



MERCY COLLEGE ALUMNI

Where are they now?

Introducing:

*Silvana Mirabelli
(nee Valesecchi)*

Class of 1989

Hello Silvana!

*Thank you
for sharing your story!*



Did you set out with a career plan?

Whilst 30 years can seem an eternity to some, particularly young women that are yet to head out into the world, I don't think the passing of time has changed the feelings of uncertainty, confusion and indecision that can all too often be a part of the process of choosing a career path. Like many young people today, I had many ideas of what I thought I may want to do, and yet where I have ended up and the joy it brings me on a daily basis, I would not have thought as I roamed the college grounds 3 decades ago.

It's really important for the young people out there, making these decisions and weighing up their choices, as we all did all those years ago, not to become too bogged down and consumed by the pressure to make THAT right decision and choice. There is ALWAYS a plan B.



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I began by completing a Bachelor of Arts at La Trobe University and worked in the community corrections sector for a short while, initially thinking that I was really interested in a career that involves the law. It seems life had different plans though, and after working in the family business for a few years my attention was redirected to the education sector. I began a Postgraduate degree in Primary teaching at ACU and transferred to the Masters (Primary) course after the first year. I graduated with my Masters as well as a Graduate Diploma in Religious Education and have worked in this field since. To me, my profession is a very rewarding privilege. It truly is an honour to be entrusted by parents with the care and education of their children. I always say, to be a great teacher you need to be able to love other people's children as your own!

Through its peaks and troughs, life has not let me down, it has delivered impressively.

What are the special milestones with regards to career, family, travel?

Elio and I were married in 2000 and travelled to Europe, anticipating that this opportunity would not present itself again for a while once our family grew. AND grow it did! We welcomed three beautiful girls in the span of exactly three years.

As a family we made many regular trips to Rye as our choice of change, until 2015, when we began to venture overseas with the girls in tow. The USA and Mexico were our first adventures as a family visiting places of fabulous historical and political significance and great rest and relaxation and entertainment value. (New Orleans, Boston, New York, Florida and Cancún). In 2017, Hawaii was our destination and Bali in 2018. Travelling is always an enriching experience that adds value to all aspects of life. I am fortunate and grateful to have had these opportunities.





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Today, you are a parent of daughters who attend Mercy College. Did your daughters attend activities at the College when at Primary School? What were the benefits?

Over the years, as life happened, I lost my connection to the College. You walk away when you graduate thinking that your job here is done. My back was turned but a short while because in the blink of an eye we were thinking about and discussing high school options for our girls.

Our college offers some great opportunities for families in the community to get a taste and feel for the school. Kitchen Kapers is one such event organised for grade 4 - 6 children to have some cooking fun on the school grounds, with an opportunity to engage with some of the school staff.

My girls became familiar with the college, the grounds and the staff and began to develop a connection with the college through KK.. For me it was an eye-opening opportunity to see how much change and progress the school had undergone since I was a student here. From this point there has been an overwhelming sense of pride and a desire to be involved in whatever capacity possible to be a part of the continuing growth of our college.

How did your girls find the transition from primary school to Mercy and what special opportunities has the school provided for them?

All three girls are now at Mercy College and their transition has been a smooth and seamless experience. The college offers so many great opportunities for all its students, they just want to be a part of it all. There are numerous and varied leadership roles that the girls can apply for, there are many different sport activities and competitions throughout the year that they can try out for, there is a sensational music program that continues to grow exponentially with a variety of different bands and ensembles, private and paired tuition, you name it, it's there!



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My girls play guitar, clarinet and flute and have joined the college band and respective ensembles, they do private music lessons at the college and have recently had the opportunity to sit music exams. Their music experience has certainly had a positive impact on their academic performance, particularly in mathematics.

The college also contributes in as many ways possible to support and further its students' passions in whatever capacity they can. For my girls, it has been their rowing. The girls have been blessed with many successes in the sport at regional, state and school levels of competition and Mercy has been there to encourage and recognise them in their journey, even designing for them Mercy rowing uniforms for school competitions.



Julia year 7, Elissa year 8, Jessica year 10, are all incredibly different from one another both socially and academically and yet the level of support and extension they have required has always been met with diligence, accuracy and flexibility. I put these positive experiences down to having a great partnership with their teachers and college leaders. It is not always easy to have certain conversations but working as a team to achieve the common goal of helping these girls to flourish, grow and achieve only happens when as parents and teachers, we speak the same language.

Describe your involvement with Mercy College as a member of the School Advisory Board.

The School Advisory Board is a great opportunity for members to bring onboard their expertise and experience to strengthen the decision-making process of the strategic development of the school. Board members also work towards ensuring that the needs of the students are being met. This is a great opportunity to work alongside both staff and students in a process that offers collegial collaboration and transparency. The board meets twice a term throughout the year to review policies and particularly data that ensures that programs and services offered, effectively support primarily students as well as their families.

Upon reflection, I think I came to join the board due to my interest in the school on many levels. I have always asked a lot of questions and sought answers and solutions. My inquisitive nature and desire to be a contributing part of our college community steered me in the direction of the board.



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Being accepted into the board this year has been not only a humbling honour but a valued privilege. Teachers and other staff invest an incredible number of hours of their own time doing behind the scenes work that often goes unnoticed by parents and students. I know this from personal experience. This has become more noticeable to me since I joined the board and so it has given me a new level of appreciation and respect for these roles. I feel the range of skill sets, backgrounds and perspectives we bring to the table is of great benefit to the school.

What message or advice would you give to current students?

As I tell my girls, focus on your own growth, any level of growth is an achievement.

Always try your best and give it your all, because then, no matter what the outcome you know you can be proud.

Remember that school is one dimension of your life, one area, make sure you have networks both in and out of school to support you when things don't go the way you would like.

Don't underestimate the importance of having people and systems in place to pick you up and help you to keep moving in the direction that you really want.

Believe in yourself, trust what you know and have faith in your abilities.

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*"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today." - Malcolm X*

***Thank you for your insightful reflection ...***

***Diane Psaila  
Alumni President  
27<sup>th</sup> November 2019***