

# Communicating is a passion for Bishop Walsh grad

CUMBERLAND – When it came time find a “people person” to help Bishop Walsh School get 10 new exchange students from China acclimated, school officials looked no further than Erin Mae Giles.

“It was an eye-opener for me,” said Giles, age 18. “We not only got different experiences with new people but a completely new culture.”

Giles, who was class president all four years, thrives on communication. In fact, when she attends McDaniel College in Westminster in the fall, she plans on taking public speaking and other communication-related courses.

“I have to follow my heart,” said Giles. “My favorite thing in the world is dealing with people. If I’m doing what I love, I know I’ll do a good job of it.”

Chloe Chen, a 17-year-old exchange student, described the benefits she received from getting to know Giles.

“I respect her. She is a wonderful person and so smart,” said Chen. “I admire her good attitude and she is always so positive.”

While at Bishop Walsh, Erin was a whirlwind of non-stop action.

In addition to being class president, she was National Honor Society president, Spanish Honor Society vice president, editor of the yearbook, mock trial team member and an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

The mock trial team at Bishop Walsh, which competed against private and public schools, made it to the state final four the last two years.

Even with the heavy workload, Giles found time to play on both the volleyball and tennis teams.

Creating good relationships with others is something Giles values highly.

"I feel it's important to be responsible. When you tell someone you will do something, you should definitely do it and follow through," said Giles.

Sister Phyllis McNally, principal of Bishop Walsh, has known Giles since fourth grade and has watched her become an indispensable asset to the school.

"The staff are all asking: 'What will we do when Erin Giles is gone?'" said McNally.

"We have relied on Erin quite a bit to help us out," McNally added. "She is always well prepared and organized. She has developed into a wonderful Christian woman."

Sunny Zhang, an 18-year-old exchange student, said of Erin, "I have improved my English through her. She is kind and friendly and good at working on school things."

Erin is the daughter of Mark and Mitzi Giles. She thanks many friends, relatives and educators who have helped her, but is clearly overwhelmed with gratitude when she talks about her parents. "I can't say enough about how they have impacted me," said Erin. "They have been there for me every step of the way."

At St. Patrick Church in Cumberland, where Giles is a parishioner, she is a lector and a sacristan.

When asked what friends might not know about her, Giles said, "People know that I am religious but they don't realize how much I love being the sacristan. I look forward to it each Sunday."

Erin brings it back to her passion, when asked what she has learned the most from the exchange students, "I learned to be patient and take my time. They definitely made me a better communicator."