Merici College Farewells Catherine Rey
## WHAT’S GOING ON

**UP-COMING EVENTS**

See Merici web-site for full Calendar and further details

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### COVER PHOTO

Cover image: Catherine Rey, Father Dave Callaghan and Danielle Farrell (Spirituality Captain).

### Building Futures Editorial Team:

- Year 10 Technology Class

### Merici College

Wise St, Braddon ACT 2612
GPO Box 154, Canberra 2601
Ph: 6243 4100 | Fx: 6243 4199
E: principal.merici@merici.cg.catholic.edu.au

Page 8: Enlighten Education’s programs help teenage girls decode the mixed messages they receive from the media and society.
The best of times, the worst of times…

As I write this final article for Building Futures, I am reminded of those famous lines from Charles Dickens: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”. It is indeed the best of times as I reflect on the very privileged time that I have spent in the Merici community; the worst of times as I contemplate leaving this community where I have been so happy and felt so professionally and personally fulfilled.

Merici culture….

In 2003, when I arrived as principal of Merici, I was welcomed by all and immediately felt very much at home. From the start, I was aware of the very special culture of Merici – welcoming, positive, inclusive and friendly. This comes from the commitment of all to these values and, I realised very early on, from the unique pastoral care system which creates mini families within the College, enabling a natural development of leadership, nurturing caring and productive relationships between students across the year levels and with their teacher and assisting individuals to explore their talents and gifts in a safe and supportive environment.

Over the years, I have often recounted to people my immediate reaction to this great culture that I had encountered: I warned myself to ensure that, coming as I did with lots of ideas and enthusiasm on things to “improve” and develop, I do nothing to jeopardise this unique culture. I am happy to say that I was successful in this! The culture of Merici, is one of its greatest assets, the reason people feel attracted to the community, and settle in quickly, the glue that binds us together and the catalyst that brings about positive change.

Support through hardship…

Ten years is a large part of anyone’s life! During that time at Merici, there have been many happy and exhilarating times but, equally, there have been times of great sadness and grief: where individuals and the community have faced hardship, sickness, tragedy and death. It has indeed been a measure of the community to see its reaction to these times. People have shown each other compassion and care; they have worked together to support those in need and have supported each other through grief and troubles. As principal, I have often been in the privileged position to witness moments and situations that may not be obvious to others. Time and again, I have seen members of our community – students, staff, parents – be the face of Christ to those in need. It has indeed been a very humbling and uplifting part of my time at the College.

A time of community growth…

These ten years have also been a wonderful time of growth for the community. I am so proud of the many things that have been accomplished. Beautiful buildings and updated facilities spring to mind but these are not the essence of our growth. Rather it is in programs and improvements that come about through the great leadership shown by so many students and staff in so many different ways.

I am incredibly proud of our healthy canteen, our Sustainability initiatives, the growth in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who choose us as a school and the great initiatives of the Narragunnawali group. Equally proud of our partnership with Black Mountain School and the mentoring program, the growth in the numbers of students with a disability who come to us and the way we look after them, the innovations in teaching and learning that teachers bring to the classroom in order to improve the educational outcomes for our students. I could speak of so many more… In these times when change can be so threatening, our community has been able not only to adapt to change but to thrive and grow through periods of uncertainty. This says everything about the selflessness, the optimism and the resilience of all, not to mention the sheer hard work that people are prepared to put in to make a difference.

…and of personal growth…

Not surprisingly, growth for me too! At the completely unexpected and beautiful gift to me which was the thanksgiving Mass on Angela Merici Day, I said to the girls that Angela Merici had certainly changed me as a person during my time at the College. Angela’s example is at the heart of all we do. Her wisdom and love are with us constantly, made concrete through her writings and through the actions of those around us. She encourages us to see the preciousness of every individual in our care, to love them and to care for them. Indeed, “love your daughters equally, do not have any preference for one rather than the other, because they are all children of God, and you do not know what he wishes to make of them” has become the personal benchmark for me in all of my dealings in the community – not always reached but certainly aspired to.

