

Mercy art program encourages creativity

Gently sponging bright shades of green and blue onto a timeline display folder for an art project at Mercy High School in Baltimore, 15-year-old Lindsay Scheve admitted art wasn't exactly her forte. But taking the required introduction to art class at Mercy has opened up a whole new world for the sophomore student.

"Taking this class has given me a new perspective," said Lindsay, a parishioner of St. Pius X in Rodgers Forge. "I've learned how colors complement one another, and I've learned to draw basic figures. I never really appreciated how difficult it is."

While the art program at the all-girls schools provides plenty of unique opportunities to cultivate the artistic talents of students who hope to pursue the arts in college, it is also focused on teens like Lindsay who might not otherwise have any exposure to drawing, painting or art history.

"I don't like students ending high school without studying the arts," said Gerardo Gomez, art program director at the school. "In all our subjects, teachers try to be active in the classroom, but there is nothing like the arts where students learn by doing."

In addition to the required introduction to arts course, the school offers electives that cover topics like painting and ceramics. An arts club under the direction of Melanie Coburn has also organized public displays of student work. A recent show of two- and three-dimensional work by Mercy students was held at Adornment Gallery in Hampden; and it was featured on local television. Some of the works were offered for sale, with the gallery owner donating 50 percent of the proceeds to Mercy High School and 50 percent to the artist.

"We try to show them the business side of being an artist," said Ms. Coburn, a Mercy graduate and professional artist who is an arts instructor at the school. Students learn about writing press releases, framing their work and other aspects of the field.

The art club's next project will involve designing and creating a product that will be

sold at the gift shop of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore.

“I consider teaching art to be a partnership between the students and myself,” said Ms. Coburn. “Art is such a personal thing. I try to get them going in the direction they want and then give them a critique as they work it through. It’s very free thinking.”