

Distinguished Alumni Award 2012
Cardinal Mooney High School
February 1, 2012

Thank you to the staff, students and Alumni Association for honoring me with this award.
Congratulations also to Bob Stoops.

This of course is an award that belongs to many others. It honors all those who support the Ursuline Sisters HIV/AIDS Ministry with their time, prayers, money and lots of hard work. It honors all the men, women and children we have been blessed to know over these last 20 years who live with HIV. It honors posthumously the many that have died of AIDS in our community. It honors my family, who has always supported me.

It honors especially the Ursuline Sisters, who despite the ignorance and prejudice against this disease, in so much of the community, 20 years ago, readily urged us to open our doors and hearts to welcome the HIV community into our home. We certainly believe that our founder St. Angela would be proud of the work we do.

It was over 50 years ago that these halls of Cardinal Mooney echoed my footsteps. In the current culture I am referred to kindly as being in the second half of life....or to say it clearly I'm old enough to be your grandmother.

So it is from this perspective I can say that there are two defining lessons I learned while at Mooney. Our 1st principal, Bishop Hughes always talked about the students in the school as the Mooney family (in the early 60's this was a brand new concept)...**each of us belonged**... we were all part of the family. Bishop Hughes also infused into this school, a spirit that everyone calls the "Mooney spirit." It is unique in the community and it defies definition; but part of the Mooney spirit comes from how Bishop Hughes urged us to always **be supportive of Mooney** ... to support Mooney and never be against anyone or another school. In other words, champion what you believe in and don't waste energy on conflict.

These lessons served us well 20 years ago, when we became aware of a group of people who stood at the fringe of society and suddenly because of a virus none of us had ever heard about were being treated with less than human dignity. The AIDS virus had entered our life and was wrecking havoc in society.

But all of us belonged to the human family and we decided to champion and to support one another, despite a disease that can rob people of their dignity and can instill fear and self-loathing, Offering hospitality to the HIV community and acknowledging their membership in the human family seemed only natural. **It was the right thing to do.**

The poet, Mary Oliver ends one of her poems with this question. **"Tell me what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"**

Hopefully, the answer to this question will continue to shadow you in your life, and that you bring to your plan for your life, the lessons you are offered here at Mooney, especially that all of us belong...we are all equal members of God's family and that we need to champion one another, despite whatever hardships assault us. Thank you again.

