

# At Mercy, teen finds her voice and strengthens her faith

**By Jennifer Williams**

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High school can be a time to develop new friendships, grow academically and increase independence. Mercy High School senior Kelly Dohony did all of those things, but she also discovered something else. At the all-girls Catholic school on Northern Parkway in Baltimore City, Dohony found her voice.

Somewhat on the shy side during her years at Immaculate Conception School in Towson, the curly-haired blond teen with blue eyes really came into her own at Mercy.

Dohony, 18, participated in a range of clubs and assumed various leadership positions such as serving as Mercy's representative on the Archdiocesan Youth Advisory Council.

Dressed in a grey uniform skirt, white button-down shirt and red Mercy blazer, the Church of the Nativity, Timonium, parishioner talked about how she also became more confident in her faith.

"It wasn't until sophomore year when it really clicked with me, how important my relationship is with God," she said, noting that she started getting more involved and coming out of her shell. "I was nervous, but now I can completely put my faith out there and no one will judge me on that."

At the start of this year she gave a speech on raising spiritual standards.

"Before I could not speak in public at all and I was terrified," said the teen. "But I did it and it was amazing. So that really helped me overcome my fear."

She attributes Rebecca Hogg, Mercy's director of campus ministries, with encouraging her to take a more active role and providing her with opportunities to grow in her faith.

Dohony's advisor, Vickie McGinty offered this observation.

"As educators, we all want to see our students blossom from young girls into young women. With Kelly, this year, I have been thrilled to see the extent of her personal growth and development. I am so happy that Kelly has come into her own, as a person of integrity, confidence and spirituality."

If it wasn't evident by the "I love Mercy" pin affixed to her blazer, Dohony will be the first to tell you how much Mercy means to her.

"It's the only school I applied to - the only place I felt at home," she said.

Although she has a sister of her own, who is a sophomore at Mercy, Dohony said she

gained several hundred new sisters.

"I like the family atmosphere and the way the girls treat each other," she said.

In addition to a slew of activities such as the literary magazine and a service club at Mercy, dancing is also a passion for the teen, who has been doing ballet, jazz and pointe for 12 years.

"It takes me away from all the stress of life and it's a great way to express my artistic abilities," she said.

Dohony plans to attend Catholic University of America in the fall, where she will major in social work and is hoping to join a dance team.

A youth minister at Nativity, Dohony thinks social work could be a great way to help people every day, she said.

This summer she is participating on a mission trip to Haiti with a handful of fellow parishioners.

"I'm very nervous but very excited," she said, noting that she will be teaching Vacation Bible School in a Catholic school.

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