



# Avila Old Collegians

Avila College acknowledges the Wurundjeri people, the traditional custodians of the land on which the College is built.

December 2010

## Avila students excel

Avila College has finished the year on a high note with the announcement of major awards to some of our young women, together with the celebration of student achievements at our annual Presentation Evening at the Robert Blackwood Hall, Monash University. In addition, Year 10 student leader Kiara Goldsmith, represented Avila at the canonisation of Mary MacKillop in Rome on October 17, just two days after the College community celebrated the feast day of another remarkable woman, Saint Teresa of Avila.

A highlight was the presentation of the prestigious Premier's Award to 2009 Art Captain, Talisa Trantino, for her exceptional performance in Design Technology last year. More recently Phoebe Tapley became our second student in two years to be accepted into the Kwong Lee Dow Scholarship Program at Melbourne University while Stephanie Barcham was honoured with a James Wall, our fourth student in as many years to be presented with the award by the Reverend Denis Hart, the Archbishop of Melbourne.

At the 2010 Presentation Evening, the following major awards were presented:

**Ms Filomena Salvatore College Dux Award, 2009:** Hannah Phillips  
**Sister Patricia Carroll Award for Service to Sport:** Naomi Linossier  
**Sister Raymonde Taylor Award for Creative Arts:**

Music Performance - Isabelle Sezenias  
Drama Performance - Maighdlin Laffy  
Visual - Santana Ponte

**Sister Josepha Dunlop Award for Christian Leadership:**  
Beth Corkill

**Patricia Ryan Award for Love of Learning:** Marnie Banger

**Public Speaking Award:** Stephanie Jenkins

**Avila/Mazenod Musical Award (*Beauty and the Beast*):** Carly Watson

**Susan Puohotaua Orchestra Award:** Isabelle Sezenias

**Monash Prize for Excellence (Year 11):** Fiona Canny

**Mulgrave Country Club Scholarship (Year 11):** Lauren Pecora

**Marie Boyle Year 10 Excellence Award (*Mrs Boyle taught at Avila from 1979 until her retirement in 2003*):** Phoebe Tapley

**Staff Alumni Service to the Wider Community Award:** Building Bridges participants, Christina Alappadan, Rubini Ball, Tessa Blight, Fiona Fernandes, Kiara Goldsmith, Heshaya Guneskere, Cassandra Lemalu and Miranda Nguyen.

**Australian Defence Force (ADF) Awards:**

Year 10 - Gabriela Cincotta  
Year 11 - Amy Tremewen  
Year 12 - Alison Coffa

**Spirit Awards:** Year 7 - Gabrielle Macpherson-Caldeira;

Year 8 - Tamar Haigazian; Year 9 - Nicola Jacobs;

Year 10 - Heshaya Guneskere; Year 11 - Ayesha Comerford; and

Year 12 - Alana Spizzirri



Incoming College Principal Ms Louise Gunther (second from right) is congratulated by Father Brendan Dillon in his capacity as President of the Canonical Administrators, Chairperson of the College Board, Mrs Caryl Finnegan and Principal Ms Liz Gleeson.

## New leadership

Avila Principal, Ms Liz Gleeson, leaves the College at the end of this year and will be succeeded by Ms Louise Gunther who has been Deputy Principal-Administration since 2008.



Joining Ms Gunther in her new leadership role will be the 2011 College Captain-elect, Mia Lentini (pictured above).

Ms Gleeson who joined the College leadership team in 2001 and has been Principal since 2006, will take up a newly created position with the Catholic Education Office as principal consultant for the western region of Melbourne. The highly respected Ms Gleeson was farewelled by the extended Avila and wider community, at a Mass of Thanksgiving and social evening attended by hundreds of well wishers on December 6.

In announcing the appointment, Chairperson of the College Board, Mrs Caryl Finnegan, noted Ms Gunther's strong background in education, and more particularly a passion for the Catholic education of young women, as well as leadership and administration.

