taylors request, the word “*Fides*” was added to the family motto so that the School’s motto became “Faith attains whatever it seeks.”

Now back to our preservation efforts. In collaboration with the National Register, we continue to bring many of our facilities back to their original historic detail; for example, with the intention of replacing the soiled carpet in the Religion Office, once the Taylors’ kitchen, we discovered its original flooring several layers down. Over Christmas break we’ll be bringing that beautiful hardwood floor and 1860s mosaic tile back to its original appearance.

Additional recent preservation progress includes:

- Pre-Pandemic, 53 windows were replaced with historic grade windows in the C Building (rehearsal space for performing arts). Due to supply chain delays, we are just now replacing an additional 192 including the front facing Gothic windows of the new Publication Suite on the 4th floor of Mercy Hall. What’s next? We await Otis’ delivery for the retrofit of the historic elevator.
- Mercy Hall west wing got new roof with insulation, and we put the final touch on the chapel refurbishment, and the original stone staircases were cleaned with diamond polishing bits. This past summer, tropical storms Elsa and Ida flooded parts of campus, turning misfortune into opportunity. We are rebuilding two oversized modern science labs opening in the Spring.
- Our Austin Organ nears its hundredth birthday. It too, received a tune up. Its last restoration was in 1996 when the pipe system was completely rebuilt through a gift by the Joseph L. Schwalje Family in honor of his wife Helen, Class of 1941. Margy Sargent, chair of the Fine Arts Department, notes “The organ in the chapel provides beautiful music to enhance the religious ceremonies held there and serves as a link from the traditions of our past to our present and into the future.”



Photo Courtesy: Elizabeth Miller

## Pretty Great in Pink!

October 18-22 was Luralton Hall’s annual *Pink Week*, in support of breast health education. Throughout the week, Luralton students learned about breast health, decked out the campus in pink, promoted awareness through art, and “got their pink on” with a dress down day. The week also culminated in the *6th Annual Mary Ann Wasil Daisy Run* on the Luralton Hall track and field.

In a special way during Pink Week, the Luralton community remembers Mary Ann Wasil, founder of the *Get In Touch Foundation* who launched the *Daisy Wheel*, an interactive, safe, and easy-to-use tool showing the eight steps for a breast self-exam—empowering all to make breast health simple, appropriate, and routine. LH was the first school in the world to share the daisy wheel.

[Read more](#) about Mary Ann Wasil, whose daughter Betsy Nilan (pictured here) now serves as president of the *Get in Touch Foundation* which has distributed over 1,000,000 *Daisy Wheels* globally.

*The Daisy Run* event featured a presentation by Betsy Nilan followed by a run/walk on the LH track where 400 participants celebrated the theme “Courage & Faith to Hope & Strength.” The week raised funds to support the [Get In Touch Foundation](#) and the [Norma F. Pfriem Breast Cancer Center](#).

## ALUMNAE WEDDINGS

Signature  Program



Shades Shutters Photography

We are so happy for our alumnae who were able to safely and joyfully celebrate their weddings in the Luralton Hall Chapel this past year, including Morgan Ferguson ’11 and Evan Kearney.

Are you an engaged alumna? Go to [luraltonhall.org/alumnae/weddings](http://luraltonhall.org/alumnae/weddings) for details about having your wedding Mass at your alma mater!



Shades Shutters Photography

## PUBLICATIONS SUITE

Signature  Program

### A New Signature Program

Luralton’s [Publications Suite](#) was unveiled on September 8, 2021, thanks to the generosity of Jen and Peter Harding P’21 of Fairfield. The oversized fourth floor space in Mercy Hall with its Gothic windows and vista of the front of our 25-acre campus is now refurbished for a new Signature Program, our Publications Suite for use by the School’s yearbook staff, newspaper staff, literary magazine staff, and for graphic design coursework. The graphic design course taught by Art Teacher Matt Rossetti will enjoy this new educational space starting with the spring semester. The class uses technology in creating original and innovative artwork while challenging the student in visual problem solving with a focus on creating strong design.

A little-known history: This space has been vacant and unused since 1945! It was known then as the Angels Room - a dormitory where the Sisters of Mercy cared for young girls who had lost one or both parents. Over the last 70 years it had become a storage attic.

*“The Board would like to congratulate the Luralton Hall Leadership Team for their vision and creativity to develop the Publications Suite. We are proud of yet another Signature Program keeping Luralton Hall on the cutting edge of education.” —Board Chair Paul Fama P’17, P’26*

“Our new Publications Suite is a space—literally and figuratively—that is incredibly important for young women who are leading collaborative teams; they are curators of information and need such dedicated space for their creativity,” explained Head of School Elizabeth Miller. “The Publications Suite will serve as a home base for our literary magazine, yearbook, and newspaper staffs.”





Photo By: Danielle Kratter

## Lauralton Hall

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## Code Hackers

On October 24, 2021, five Lauralton Hall seniors, Meghan Miller, “Cee” (Caroline) Begg, Anika Thite, Abigail Delaney, and Hailey Reed participated in the Fairfield University Hackathon virtual event for high school seniors. These girls study AP Computer Science Principles with Ms. Danielle Kratter.

Using quantitative and qualitative data from the CDC, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and other public sources such as the US Census Bureau, each school’s team was tasked with developing an evidence-based digital-first solution that would address the opioid epidemic.

After the 3-hour competition, Lauralton Hall took first place! The team won a cash prize of \$1,200 divided among the team and \$6,000 per student in scholarship money for anyone attending Fairfield University Engineering. Congratulations, Lauralton!

Please keep us up-to-date on your latest moves at:

[\*\*LAURALTONHALL.ORG/MYINFO\*\*](https://lauraltonhall.org/myinfo)

For a list of Lauralton loved ones who have passed away in the last year, please visit:

[\*\*LAURALTONHALL.ORG/INMEMORIAM\*\*](https://lauraltonhall.org/inmemoriam)



Mercy  
Education

Courageous Action. Selfless Spirit.™

Lauralton Hall is a sponsored ministry of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and is a member of Mercy Education.