Thank you all…

And so, having just welcomed the Year 10 students to the Transitions Forum where I urged them to take this time to embrace the possibilities and opportunities that come to them, I can but take my own advice. It is not at all “the worst of times”; rather a time of opportunity for further growth for me – a time to leave the comfortable and the safe and “put out into the deep” in my own life’s journey.

Thank you all for your care and support of me over these years. I have been overwhelmed by the kind words and thoughts from so many in these last weeks. Thank you to the students and staff for the recent “surprise party” – the assembly that was so beautiful, so affirming – and a complete surprise!

I wish all of you every blessing. Rest assured that Merici will remain a part of me always and that I will keep all of you in my heart and prayers.

Catherine Rey
Principal
Brescia House’s charity for 2012 is United Nations Women Australia. This has been our charity since 2010 and we have been lucky enough to gather the support of the Merici community to get behind this great cause. United Nations Women Australia is an organisation that stands for gender equality; one of their main objectives being to empower women.

This year Brescia House has raised funds for our charity by coming together to run a bake sale for the Merici students while also taking part in a cupcake drive at Marist with Penola House. These fundraisers have helped raise awareness about UN Women while raising sufficient funds that we proudly donate back to the charity.

United Nations Women Australia has allowed Brescia House to become a part of their worldwide known organisation while fulfilling the duty to make the young ladies of Merici College aware of the impact this charity has upon them.

Hanna Darmody and Farrah Marolt
Brescia House Captains

CanTeen - The Australian Organisation for Young People Living with Cancer - is a national support organisation for 12 - 24 year olds who are living with cancer. The inspiration behind CanTeen is the belief that young people are better able to cope with the uncertainties of a cancer diagnosis through meeting and talking with other young people who have had a similar experience and understand exactly what they are going through.

CanTeen organises recreational days and camps for sufferers of cancer and their siblings. They help young people with cancer come together to have fun and form friendships. With many CanTeen members stating they have made friends for life. “It is just great to have fun with people who understand what you are going through. CanTeen has been invaluable for my recovery.”

Seiwa House raises money for CanTeen via our annual cupcake and ice-block sales which occur on the 28th October, CanTeen’s Bandanna Day. In addition to raising money for CanTeen, Seiwa House also offers their ’people power’ by volunteering our time to help with the packing of merchandise in preparation for CanTeen’s major fundraiser Bandanna Day.

Catherine Amesbury
Seiwa House Coordinator

Balgo House raised approximately $800 at the Biggest Morning Tea by making and selling cupcakes at a stall at recess. Our next event will be in September when we sell the daffodils that we planted in March. We will also be selling fresh daffodil stems on that day, in addition to other merchandise from the ACT Cancer Council.

Maureen Adams
Balgo House Coordinator
CAN LINE collects over 2,700 cans for St Vincent de Paul

We would like to thank everyone who contributed and/or encouraged the students to contribute to the Can Line. The St Vincent de Paul representatives were amazed with the generosity of the College. We collected over 2700 cans, a fantastic effort! We would also like to thank the students and staff who help load five cars and a trailer with cans. Special thanks to staff member Anne Curran and Year 12 student Sarah Sowry for coordinating this most worthwhile event.

Bridget Bandle
Tullow House Coordinator

Penola House has for years, in various ways, put all its fundraising efforts into raising money for Marymead. Marymead, situated at Narrabundah, is a community based not-for-profit organisation with a 43 year history of supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families. Recently Penola House ran a successful Trivia night, raising hundreds of dollars to help support this worthwhile cause. The night was impressively run by Penola House Captains Amy McAuliffe and Charlotte Egli.

Liza Laird
Penola House Coordinator
On Thursday 24 May 2012, Merici College staff, students and invited guests celebrated the Feast Day of Saint Angela Merici. This year was cause for both celebrating and thanksgiving. Father Dave Callaghan celebrated Mass with the school community and staff and students were delighted that he could join them, as Father Dave was the College chaplain at Merici for a number of years.

The Ursilines came to Australia in 1882, to continue the work of their founder Angela Merici and it is believed that as they set out from Sydney to Armidale they vowed they would, ‘challenge people to love life, have hope, be faithful and build futures more wondrous than you dare to dream’. Today, Merici College continues to live by their motto.