Both Mrs Finnegan and Ms Gunther paid tribute to Ms Gleeson: 'Ms Gleeson has served Avila College with distinction. Continuing Avila's line of inspiring women of leadership - 'Teresa's Women' - Ms Gleeson has guided the college to outstanding academic and extra curricular success, furthered the development of the college in its faith development, expanded students' opportunities through the introduction of alternative learning pathways and guided us through times of celebration and times of sorrow,' Mrs Finnegan said.

Our incoming College Captain comes from a line of student leadership. Nicole was 2008 College Captain and Genelle was 2006 Drama Captain.



*Mrs Christine Dalwood  
(14/03/52 - 05/07/2010)*

## Vale - Mrs Dalwood

Retired long-serving staff member Mrs Christine Dalwood was a much loved member of the Avila community and we were deeply saddened when she passed away on Monday July 5, after a battle of some years with cancer.

A teacher at Avila from 1990 until her retirement in 2008, her influence on our community is immeasurable and we are the richer for having known her.

Mrs Dalwood was a woman of great wisdom, courage and faith. She came late to teaching but brought with her a great love of literature and a belief in the great potential of all young people. During her time at Avila, she was editor of the school magazine, teacher-leader of the SRC and Student Leaders and the founder of the Social Justice group in 2000. She was a Year 10 Co-ordinator and the English Co-ordinator. Mrs Dalwood always encouraged and inspired our young women to believe in themselves and the story that was theirs. She made a real difference in the lives of so many students and she did this with a wry smile and twinkling eyes as she dealt with the volatile world that comes with teenagers! Her wisdom was also sought by her colleagues, especially those new young teachers, and Mrs Dalwood would mentor them and encourage them to strive for excellence. Mrs Dalwood taught Literature

to countless numbers of students and the class would often grapple over the meaning of the poem or argue over the merits of the characters presented, but they too came to love the 'story' as Chris did. Many of her past students came to her funeral, to honour the memory of someone who'd had a profound impact on their life.



### Artist donates work

Professional artist and past student, Veronica Caven Aldous (Class of 1974) has donated one of her works to the College.

Titled 'Mobilephone Strips', the piece reflects the technological influences on today's students.

*Principal Ms Liz Gleeson was delighted to accept the artwork from Veronica on behalf of the College community.*

When Mrs Dalwood retired she had hoped to spend some more time in Africa, a place she dearly loved. She actively supported the Vanessa Grant School for Girls in Kenya, and a scholarship has been set up in her memory. Mrs Dalwood's impact will continue not only with the Avila students and staff, but in the education of these young girls also.

Mrs Dalwood is survived by her husband Peter and her children, Matthew and Fiona.

Mrs Marie Stuart  
Faith Development Co-ordinator  
and long-time friend and colleague

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### Greeting cards showcase talent



Avila College has produced a set of six general-purpose greeting cards featuring student artwork. The packs are available from the General Office at a cost of \$5.00 and are ideal for sending personal notes or as gifts for family and friends.

## One of Teresa's great women

*To act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6:8



*Ms Liz Gleeson*

**T**rumpets blurring, red and blue footy scarves shamelessly worn, joke books studied, pranks planned, penguin paraphernalia purchased, boogie boards dusted off, special bottles of red wine sought, readings from the Gospel scrutinised - all this too closely reflect and honour the life and times of Ms Liz Gleeson, out-going Principal of Avila College (2006 - 2010) ... Such is the impact Ms Gleeson has had on the Avila community that everyone tries to imitate aspects of her personality and hobbies as a source of great amusement and a mark of respect.

