

Class of 2019: Spirited scholars put on a happy face - even if it isn't always visible

Spring seasons at Maryvale Preparatory School, Sophia Antonopoulos played lacrosse, well enough to earn a scholarship to the University of Maryland, which recently won its 15th NCAA championship. In the winter, she was the point guard for its basketball team.

And before that, as leaves turned, Antonopoulos put on a Lion costume and cheered on Maryvale's fall sports teams.

Like others in Archdiocese of Baltimore high schools who have played the part of an athletic mascot, Antonopoulos is an authority on school spirit.

"I don't find myself in it (the costume) a lot," she said, "but I'm a big fan of Maryvale and its sports teams. I encompass what the costume means.

"It's a small school, everyone knows everyone. When you walk the halls, you smile at people you don't even know."

Her voice was heard loud and clear when she started a One Love Club, which educates the Maryvale community "on healthy relationships." It's affiliated with the One Love organization, which honors the late Yeardley Love, a graduate of rival Notre Dame Preparatory School who was a victim of domestic violence in 2010.

"When you go to NDP and see the field dedicated to Yeardley," Antonopoulos said, "I took it upon myself to bring more awareness to Maryvale."

She plans to major in biology and become a physician, following a path taken by several other Terps' women's lacrosse players. Having taken in a number of basketball and football games there, she's already familiar with Testudo, the Maryland mascot,

Antonopoulos entered Maryvale Prep as an eighth-grader and worships at St. Demetrious Greek Orthodox Church in Parkville.

What's in a Don?

Blessy Mbaya was a few days into his junior year at Loyola Blakefield when Logan Harvey, a member of student government, asked him to take on the persona that is a Don, in order to whip up the crowd at a forum.

"It's so much more than a knight or conquistador," Mbaya said. "It is so much more than a Spanish knight."

He put on the elaborate costume "at least 20 times" at soccer, football, ice hockey and lacrosse games, putting to use the theatrical talents that had him cast by The Blakefield Players as the sheriff in "The Front Page" and the jury foreman in "12 Angry Men."

Mbaya displayed leadership, as president of the Robotics Club, which twice went to national competitions, and the Service and Justice Club, which has gone to Camden, N.J., and the summer camp for children who are homeless in Baltimore that is sponsored by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The son of parents who came to the United States from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mbaya attended St. Ursula School in Parkville before entering Loyola Blakefield as a sixth-grader. He's headed to Loyola University Maryland to study Forensic Sciences.

Patriotic fervor

Kirstin Huggins has no qualms about taking on the persona of the Patriot, the mascot of The John Carroll School in Bel Air.

"I love representing John Carroll. I love everything about John Carroll. It's been like another family to me."

Huggins has been one of busiest members of that family.

At Stevenson University, she'll play basketball, a sport in which she was a three-year

captain for John Carroll. Huggins also played three years of varsity volleyball; was active in the school's Fellowship of Christian Athletes; a member of student government; and as a senior was co-editor-in-chief of Pacificus, the yearbook.

With a 4.3 GPA and membership in the National Honor Society; the Spanish Honor Society; and Quill and Scroll, the honor society for high school journalists, Huggins was nominated for the Black & Gold Award, the highest honor for a John Carroll senior.

Her family has done its part to boost John Carroll by hosting two international students from China.

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