“To encounter God requires only one thing. Not intellectual prowess, worldly excellence, or sophisticated achievements, but simplicity.”

At the Mass, staff and students prayed especially for their Principal, Mrs Catherine Rey, who has been a true leader, offering herself to the service of all at the College, showing care and compassion to all in the Merici community. For the last ten years, Mrs Rey has been an inspirational driving force, challenging all staff and students to move forward in all areas of life in the College. As the Offertory gifts were brought to the Altar, Danielle Farrell, the College’s Spirituality Captain presented Mrs Rey with a bouquet of flowers. Student leaders from each of the College Houses also presented to the school community, beautifully painted canvasses which, when combined together, affirmed the College’s 2012 theme “be faithful”.

The readings chosen for the Mass were based upon the Book of Sirach 4: 11-18; St Paul to the Corinthians 1: 18-25 and the Gospel was from Matthew 18:1-5.10.12-14. Sirach and Corinthians teach us about the value of seeking wisdom, a gift that the Spirit of God imbues us with and if we remain faithful to wisdom, our decisions will lead us on the right path. In Matthew’s Gospel, we all reflected upon the need to be ‘like children’. “To encounter God requires only one thing. Not intellectual prowess, worldly excellence, or sophisticated achievements, but simplicity. The mark of children is not innocence; most often they are quite mischievous. It is not ignorance, for they often surprise us with their insights and thoughtful questions. Nor is it helplessness, for many of them are street wise survivors, as often seen in situations of poverty and war. The mark of a child is trust. If we put our trust in God, and not in ourselves, we will find God.” (Unknown source)

It was wonderful to gather as a united community at the Mass and afterwards staff and students shared a meal together in Pastoral Care groups.

May we all continue to be inspired by the words and actions of Saint Angela Merici.

Colette Davison
Liturgy and Ministry Coordinator
Merici College
The Merici community came together on Monday 12 June to discuss, brainstorm and deliberate what Inclusion in Action looked like at Merici College. All members of our community were invited to attend the event – parents, students and teachers.

Our afternoon began with an inspirational presentation from Dr Rhonda Faragher. Rhonda is the mother of Ruth, a Year 9 student at Merici College. Rhonda’s theme for the afternoon was “The Gift of Ruth” and she took us on her family’s journey of the joy and challenges of having a child with special needs and the role that an inclusive education played in this voyage. Rhonda’s important message was that having children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms not only benefits the child but also has positive educational outcomes for all the students in the school.

As a community we then discussed and brainstormed three key questions about Inclusive Education.

- What are the essential characteristics of a genuinely inclusive school?
- What do we see, hear and feel in a classroom where inclusive education is taking place?
- What are the attitudes and skills that the Merici community should demonstrate as an inclusive community?

The community then voted on the ideas that were brainstormed and these responses will be used to devise the Merici College’s vision and mission for Inclusion.

The key ideas that come out of our forum where -

An inclusive school was one that -

- Caters for a full range of needs.
- Values differences and accepts all people regardless of who they are.
- Is warm and welcoming.

- There is an openness to change.
- There is challenge and growth for all.
- Support and resources are available for teachers.

Our community thought that an inclusive classroom would have -

- Students working together, no student isolated.
- Engaged learning, diverse teaching methods.
- Students feeling safe in an accepting environment where all opinions were respected and valued.
- Teachers being positive role models.

The attitudes and skills that should be demonstrated in an inclusive school were -

- Understanding student’s needs and catering for them.
- Healthy relationships between students and teachers.
- A growth mindset allowing opinions and experiences of all to be heard.
- Open mindedness, patience, and a sense of humour.
- Being adaptable.
- Non-discrimination and staff trained in the required learning areas.

It was reaffirming to see so many positive sentiments being expressed through the Forum and these ideas are the starting point for future discussions.

