

Barbara Clarke '67

Athletic Director, Merion Mercy Academy

Sports have been a major component of Barbara

Clarke's '67 life as a student, teacher, coach, and, ultimately, as a highly regarded athletic director at Merion Mercy Academy.

And yet, Barbara is a strong advocate for keeping sports in perspective ... as a facet of a well-rounded student.

"Some parents and students feel," said Barbara, "that if you don't play field hockey, for example, year-round, you won't have that extra edge when fall comes. The students often feel they would rather be a superstar in one sport, when they could be a star in several, and this specialization limits the number of athletes that are available at all schools. That is unfortunate.

"Young bodies develop better if the children are well-rounded and play more sports. But so many children play club sports now that it takes away from their home time, and even their family dinners because Mom and Dad have to run them from here to there."



Barbara Clarke '67 is joined by her mother, Barbara P'67'69'70'73'75'77'80'83 GP'01'02'03 as she displays her State Award of Merit.

Barbara talks fondly of her years at Rosemont School. The School has retained the small class sizes that she recalls, and still encourages children to try their hand at everything - even if the activity or sport might be unfamiliar. This approach served Barbara well when she was hired as a

physical education teacher at Merion Mercy; she taught high school girls during the school day "and coached whatever sport was in season at the grade-school level."

"The organizational skills that I developed at Rosemont School were invaluable," she added. "I learned how to be organized when I began in Kindergarten, and how to adjust to any situation, when I needed to."

Thirty-nine years later, she can look back on a career where she expanded the Merion Mercy Academy athletic program from



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three sports to a 12-sport, 20-team program that has won numerous

league, district, and state championships in volleyball, basketball, and track & field, as well as many crew races and regattas.

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Her administrative skills have enabled her to attain many executive positions within the Athletic Association of Catholic Academies - where she has been president for 15 years - as well as others within the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association, and the Pennsylvania State Athletic Directors Association.

Last March she was honored with the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association 2014 State Award of Merit for leadership and special contributions to interscholastic athletics at the local and state level.

"It was wonderful to receive the award," said Barbara, "especially to be recognized by your peers for something like this."

When asked what she most valued about her experience at Rosemont School - from which six of her siblings graduated - Barbara spoke often of "values" and "family."

The Clarke family still is prominent at RSHC. Brother Steve '73 P'01'03 is a teacher and coach, and mother Barbara P'67'69'70'73'75'77'80'83 GP'01'02'03 is a longtime volunteer in the Office of Institutional Advancement.

"Rosemont School was such a caring place, like a family," she said. "I found the same thing at Merion, which is what has kept me there for so long.

"What I found to be the biggest benefit was the small class sizes. You were a person, not just a student. You knew your classmates, the teacher knew you - how far to push you, how far not to push you - because they knew you well and were interested in your well-being."

And RSHC remains a place where those traditions live on. ✦