

Mount St. Mary's employee collects rare experiences

How distinctive are the experiences that Jim Hartnett has collected in his 60 years?

Try and find another on-campus carpenter who has taught in Australia, coached an Olympic champion and been honored for his good works by his employer.

For 31 years, Hartnett has cheerfully toiled and provided service for Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, making him a most worthy recipient of its 2010 Sisters of St. Francis Award, named for the religious order that served the educational mission for 100 years.

"Jim has been a humble, hard-working and devoted member of the Mount community," said president Thomas H. Powell. "He is a kind and caring person, who I submit epitomizes the four Mount pillars - faith, discovery, leadership and community."

Consider those pillars, in reverse order.

Hartnett ran a marathon in 2 hours, 41 minutes as a student at what is now Rowan (N.J.) College, and he remains a remarkably fit and productive part of his community.

An avid cyclist, he logs 140 miles a week as a member of the South Mountain Velo Club, which in 2009 raised money for an outreach that shipped 100 recycled bicycles to developing countries.

At the Mount, he has served on staff affairs and compensation analysis committees. He has been a member of the Campus Ministry Council and co-chaired its campus food drive, which benefited a local food bank.

When it comes to leadership, Hartnett coached cross country, indoor track and field and outdoor track for the Mount from 1979 until the early 1990s, when he stopped to spend weekends with his wife, Patsy, and their children, son Graeme, now 29, and

daughter Kerry, 23.

He contributed to a grand era for Mount track, which culminated at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, where Peter Rono, considered the school's second-best miler, earned an improbable gold medal in the 1,500 meters for his native Kenya.

"At one cross country meet, one coach said 'you're doing a good job,' and I laughed," Hartnett said, mindful of the God-given talent of Africa's Rift Valley that found its way to the Blue Ridge. "He gently reminded me that other coaches might have messed up the Kenyans."

On the discovery front prized by Mount St. Mary's, Hartnett spent a portion of his childhood in his parents' native Ireland. His first job out of college was for four years as a teacher and coach at the secondary school level in Australia.

Hartnett and his wife, a native of York County, Pa., settled near Gettysburg, where he began a futile search for an appropriate teaching position. Coaching at the NCAA Division II level was not the most lucrative pursuit, so he parlayed that avocation into another job with the Mount.

"Now we do more maintenance than carpentry," he says of his job.

Which takes him to Mount St. Mary's fourth pillar, faith.

"We're put on earth to do more than just make money," Hartnett said. "I believe, more and more, that we're God's hands. I don't ever feel like I've done enough. It's hard finding time to do everything you want to do."