Stephanie O’Meara
Languages and Learning Support Coordinator
As part of the Pastoral Care program a Year 9 Enlighten Education Day was organised and run by Enlighten Education. Enlighten Education’s programs help teenage girls decode the mixed messages they receive from the media and society. It helps them develop self-esteem and confidence. The purpose of this day is to inform and educate girls about important issues that affect them as young women and empower them to make appropriate decisions as they move through adolescence. The workshops delivered are designed to help girls discover their own inner beauty, manage friendships, encourage them to be discerning consumers and critical thinkers and to find their own voice and power in a complex world. Rather than telling girls what to do, the focus is on informing, inspiring and empowering them. This day not only educates the girls but allows them to have time with their peers and have some fun.
Year 9 Enlighten Day was structured into several workshops on friendships, personal safety, girl power, relaxation and self-discovery. Some of the responses from students were:

I liked learning to listen to my body and today I felt like I learned ways to stand up for myself in ways I feel comfortable. I learnt about good body image and girl power. Thanks. I love Enlighten Education.

I liked the part ‘Wake Up Sleeping Beauty’ because it was fun, engaging and very insightful. I loved the whole day. I learnt how to keep friends and how to deal with arguments, ways of protecting my personal space and the truth behind the intention of advertising products to women. It was amazing.

I liked the 10 steps to apologising or sorting problems out with friends the best. The whole day was so much fun and really interesting.

I loved all of today. It was so inspiring. I want to do something like this when I am older. I love the Enlighten Education programs.

The best thing about today is how it is so relevant to us and how we talk about real situations. I learnt to not place myself in vulnerable situations, to be more aware of my environment, that beauty is not everything and that there are very good ways I can relax myself when needed. I love this workshop!
Our bands have been particularly busy lately: They recently went to “The Pines” in Tuross for a three day music camp which was conducted over Friday to Sunday May 18-20. Fifty musicians were trained intensely by visiting music specialists and our staff, to build up a repertoire for the remainder of this year and to finalise their National Eisteddfod pieces.

On the next weekend our Junior and Senior Bands participated in the National Eisteddfod, the Junior Band won a Silver Trophy and the Senior Band won Gold. The Senior Band being the only 18 years and under group to win a gold in the 18 and under Band sections all weekend.

Last year it was the other way around, juniors won Gold and Platinum and Seniors won Silver. So it seems we are taking turns!

Mr John Thompson would like to thank you the young musicians and their parents for their hard work over the two weekends: “we appreciated that parents are closely involved with their daughters activities and must acknowledge the extra driving involved”.

For the Band camp we had a number of parents who helped us with various organisational requirements: Mrs Sue le Quesne, Aska and Paul Moir and Janet Hanratty. We are all most grateful for their helpfulness.

Merici College has now become a Music Centre of eminence because of the hard work of our full and part-time staff, our students and parents.

On the 28th June we are taking our Junior Band, Merici Strings and Merici Choir on a Safari to Goulburn and Crookwell. This will be a one day tour and our students will demonstrate their instruments and musical skills to secondary and primary students.

John Thompson
Music Teacher

In April this year, I was in Jordan on a three-week intensive course of Arabic Language and Culture. Language classes were held for 3 – 6 hours each day, 5 days a week with several hours of homework each day. In between, there was time to visit some memorable places.

Across the River Jordan, about 100 metres away, is Israel – rows of pilgrims in white, snake down to the water’s edge to the spot where Christ was baptized by John. Some bathe in the sluggish water, grey like putty. In the afternoon, I stand where Moses stood with the Israelites on Mt Nebo and pointed to the Promised Land: a hint of green in the light brown distance. How could anyone survive in the long stretch of semi-desert between here and there?

The flat, shiny key, partly wedged underneath the 2000 year old massive stone pillar shudders and then starts a rhythmical shiver up and down; deep underfoot, the earth is restless. In 726 AD it moved with such force that a thriving Roman city was completely buried under what had been a steep hill. Eventually grass grew over the new landscape and fed herds of wild goats until the 1800s when excavations began. As I step on the brilliant-white slippery stones of Gerasa’s main street, I hope that the earth will stay calm.

On a stony beach, I hold a clump of warm, black, gooey mud, the size of a cricket-ball; not sure if I want to cover myself in it like everyone else. However, to throw it away would be impolite, so I say ‘thanks’ to the man who gave it to me and start smearing it over my arms and legs. My skin will be as ‘born again’, a woman tells me. As the mud cakes and wrinkles in the Dead Sea sun, I wonder.