As Principal, Ms Gleeson has achieved much. Having arrived at Avila in 2001 as Deputy Principal -Welfare, Ms Gleeson was appointed Principal in 2006 following the death of the much loved Ms Filomena Salvatore. She managed these difficult times with great integrity and sensitively; comforting and restoring the grief-stricken College community. Ms Gleeson acknowledges that she worked with a highly competent team and drew strength from the participation of all in the decision-making process. This is just one of her remarkable skills - her ability to consult widely, efficiently and then make sound decisions which are clearly communicated to all. Her educational vision encompasses a range of attributes that she encourages within students -inquisitiveness, critical thinking, compassion, self motivation, active faith-filled citizenship and a strong sense of their potential because they are women.

Laughter is a part of Avila life and in contrast to her more serious side, Ms Gleeson elevated humour to a new height during her time at the College. Rarely did a morning briefing or staff meeting pass without a witty quip from her. Laughter is a part of Avila life. Her outgoing and friendly manner endeared her to all. Her special and individual relationship with members of the College is another of the qualities that made her an outstanding principal. She can identify everyone, teacher, student or parent by name and recall something particular about each. Ms Gleeson makes people feel special. In this way she has shaped the role of principal into that of a connector. She has built many bridges to outside networks that enriched the Avila community and benefitted others in the wider world.

Foremost in Ms Gleeson's mind is a concern for the less fortunate in our world. This scripture from Micah has always guided Ms Gleeson: 'to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God'. She is an active member of various organisations and works tirelessly for many social justice causes. Ms Gleeson cited her trip to the Santa Teresa Mission near Alice Springs in 2009 as one of the most special times she has experienced as a principal. She was thrilled to be able to further strengthen the connection Avila has long held with Indigenous people. She recognised the great importance of raising awareness of the rich aboriginal culture with city students and the need to vigorously work towards reconciliation. When the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, formally apologised to the Indigenous people of Australia, Ms Gleeson did not hesitate to act. The entire student body gathered in the gym to witness this historic moment, which reinforced Avila's stance on social justice and reconciliation. The power of that moment was indelibly etched into the memories of all present.

Ms Gleeson's unique skills as a teacher and leader were shaped by her strong family network, her Catholic heritage and several outstanding role models in her previous schools. Among them was Patricia Ryan, ex Principal of Avila (1980-1986), who confirmed that schools could blend pastoral care and academic rigour without sacrificing either. Miss Ryan's wisdom and constant encouragement of teachers impressed Ms Gleeson. She recognised the value and importance of leading with a consistent and fair manner on every occasion. Typically, she acknowledged that students have also demonstrated some of the most inspiring lessons in leadership for her. Witnessing students accepting the challenge to lead selflessly despite their own personal struggles in some cases, humbles Ms Gleeson. Student performances in the Arts, Sport and the classroom give her great pleasure and satisfaction. Ms Gleeson is a member of the School Orchestra, in the Brass section. She began learning the trumpet at Avila and is a great role model for young musicians. Her presence at all functions and classrooms visits is another reason why teachers and students will miss her enormously.

Despite our sadness at farewellling her, we can be comforted by the fact that Avila is not only a magnet to leaders of such calibre but also a community that has learned from Ms Gleeson, to inspire the best in all. Ms Gleeson will always be remembered as a passionate educator and a genuine friend to all. We wish her well in her newly created position with the Catholic Education Office as Principal Consultant for the Western Region.

**Ms Suzanne Bourke, long-time friend and colleague,  
who retired as Avila's Deputy Principal - Curriculum at the end of 2008**

*Pictured: Ms Gleeson has always modelled the 'Avila Way' through her actions. At left, four of Avila seven principals Sr Patricia Carroll (1965 - 1970), Sr Raymonde Taylor (1971 - 1973), Ms Patricia Ryan (1980 - 1986) and Ms Gleeson (2006 - 2010).*



## Mrs Early - the leaven of Avila

'When you see Mrs Early make sure you give her my love. You know, she changed my life ... I miss her.' This is what Mary Early's past pupils say when they run into a staff member. How many lives must Mrs Early have changed in a teaching career spanning 46 years, 34 of which have been spent at Avila!

