

# suburban life

On the eve of Villa Joseph Marie High School's 90th anniversary, new president Jeanne Frawley leads the school into the future with joyfulness, positivity, and possibility.

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# Ever Upward

BY LEIGH STUART | PHOTOS BY BRIDGET GORMAN

ON THE EVE OF **Villa Joseph Marie High School's 90TH ANNIVERSARY**, new president **Jeanne Frawley** LEADS THE SCHOOL INTO THE FUTURE WITH JOYFULNESS, POSITIVITY, AND POSSIBILITY.

**O**ne's high school years can be a daunting time for anyone, let alone the students who have grown into young adulthood during the tumultuousness of recent memory. Having addressed this unique time with empathy and kindness, the faculty and staff at Villa Joseph Marie High School in Holland are approaching the 2022-2023 school year—the school's 90th anniversary—with an abundance of optimism.

"Villa has so much opportunity now as the single women-only school in Bucks County," says Jeanne Frawley, the school's newly inducted president, as well as an alumna from the Class of 1994. "I've worked in higher education in various roles, but I'm so excited to connect with these young women and their parents, and support their journeys."

Lauren Carr, an alumna from the Class of 2000, has served as Villa's principal since 2013 and a math teacher since 2004. She gives Villa's students tremendous credit, not only for the grace with which they met the challenges of recent years, but also for their eagerness to move forward.

"That ability they showed to go through that and see there is a brighter side past the pandemic, that resilience is a testament to what Villa prepares young women for," she says. "The ability to face obstacles and come out on top even when it seems as if the world is crumbling—and for teens, there is a true challenge to that—shows that Villa women are fierce leaders who can do whatever they want."

The theme of Villa's 2022-2023 anniversary school year is "The Year of the Alumna." With the recent addition of Frawley, five of the school's 13 administrators are graduates: (front, from left) Jeanne Frawley '94, president; Lauren Carr '00, principal; (back, from left) Erica Franzzo '03, communications manager; Bailey Gorman '10, admissions director; and Becky Flynn Hensel '99, athletic director. With the help of the entire faculty and staff, these proud alumnae are ready to lead by example and inspire the next generation of Villa students to find who God calls them to be.



As they prepare to celebrate a landmark in the school's rich history, Villa students and staff have good reason to be excited for the future. Frawley and Carr both cite the expansion of the school's physical footprint since their time as students.

"In the early 2000s and before, Villa was one hallway," Carr shares. "Now we have an entire campus and have expanded into a three-floor building. We've built a state-of-the-art performing arts center and have many theater arts courses, including theater tech where students can learn sound systems, lighting, rigs, and other things that a student normally wouldn't experience until college or in the work force."

While much has changed in terms of campus expansion, much has stayed the same in terms of Villa's commitment to the mission of its foundress, Venerable Mother Maria Kaupas. As a faith-based institution, Frawley emphasizes that the school's educational approach is, and always has been, holistic in terms of teaching students a balance of "mind, body, and spirit." These foundational elements apply to students who are Catholic, as well as to those who are not. Frawley notes that the school strives to help each student find her voice, her center, and her balance in life.

"Graduates of women's education report feeling supported by their peers and their teachers at rates 10 to 15 percent higher than women in coeducational institutions," she says. "We're building women leaders at Villa."

For example, Villa has nurtured a generation of women leaders in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) fields. Frawley notes that the majority of Villa's most recent graduating class chose to pursue STEM majors, and she looks forward to the further expansion of the school's engineering program.

"Fifty-five percent of our recent alumnae went on to study STEM in college," Carr adds. "It shows what females can do. From coding to robotics to rocketry, our students are doing things that were never even thought of 20 or 30 years ago, and we're offering courses and curriculum that never would've been thought of in the '70s or '80s."

Some of the graduates who excel in STEM fields will be spotlighted in the upcoming "Profile of a Graduate" series, an initiative launched to coincide with the school's 90th anniversary.

This all ties in with the school's motto, taken from the words of its foundress: "Always more, Always better, Always with love."

"The culture at Villa is one of support," Frawley says. "Women helping women is really encouraging. It's fortunate to see that piece of Villa hasn't changed."

This culture of kindness shined when the school welcomed 75 students from St. Basil Academy. The all-girls institution in Jenkintown closed its doors at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, after nearly 90 years of service to the community.

"This group [from St. Basil] offered such unique and powerful experiences to share with our students," Frawley says. "We continue

to learn from each other and now our family has expanded to a greater network than ever. We're thrilled to have an enriched student body and alumnae community."

Last year's graduating class featured two valedictorians and two salutatorians, with one woman representing each school in each category. Villa also welcomed Connie D'Angelo, the former principal of St. Basil, as dean of academic affairs, an addition Frawley describes as "a huge benefit" to students and staff.

"Our students have learned from each other, and continue to open up to each other," she says. "The families are engaged, and I look forward to that continuing."

Considering its past successes, its ability to overcome recent challenges, and the culture of possibility it has nurtured since its founding 90 years ago, Villa is poised for a bright future. Upcoming events such as a Sept. 17 casino-themed night, a welcome picnic for first-year students, and a golf outing, among others, will give all constituents plenty of reasons to celebrate Villa's spirit of love, innovation, and understanding.

"After the last few years," Frawley says, "we're all looking forward to the future." ■

## About Villa Joseph Marie

9:1	23	38	15	40
Student-Faculty Ratio	AP Courses	Honors Courses	Interscholastic Sports	Clubs

Are you interested in learning more about Villa Joseph Marie? Tour the campus, browse athletic and club extracurriculars, and hear from administration, teachers, and students at the Fall Open House on Sunday, Oct. 2, 2022. Visit [vjmh.org/openhouse](http://vjmh.org/openhouse) for more information.

## → Villa Joseph Marie High School

1180 HOLLAND ROAD | HOLLAND, PA 18966  
(215) 357-8810 | [VJMHS.ORG](http://VJMHS.ORG)