The camel-handler in Petra helps me scramble into the saddle. In three movements, Zu-Zu is up and starts to pad along the rocky, dusty path – back to the Treasury. After a few minutes, the rope lead is put in my hand. ‘To Aqaba!’ I want to shout like Lawrence of Arabia in the film, but – who knows – the beast may take me at my word; and I need to be back in Amman tonight. So I relax, gently swaying with the camel’s walk as rock-walls sculpted by sandstorms of a million years glide by.

Dr Irena Svilans-Dennis
Teacher of French
The ACMA website http://www.cybersmart.gov.au has exceptional resources for families to assist with safe online navigation. The following tips come from this site:

**Unwanted contact**

What is it?

Unwanted contact is any type of online communication that you find unpleasant or confronting. The contact can come from online friends you don’t know or someone you know in the offline world.

Unwanted contact can include:

- being asked inappropriate or personal questions by someone you don’t know
- being sent offensive, confronting or obscene content
- being asked to send intimate pictures or do things online that make you feel uncomfortable

How do I deal with it?

- Tell someone you trust, like your mum, dad or another adult.
- Don’t respond and leave the site or chat session.
- Block the contact or remove them from your friends list.
- Change your profile settings so that your personal details are kept private.
- Don’t open messages from people you don’t know.
- Keep the evidence. This can be useful in tracking the person posting unsuitable material.
- Contact your ISP and/or phone provider, or the website administrator. There are actions they can take to help.

Most importantly - Report it. Talk to an adult that you trust or to the police if there is a threat to your safety.

Suspicious online behaviour towards a child should be reported to the Australian Federal Police.

**Digital reputation**

What is my digital reputation?

Your digital reputation is defined by your behaviour in the online environment and by the content that you post about yourself and others. Tagged photos, blog posts and social networking interactions will all shape how you are perceived by others online and offline.

A poor digital reputation can affect your friendships and relationships as well as your future job prospects.

What happens online can permanently affect you in the real world—so protect your digital reputation.

How do I protect my digital reputation?

- Think before you post!
- Set your profile to private – and check every now and then to make sure the settings haven’t changed.
- Keep an eye on photos tagged by your friends.
- Remember, online information could be there forever. Your personal information may end up being seen by people you don’t know, including potential employers.
- If you want to talk about a problem with cyberbullying, you can call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, visit Kids Helpline or contact the Cybersmart Online Helpline service.

Recently there have been several circumstances involving students from across year levels making poor choices online, at home and at school. We have had some cyber safety education from the AFP who clearly articulated the legal ramifications of staying safe online.

The latest research into the development of the adolescent brain tells educators that the decision making section of the brain, which governs risk taking and forethought, is not fully developed until girls are in their early 20s.

We understand that communication can be difficult and complicated for young people especially as the face to face style of speaking directly to each other is often not the preferred way girls communicate. Communication via text or social networking sites is the first choice and can lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding as there are no physical cues the girls can read to interpret the social situation accurately.

In an attempt to combat the problems all teenagers face when online, at school, with friends, with relationship breakdown and general decision making, the Merici Pastoral Care Team have developed I Think Twice.

This phrase is designed to be something students hear over and over again, the logo is everywhere, including on their login screen on every laptop and desktop computer in the school. I Think Twice is also designed to encourage their friends to assist with the decision making process, so they have permission to say “hang on, is this ok?” All students are encouraged to Think Twice before they post, blog, comment or act in any negative way. This does not mean that the program is specifically for cyber safety as it marries well with all aspects of their daily lives. Students are encouraged to Think Twice before carrying their laptop out of it’s bag for example or to Think Twice before speaking ill of someone else.

Trazel Scott
AP Student Welfare
In recent times, members of the PHABS department have been working closely to revisit our Vision and Mission (which is outlined below). This gave us an opportunity to see how important our role is in educating your daughters to be active for life and to empower them to make informed choices about their health. We recognised that this role also includes the education of our wider Merici Community.