As a fine teacher of English and Religious Education, specialising in Biblical Studies, she has transported students into a world of possibility. It is a world in which all problems would be solved if we could, 'sit down for a cup of tea' with whoever is causing the problem. Her students know that, as Mrs Early would sit sipping her cuppa, she would definitely have a message for all tyrants, manipulators and political leaders who lack a conscience!



*Mrs Mary Early*

However, you must take into consideration that Mrs Early is Irish – very Irish ... lovably Irish ... blessedly Irish. She is full of contradictions. This woman of firm, unmovable opinions about justice is, on the other hand, a most tolerant, patient and understanding woman. She paradoxically describes herself as a 'principled pragmatist'. But really, one has to be if you value compassion above all else. Her willingness to give 'a piece of her heart' to all has moulded her into a friend to everyone; modelling strength, while remaining fragile through her sensitivity to pain. Her resilience, which is so apparent, comes from her wicked sense of humour that everyone loves. It is often deliciously irreverent.

In Biblical language Mrs Early is the leaven at Avila – she is the salt of the Earth, the light that has never been under a bushel. She has, with others from those early years of the school, helped to shape the ethos that we affectionately call, 'The Avila Way'. It is a 'way' that always puts the person front and centre. There have been some students who wished she was less focused on the individual, as Mrs Early has come to know many parents in the Avila community through phone calls home or even conversations over that 'cup of tea'.

As an educator she has always been progressive. Meditation has long been a part of her classroom practice. She has consistently argued that a time of quiet reflection at the start of a lesson makes her students more productive ... and studies are now showing this. Academically, she demands commitment, discipline and diligence while encouraging students to develop their gifts.

An Irish claddagh has symbols of friendship, love and loyalty. It is these values that Mrs Early will employ in her retirement. She is already planning that time when she will revel in catching up with her friends. The loves of her life are her family and retirement will allow her to fully enjoy the grace they bring. Mrs Early has such treasured relationships with people because she is a totally loyal wife, mother, sister and friend. *Mrs Christine Valladares, long-time friend and colleague*



*Mrs Angela Gaymer in her element*

## Qualities of gold

**M**rs Angela Gaymer has hung up her lab coat after 34 years of teaching with 30 of those at Avila!

Born in London during the Blitz years, Mrs Gaymer gained her degree in Science at Bristol University before being head-hunted to teach at a local Catholic college in Bath where she taught for four years before leaving to raise her family. On arriving in Australia in 1981, she resumed her teaching career at Avila.

During her time at Avila Mrs Gaymer has spent many years in leadership as year level co-ordinator for years 9 and 11. She brought her initiative, her desire to learn and her sense of logic to these roles and they imbued her with great wisdom and experience.

However, it was her love of Chemistry and its ideas that delighted her most and she is happiest in the laboratory explaining electron configuration and atomic absorption spectrophotometers. Despite her experience, Mrs Gaymer continued to look for, and find, new ways to teach the concepts and encourage students to grapple with ideas. She has been a marker of VCE Chemistry exams since 1986 and was selected to the writing panel for the last VCAA Chemistry study design. In addition, she has acted as a consultant on a number of chemistry DVDs. She will continue her communication of chemistry through tutoring and probably more marking.

Words like 'sensible' and 'reasonable' flow frequently from her lips and, to use a Dickensian term, there's 'no nonsense about her'. She is also dedicated, willingly giving up her lunchtimes to help chem students and generous in her dealings with her colleagues as well. It has been my great fortune to work with Mrs Gaymer. To discuss the finer details of a prac or SAC or exam question, to relish new topics in Chemistry and attend lectures to keep abreast of the latest research has made our partnership one I will always treasure.

Thirty years at Avila ... If it were a wedding anniversary, it would be pearl and pearl is calcium carbonate but pearls dissolve when put in some acid - just ask Cleopatra -so that's not good enough. Silver of course is a big favourite because its symbols match Mrs Gaymer's initials and makes a logical choice. Platinum is nobler but too inert to describe Mrs Gaymer. Gold, I think, is really what she is.

