

# St. Mary's School - St. Mary's Graduate Makes Helping Others with Mission Trips a Priority in Life

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Monday, April 20, 2020

Colleen Anderson is a person who has always been doing kind things. She was inspired to do mission work when she was a fifth-grade student at Saint Mary Catholic Community School in Crown Point. This calling came when a group of students from Nicaragua visited the school. Colleen has since been on eight mission trips to Guatemala with Saint Mary Catholic Church and is currently living on the NPH (Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos) Ranch, a home for orphaned, abandoned, and at-risk children in Honduras. Colleen values mission trips because on a trip “you get to know people and develop relationships”.

Colleen graduated in 2011 from Saint Mary Catholic Community School, in 2015 from Andean High School, and in 2019 from Boston College with a degree in Pre-Med. Colleen wants to get a Master’s Degree in mental health and then work with adolescents ages 13-21 in a youth group or international mission. Colleen is currently working in a dental clinic on the Ranch in Honduras, where she coordinates medical care and assists with surgeries during the day. At night, Colleen is a “house mother” in a hogar at the Ranch where she lives. Colleen spends her evenings with “her girls”, aged 9-16, doing chores, cooking dinner, having fun (braiding hair), and working on homework. Colleen plans on maintaining contact with and supporting her girls after she leaves the Ranch this summer.

Colleen fondly remembers her former teacher Ed Cole, whom she had in fifth grade. Ed, who traveled and knew about the world, was willing to listen to her questions. She remembered that Mr. Cole, “conveyed his interest in each student as a person”. That school year, Colleen did some traveling with her family for Spring Break. When she returned, he asked her many questions about her trip. She also said that she remembers Mr. Cole’s dedication, he “came in to school early and stayed late”.

Colleen’s favorite experience at St. Mary’s School was being a part of the first Science Olympiad team; she participated for all three years of junior high. She was impressed that the team was led by a female teacher who was assisted by female parents. Colleen’s favorite events were Towers, Anatomy and Physiology, Bottle Rockets, and Geology.

Colleen fondly remembers that her education at St. Mary’s School was a “family education”. Her parents were involved throughout her education and provided the needed support for her to excel. Colleen was also inspired by her teachers who were “willing to celebrate me”. She watched how they “served and supported” the school and community and she “wanted to give back” as well. Colleen said that “the success of the school” can be found in the graduates and that, “passion for community and service starts here.” “Every child can find a community within St. Mary’s School.”

Colleen recently returned home to St. Mary’s School and offered advice to students who are interested in going on mission trips. First, they should learn a foreign language. They should practice service locally by getting to know their neighbors and their own community. They should freely donate time and take the required service hours seriously. Once they have done these things, they should find a mission trip. Colleen firmly believes that “you can’t serve a different community if you don’t know your own community.” Sister Joanne Marie commented to Colleen, “It’s important to speak your dream. You spoke your dream, and it got bigger and bigger”.

St. Mary Catholic Community School in Crown Point offers grade levels Junior Pre-Kindergarten (for three-year-olds) through grade eight. St. Mary's faculty teaches a rich curriculum supported by cutting-edge technology. Faith, Academic Excellence, Life Lessons, and Compassion are the pillars of the school. Students in all grades are provided with opportunities to help others by way of service projects. To learn more about St. Mary's School visit [stmarycp.org/school](http://stmarycp.org/school). St. Mary's is **now** accepting new students for the 2020-2021 school year.

Written by:  
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Assistant Principal



Colleen Anderson, a St. Mary's graduate, visited her old 8th grade classroom and spoke to the students about her mission trips



Colleen was given the opportunity to speak to the entire school at St. Mary's Friday Mass and inspired them to consider doing missionary work





Colleen posed for a picture with her favorite teachers, Mr. Tony Pagorek, Mr. Brad Nieman, and Miss Beth Flynn along with Father Patrick Kalich