Health and Physical Education is a dynamic and evolving subject. Research continues to inform us about the best way of motivating the youth of today. A study on the ‘metacognitive activity in physical education classes’ (Theodosiou, 2008 et al) reported on several ways to improve the outcomes for students. In brief, the report revealed that task-orientated individuals working in a motivational environment can significantly improve metacognitive ability in physical education classes. They continued to mention that a highly motivated environment, combined with a shared understanding of the importance of the task, provides the best possible outcomes for participants.

In every aspect of the PHABS curriculum we aim to create this motivational environment. For example, our annual Fitness unit provided an opportunity for students to improve their own health and cardiovascular endurance. Students worked in teams and as individuals to achieve set goals. They were encouraged to complete a variety of physical challenges and fitness sessions that involved skill, tactics, teamwork and the ability to outwit their opponent. Most students were motivated and experienced a variety of ways in which they could enjoy fitness and have fun with friends in a safe learning environment. Some of these fun fitness activities included Cardio Tennis, Boxercise, team relays and obstacle courses.

In looking at the above research, we now invite teachers, parents and all members of the Merici Community to read our Vision and Mission and work together to ensure your daughters are not discouraged from active participation. As current Physical Education and Health promoters, we are aiming to develop the whole child through personal and external activities which further motivate and engage students. To do this effectively we need to maintain an appreciation of Health and well-being and share in a common goal of improving our culture of fun and enjoyment through sport.

VISION:

The Merici College PHABS Department are facilitators of lifelong learning, with a particular focus on health and well-being. As active role-models, we promote physical activity as a way to achieve balance in our lives. Through fun, inclusion and enjoyment we nurture young women to become physically educated with skills and activities to keep them healthy, rather than solely focus on the competitive sporting environment. Staff encourage critical thinking and self-reflection to enable our students to reach their full potential. We promote fair play and develop values that encourage a safe learning environment where all members of our community can further develop strengths and improve weaknesses. Our Health focus empowers students with knowledge and allows them to develop skills in order to make appropriate decisions with confidence regarding their well-being. PHABS enables students to make informed decisions about health, physical activity, lifestyle and life planning.

MISSION:

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Most students were motivated and experienced a variety of ways in which they could enjoy fitness and have fun with friends in a safe learning environment.
improve their own abilities, we continually review our existing methods and find innovative ways to inspire students to ‘be active for life’. In the Health component, we aim to embrace technology and provide values and skills for the young women we teach whilst preparing them for the experiences they may face in our rapidly changing world. We strive to provide learning initiatives through communication, decision-making, interaction, movement, planning and problem-solving, empowering students to adopt healthy lifestyle practices.

Our future focus includes refining some programs to follow our Mission and Vision statements. This will assist us in promoting our Term 3 Foci of the Colleges Principles of Powerful Learning; ‘Independent and Collaborative work’. During our Athletics unit, students will have three weeks to self-motivate and work together to improve their skills in a range of dynamic situations. Then in a mini Olympics set-up, students will have the opportunity to challenge themselves and show how they have improved their individual performance. Students will monitor their own results and participation over the duration of the unit. They will be responsible for collaborating with peers and staff to ensure they strive to give their best and feel empowered through their personal achievements.

Robert Higginbotham
PHABS Coordinator

PIERRE DE COUBERTIN AWARDS
“The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle.”

Baron Pierre de Coubertin

On June 22nd, I had the privilege of attending the annual Pierre De Coubertin Awards. The awards were created to acknowledge those students who have made a significant contribution to Sport whilst maintaining great links within the College Sporting environment.

The Merici College 2012 award recipient is Leigh Kalsbeek. She is a Year 11 student who has been named as an invitee in the Australian Under 17 Netball team. Whilst balancing these commitments with tertiary studies, Leigh has also represented the College in several sporting teams; Netball, Basketball, Athletics and Touch Football. To her credit, Leigh also plays for the College in the Division 2 Women’s Netball competition so she can contribute to the school program and maintain a balance of fun and enjoyment.