*Dr Sue Liston, Head of Science*

## Life of learning

**M**rs Alice Willee, one of Avila College's longest serving and most respected staff members, retired at the end of Term Four.

Mrs Willee began teaching at Avila in 1981. She was employed as a Typing, Shorthand and Secretarial Practice teacher. As the nature of Victorian education and the role of women in the workforce began to change, Mrs Willee realised that she needed to broaden her teaching repertoire. The new Information Technology (IT) course, introduced as part of a revised Victorian Certificate of Education, was a natural next step and, over the ensuing years, Mrs Willee became a stalwart of the IT Department.



*Mrs Alice Willee*

Always looking to challenge herself, in 1988 she decided to enrol in Units 3 & 4 VCE Legal Studies.

Mrs Willee achieved an outstanding result and the following year she taught the first of many Year 11 Legal Studies classes. She loved providing students with engaging experiences that are part of this VCE course. She organised excursions to the Magistrates', County and Supreme Courts and also visits to Loddon and Barwon prisons. It wasn't long before Mrs Willee added Year 12 Legal Studies to her teaching load.

The Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Department was Mrs Willee's next endeavour and, apart from a brief interlude with Italian, she specialised in teaching lower secondary French for many years, where she was able to put her love of travel to good use.

It has been a privilege to work with Mrs Willee since she began at Avila 30 years ago. Her thorough lesson planning and the high expectations she brought to the classroom, have been reflected in the excellent results her students have achieved.

Mrs Willee lists advances in technology and the evolution of the family structure as the most significant changes she has noticed during her three decades at Avila. When asked what she will miss most, her top responses include the camaraderie of the Avila College staff and also what she calls the 'magic' of the classroom.

Beyond Avila, Mrs Willee is looking forward to further travel and spending more time by the beach with her four grandchildren will be a priority, while her next big challenge will be convincing husband Paul of the benefits of retired life.

As Mrs Willee departed the College for the last time, she carries with her the respect and gratitude of thousands of students and the lasting friendship of the many staff with whom she has worked.

Enjoy your retirement Mrs Willee, you deserve it. **Mr Phillip Cornell**

## Faith-filled friend to all



*Ms Di Brebner*

**T**he students simply love her and the staff revels in her positive outlook on life and living. This permeates throughout the wider Avila Community and leaves us with the distinct understanding that Di Brebner is the Chaplain's Chaplain!

Faith is a wonderful gift made evermore so through the sharing of it. In times of sheer distress, sadness, loss, joy and great celebration, one's faith often comes to the fore and with it, a deeper meaning to life's experiences. For us at Avila, Ms Brebner has become the personification of expressed faith. She has walked with many of us in life's triumphs and turmoil. The 'walking' is gentle, calming and comfortable; we have felt deeply accompanied, not suffocated, but listened to, and comforted. It's a special knack to be able to be present to people without dominating a situation and Ms Brebner has this knack in spades.

Through prayer and presence, laughter and liturgy, song and silence, Ms Brebner has led us in some of our most trying times and helped us to reach some understanding as to the whys and wherefores of our lot.

Her smile is infectious and it has been wonderful to see students' smiles beam as Ms Brebner enters a classroom to catch up with a particular student or to teach us a new song. She has that terrific (and rare) gift of an older person to be able to brush aside the generations and connect with young people; engage with them in such a way that they feel they can tell this woman anything and it would neither scandalise nor result in judgement.

Recently Ms Brebner led the College community in a special liturgy for the repose of the souls of those we have known and loved. The simplicity of the words and symbols, and the active involvement of students and staff, epitomised Ms Brebner's depth of spirituality and, through her example, her deep belief that this needs to be shared with and modelled for our young people.

