FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mackenzie Schuler, Communications Manager

July 31, 2018

Saint Joseph Academy Students Make Global Impact in the Dominican Republic

When Mary Sessions ’18 signed on to participate in a week of service in the Dominican Republic, she knew she would be stretching outside her comfort zone. “This experience opened my eyes to how complete strangers can become friends,” she shared. Along with 12 other Saint Joseph Academy students, Mary and her peers participated in many hours of grueling physical labor: painting a total of 29 houses, leading 100 young children at a community vacation bible school and volunteering at the medical clinic. Several students also spent three days in a medical clinic, shadowing registered nurses, pharmacists and nurse practitioners where they interacted with more than 300 patients.

One of Mary’s favorite memories included working at the health fair and free health clinic. “The clinic was located in an extremely impoverished neighborhood that is flooded, smells of human waste, full of trash and yet, also filled with joyful people. In the clinic, we shadowed nurse practitioners, a pharmacist, nurses and a variety of other medical personnel - all volunteering their time and knowledge. The patients served were suffering from things like parasites, severe dehydration, rashes, colds and diabetes. Every patient was given a thorough exam. We assisted by testing blood sugar levels and completing urine tests - things that students in the U.S. don't have the chance to do until they are into their college career! What struck me was that almost all of the patients’ illnesses treated were directly caused by the environment. They were literally getting sick from breathing the polluted air, drinking unsafe water or eating diets full of sugar because of what food is affordable and readily available. These individuals have so little and make do with what they have. I am planning on studying biology at John Carroll University for my undergraduate degree and entering into the medical field in the future. This trip helped me finalize that medicine is what I want to pursue for the rest of my life, helping impact people in the little ways that I can.”
Saint Joseph Academy students are truly connected to serving the dear neighbor, a part of their mission inspired by their founders, the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph. Each student is required to complete 20 service hours annually. This past year was an exceptional year for service, with the 724 students serving more than an astounding 29,000 hours, averaging 40 hours, which is twice the goal.

“It was truly amazing to witness the students work through all kinds of adversity while living outside their comfort zone,” said trip chaperone Mrs. Alison Morgan, who is also a Spanish teacher and the World Languages Department Chair at the Academy. “This group was determined to get all tasks completed every day – putting aside their own wants and wishes to get them done. The students truly understand what it means to live in a country as great as the U.S., yet know that most of the world is without things like clean water and sanitary systems. They utilized their personal strength, compassion and empathy, and used these talents to serve the Dominicans. I am so proud to be a part of the Saint Joseph Academy community that works diligently to provide this opportunity to the students.”

"The trip was an eye-opening experience. Being able to spend time with the children and experiencing their joy, even though they have little to nothing, was my favorite part," shared Haley Morgan ’19.

To learn more about the mission trip, please click here.

###

Now in its 128th year, Saint Joseph Academy is the only all-girls Catholic high school in the City of Cleveland. With a current enrollment of 720 young women, Saint Joseph Academy is rooted in the spirituality of the Congregation of St. Joseph and works to foster unifying relationships with God and all creation. Each young woman is empowered to achieve academic excellence, and inspired to a life of compassionate leadership and service in a global society. Saint Joseph Academy is located at 3470 Rocky River Drive in Cleveland. For more information, visit www.sja1890.org or call 216.251.6788.