Leigh Kalsbeek, proud recipient of the Pierre De Coubertin Award
BUILDING A BRIGHT AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE BEGINS IN THE SCHOOL

The staff and students of Merici College have created a shared vision for an environmentally friendly school. As the sustainability officer I have the pleasure of facilitating this dialogue and helping the school community to plan and implement projects which will ensure that such a vision becomes a reality.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that the school will become environmentally friendly and that the projects designed to achieve this aim will provide an opportunity for learning and will also create community. The school follows the framework provided by the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI), but within this it creates projects that are tailored to the unique culture of our school. Our projects aim to create systems which will reduce the consumption of energy, water and waste and encourage students to learn about biodiversity through a kitchen-garden program.

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY SCHOOL

The students from the Sustainability Elective and the volunteer group, the Environmental Sustainability Team (EST), play a crucial role in designing and implementing the projects aimed towards making our school environmentally friendly. One of EST’s focuses this semester has been to establish an effective recycling system.

The students in EST have thought about the type of recycling stations that will be easy to use and where in the school they should be placed. They also know that information and promotion is the key to creating behavioural change. In order to facilitate this they are creating many fun videos, dances and posters. In August, they are going to swap roles with their teachers and use a whole of staff meeting to inform their teachers about the new recycling system!

Facilitating a dialogue between the entire school community gives everyone a chance to shape the projects so that they will be effective. Furthermore, the crucial role the students have in leading this change ensures that they have ownership and interest in the projects which are then integrated into their curriculum.

A HUB FOR LEARNING

Merici College recognises that sustainability relates to every subject and therefore must be taught holistically. Furthermore, the school is committed to adopting the new Australian curriculum’s expectation that sustainability will be incorporated into every class. The projects which make our school more sustainable are also a hub for learning. They complement a theoretical understanding of the environment with a practical application of how it can be restored and protected. Claudia Keski Nummi-Wilson reflected that “I have learnt things that I otherwise wouldn’t have.” A primary example of this style of learning is the school’s Kitchen Garden Program.

A CASE STUDY: THE KITCHEN GARDEN PROGRAM

Over the past year Merici College has worked hard to establish its Kitchen Garden Program. We have many large garden beds which are used to grow produce for our canteen. The canteen offers students and staff healthy, cheap, locally sourced, freshly cooked meals and snacks on a daily basis.

The Kitchen Garden Program has also become a key teaching resource. The sustainability elective spends time working in the garden each week and back in the class room they relate it to concepts around local sustainability and food systems. Year 10 Hospitality classes use the produce to cook meals which are sold at the canteen. Science students use the green house to propagate seedlings which are later planted in the garden. Finally, we are creating an Indigenous Garden to encourage a cross-cultural understanding of land management and food production.

CREATING COMMUNITY

Creating a community which has a shared commitment to sustainability is the key to the projects’ success. One student, Sammy Mayne remarked that “being part of EST and the sustainability elective has been an amazing experience….I have met a lot of interesting people and see the world in a different way”. At Merici College, an interest in sustainability stretches beyond these two groups to a commitment from the entire school. It is because of this that there is change in the whole-of-school systems, such as the canteen and recycling. But in addition to this Merici College has found that its experience in sustainability can be used to create a community which stretches beyond its walls.

Merici College is always eager to share their experiences in sustainability and learn from those of others. We engage in a variety of inter-school exchanges, such as the Eco-Bus Tours and the Kids Teaching Kids local and international conferences. We also have a buddy system with Marist College’s environment group and we share with other schools involved in Carbon Kids.
and Healthy Food at Schools. Reaching further afield, the EST group has a pen pal system with Prosperity Girls High School (PHGS) in Sierra Leone. They are also raising funds for solar panels so PHGS has electricity. One student, Abby Smith, reflected that a community is formed because “we present and share ideas with people our age who have common interests”.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most exciting thing about the community which has formed at Merici College is that it is full of young people who realise that they can begin to create a bright and sustainable future, right now. One student, Karina Horvat reflected; “EST has changed my life….it sounds corny but it actually has. Now when I look at my surrounding I see the problem and how I can fix it, rather than ignoring the dilemma.”

Eliza Hopkins
Sustainability Officer
MERICI MOMENTS
Merici celebrates St Angela Merici Day