While it is true to say that no-one is indispensable, it is equally true that some people hold gifts and talents that are irreplaceable. Thanks to the sum total of all her life's experiences, Ms Brebner has developed gifts and talents that she has happily shared with us. For this and for all that you have done, thanks Ms Brebner. Good luck and God bless.

**Mr John Rhynehart, colleague and incoming Faith Development Co-ordinator**

### Secretarial whiz, office gem



*Mrs Paprota, a welcoming front of house' in the Music School, and with one of her many exuberant 'friends'.*

Mrs Berny Paprota officially started at Avila in 1996, but she had been volunteering in the library since her daughters - Linda (Class of 1997) and Joanne (Class of 1999) started at the College. In fact, it was in the library, covering books, helping to catalogue and typing the spine labels, where she was discovered as a secretarial wiz.

Mrs Paprota was quickly snapped up to work in the Junior School assisting the Year 7 and Year 8 co-ordinators for the first half of the day, and then into sick bay for the remainder of the day. Mrs Paprota held the sick bay position for three years before a position before moving to the Music Department. The new Music School had not been constructed, so Mrs Paprota worked at a desk in the corridor. Each time the door opened a gust of wind would blow papers everywhere. 2003 saw big improvements with the new Music School finished, complete with a Music secretary's office for Mrs Paprota.

There are many benefits to working in a Music Department and some draw backs. Mrs Paprota loved listening to the string ensemble play her favorite piece 'Colours of the Wind' at their early morning rehearsal, but then there were the beginner saxophone students (ouch), and listening to the monotonous vocal warm ups over and over again every day, which, she admitted, nearly drove her mad!

Working in different schools throughout Melbourne, the 20 or so instrumental staff would consistently rate the Avila Music Department as 'the best' - and Mrs Paprota was the reason. Her gentle, welcoming personality extended to all she dealt with. She is warm and friendly, nothing is too much to ask, and everything she puts her hand to, is done to perfection.

She is skilled in an array of software and eager to learn new programs. Mrs Paprota is an incredible support to staff during report writing times - in fact, any time, and regularly takes work home to complete. She is the 'front of house' person at all major school events like Creative Arts and Presentation Evening, making sure that everyone has a ticket. She handles phone calls from parents and diffuses tense situations with ease, and she has a wonderful sense of humor.

Beyond the Avila gates, Mrs Paprota leads a creative and adventurous life. Her craft skills include scrap booking, stained glass work and other craft projects as well as stamp collecting. Spend anytime with Mrs Paprota and you'll soon find out how passionate she is about animals, in particular our native wildlife. So much so, that Mrs Paprota is a wild life carer and can be called out at a moment's notice to rescue possums, kangaroos, wombats, echidnas and birds of every feather. She has completed courses on caring for wildlife and is trained to rescue animals after the devastation of bush fires. She often has a baby possum or five under her desk at work, to make sure they don't miss out on a feed. She has recently brought her dream property on 41 acres in Nar Nar Goon and is establishing a wild life shelter called Back To Nature, which rehabilitates native animals and returns them to their habitat. It is a dream she has wished to pursue whole heartedly for many years and now can.

The Avila family will miss her very much, but is thankful for her years of dedicated service and most of all for her friendship. We wish her all the best for the future.

Ms Roxane Lascaris, Director of Music

### Three decades and thousands of canteen customers

Canteen volunteer Mrs Lucy Fernando has retired this year after more than three decades of service.

It will be the end of an era as Mrs Fernando's grand daughter, Nina Fernando- Bowen, is among our 2010 Year 12 graduates. During her 31 years at the Avila canteen Mrs Fernando has not only served her two daughters - Juanita (Class of 1975) and Jo-Anne (Class of 1976 and College Captain) and two grand daughters - Saara Fernando (Class of 1998) and Nina (Class of 2010), but literally thousands of other students as well. And whilst she supports the canteen menu becoming far healthier over the years, she still thinks there should be more lollies!

Mrs Fernando first started working at the canteen to simply do her bit. However she soon discovered the benefits were mutual because she loved working and interacting with young people because 'it keeps me young' and, she 'loves to talk'. Her biggest reward from volunteering at Avila has been to see students grow and mature. Physically, she has seen the College grow immensely with so many more opportunities available to students.



*Mrs Fernando*

According to Mrs Fernando, the memories she will cherish most are the laughter, fun, interaction with young people, close friendships and the many wonderful personalities of Avila students.

'I'd like to thank the young mums for making me feel part of the tuck shop community, I sometimes forget that I am a grandmother, not a mother,' Mrs Fernando said.

Interview conducted by Year 11 Business Management student, Melissa Nanfra, as part of her practical work for a unit on Public Relations and Marketing.

# Juggling law career with family

**A**rmed with the Avila 'can-do' belief that girls can do anything they are passionate about and prepared to work towards, Sharon Johns has carved herself a successful career as a Melbourne barrister specialising in family law and defacto relationships.

And she is quick to highlight the power of Avila's 'can-do' philosophy by adding that some of her closest friends from Avila are strong, independent women who are making their mark professionally in diverse fields ... Catherine McLaren (nee Culhane), 1985 College Captain, is a neurological physiotherapist, 1985 College Dux Anna Catanzariti (nee Domine) is a solicitor and Daniella Casamento is a successful interior designer.

'One of the greatest advantages of attending Avila was that the teachers and my peers gave me the confidence and self belief that I could achieve my goals,' said Sharon, a Class of 1985 graduate who studied Arts/Law at Monash University.

For Sharon, like so many past students, she treasures the enduring friendships she made at Avila.

At Avila, Sharon was a diligent student who also embraced the wider community life through her involvement in music, drama and sport. She was the Nagle House Captain for music and drama and represented Avila in inter-school swimming. In one of those quirks of life, her Year 11 role in the 1984 Avila Mazenod Musical, *Oliver*, has had an 'encore' at a professional level. One of her instructing solicitors is a Mazenodian and was a Year 8 performer in the show.

The 'can-do' culture of Avila held Sharon in good stead as she pursued her career in the highly competitive legal profession. As a young lawyer the challenges at times seemed overwhelming, however, Sharon believes her years at Avila equipped her well with the skills to meet those challenges, including a preparedness for hard work and confidence in her own ability. She believes that women have much to offer the legal profession because they are naturally good communicators who can present a strong argument yet more importantly, can listen. They also have great empathy, an essential quality for any successful lawyer.

Sharon started off as an articled clerk with a local law firm before joining a city firm, Barker Gosling, where she advanced to senior associate before signing the bar roll as a barrister in 1998. While it was quite a 'scary' step to leave the security of a law firm to work for herself, Sharon's decision to become a barrister was fuelled by her desire to be more at the heart of the action and influence the law making process, as well as her love of a challenge, work ethic and her expertise in the area of family law.

'I love being in court. I have always been a bit of a performer and enjoy the adrenalin rush of having to think on my feet, the intellectual challenge of presenting a case and being an advocate for clients,' said Sharon who has been involved in several high profile cases which have led to what Sharon considers to be positive changes in family law.

Sharon's work as a barrister has not only given her professional satisfaction but also the flexibility to pursue her passion for family. It has enabled Sharon and her partner to share the parenting of their two-year old son who no doubt will put some of Sharon's skills to the test as time goes by ...



*Precious moments*

## Love of learning

**N**ever turn down the opportunity to learn a new skill are the wise words of past student and scientist Alison Neil (nee Evans) who, since graduating from Avila in 2003, has strived to fulfil her teenage ambition to pursue a career in science.

Alison was interested in a career in science because she believed it would offer an intellectual challenge. She chose to pursue physiology as a major and completed a Bachelor of Science (Honours) at Melbourne University. Alison thrived on the vast range of options within the course. She also enjoyed university life but warned that it was a place where students must learn to be very self disciplined.

Since graduating from university in 2007, Alison has been working at the Bionic Ear Institute at St. Vincent's Hospital where she is a research assistant involved in both laboratory and administrative work. The laboratory work includes performing experimental surgeries on animals, electrophysiological recording and tissue cultures. The administrative work involves designing experiments and organising suitable personnel, writing grant submissions and animal ethics applications and contributing to scientific papers.

Alison finds joy in her job: 'One of the most rewarding aspects is when you see evidence of something nobody knows yet, even if it has been suspected'. One of her future goals is to advance her career to research management or laboratory management.



*Alison Neil at work at the Bionic Ear Institute*

Interview conducted by Business Management students Shanelle Albanese and Audrey Cavalera as part of a unit on Public Relations and Marketing



## Class of 2009 explores world of opportunity

**A**t the Class of 2009 reunion on August 24, it was apparent that the stress of end-of-year exams had been replaced by great enthusiasm and expectations of upcoming fashion designers, accountants and lawyers, full-time workers, travellers and apprentices!

The reunion on August 24 saw a room buzzing full of friends eager to catch-up, as well as teachers wanting to know just where their beloved students are now.

As we have all settled into 'lives away from Avila', it was lovely to return to see familiar faces in a place we called home for many years. The appetisers provided by Food Tech students were a wonderful contribution to the relaxed celebration.

It was not only a time for students to reminisce and catch-up, but to celebrate the wonderful leadership of Principal Ms Liz Gleeson, particularly in light of news that she will be moving onto different work next year. Ms Gleeson has been in a principal position (whether deputy, acting or as actual principal) for the entirety of our time at Avila, and so the Class of 2009 especially thanks her for the wonderful way she engaged with, inspired and supported us. She was a constant model for us as students and as young women. We wish her all the best for the future.

A huge thank-you to Mrs Louise Swift, our much loved Year 12 Co-ordinator and to the other staff for organising an opportunity to come together as Avila girls once more.

We look forward to keeping in contact as we pursue our chosen paths, always remembering the community that gave us so much support at such an important time in our lives.

Caityln Petrie, 2009 College Captain



## Classes of 1980 and 1990 reunite

**T**he Avila Spirit was alive and well when the classes of 1980 and 1990 held their respective 30 and 20 year reunions in the second half of the year.

About 100 of the Class of 1990 cohort gathered for their 20-reunion on August 14. And, a past student who lives in London and was unable to attend, sent a box of chocolates for each of her former classmates.

One of the highlights of the reunion was a College tour. There was lots of giggling to heard as about 17 students took revisited their old haunts on their walk down memory lane.

The Class of 1980 reunion as held on October 22.



## Guests travel from afar

**G**uests travelled from as far as Baltimore to celebrate the marriage of Megan Cox and Michael Gidley.



The couple were married at St John's Catholic Church in Heidelberg on June 12 by Father Michael Kelly from Holy Family, Mount Waverley.

Megan, Class of 2001, was attended by Avila friends Loren Rushton, Krystalyn De Mesa and Felicity MacLeod (pictured from left to right above). Another friend and past Avila student, Elizabeth Chapman (nee Morgan) made a special trip to Melbourne from Baltimore, where she lives with her husband.

Megan works in publica relations and she and Michael, wh was the Liberal candidate for Mount Waverley in the recent state election, mt while studying at Deakin University.

## When Justin married Sally

**F**ederal elections aside, Saturday August 21 was an auspicious day for Head of Drama, Mr Justin Cash, when he and his bride Sally Druitt exchanged wedding vows at The Gables in East Malvern.

Justin and Sally were joined by colleagues from Avila as well as family and friends for their special day. Justin and Sally initially met at Avila where Sally taught Science in 2002/2003.

Due to their respective teaching commitments, Justin and Sally will spend the Term Three holidays honeymooning in the Philippines and Hong Kong.

