

Sister Mary Aquin Mission in Mercy Award
Honoring Todd Freeman
December 18, 2025

Good afternoon.

One of the great privileges of life at Mount de Sales Academy is witnessing, year after year, the way ordinary days are shaped by extraordinarily dedicated people. People who carry the heart of this place not through grand gestures, but through the quiet consistency of how they teach, how they serve, and how they care for those around them.

Since our founding in 1876, this school has been formed by individuals who understood that their work, whether in a classroom, an office, a gym, or entirely behind the scenes, was more than a job. It was a vocation. A calling rooted in faith, in service, and in the Mercy tradition that continues to define who we are.

The Sister Mary Aquin Mission in Mercy Award exists to honor that calling. It recognizes a faculty or staff member who reflects the best of our heritage: someone who invigorates student learning, who builds a

collaborative and faith-filled community, and who cares deeply, for students, colleagues, and the life of the school as a whole. This award is grounded in the charism of Catherine McAuley, carried here by the Sisters of Mercy, and preserved through generations of educators who believed that forming young people is holy work.

The award we present today is named for Sister Mary Aquin, one of Mount de Sales' first graduates and a woman who devoted fifty-five years of her life to teaching here. Her life reflects what it means to answer a calling and live it out faithfully and fully on this mount.

That same commitment, formed here as a student and lived out here as a faculty member, is what we honor in today's recipient. It is my great joy to present the first Sister Mary Aquin Mission in Mercy Award to Todd Freeman.

Todd is the kind of educator who strengthens a school in a hundred quiet ways, many of which students and colleagues may never fully see, but all of which matter deeply. In the classroom, he teaches physics and anatomy with clarity, high expectations, and a deep respect for the work

he knows his students are capable of doing. He helps students not only master content but is also one of our most dedicated academic mentors, helping students understand themselves as learners: how to study, how to think critically, how to persist through challenge, and how to trust their own growing abilities.

With Todd, physics is both the discipline and a daily lesson in action and reaction; how what we do matters, and how we respond matters just as much. The real lesson is about who these kids are going to be: their character, their integrity, and their sense of responsibility to others. He teaches them not just how to do things, but how to do things right. Because that's what you do. That's what Cavaliers do.

For freshmen especially in physics, Todd can feel... intimidating at first. He has a commanding presence, a strong voice, and very high expectations. It is not uncommon in August to hear: "Coach Freeman's a little scary." And every year, I smile and say, "Just wait. You'll see."

And they always do.

Todd's commitment to students shows up in moments large and small.

One of the most meaningful examples for me was actually one that was in my role as a parent, and I don't think I've ever even told Todd about it.

One day, my daughter said to me, "You know, Mama, Coach Freeman always has our back." Now this was not breaking news to me, it was something I had always known, but I didn't know where this was coming from. She explained that she had been getting unwanted and uncomfortable attention from a classmate. She was not even in Todd's class at the time, but he noticed and quietly stepped beside her in the lunch line and simply asked, "You good? You need me to step in?"

Todd's actions gave her the confidence to handle an awkward situation on her own, knowing she was supported. That is the Mercy mission lived out in real time. Todd's presence is steady. His counsel is thoughtful. Students seek him out not because he offers easy answers, but because he listens carefully and responds with honesty and care. Colleagues do the same.

And then there is the part of Todd's service that might sound impossible to quantify, until you realize it is actually measurable: in seats, mileage,

spreadsheets, schedules, and contingency plans. Todd is the person who gets people where they need to go. MDS Transportation, “Safe and On Time.” He oversees Mount de Sales transportation with care and precision, making sure that students arrive where they need to be and that faculty and parents can trust the system completely. It is logistical work done with personal care.

That work alone would be enough. But of course, that’s not all.

Todd continues to support everyone in this community; students, faculty, and administrators alike. One small but perfect example is his weekly emails. It is practical, thoughtful, inspiring, and reassuring. It says, in effect: *I've got you. And you've got this.*

Todd also embodies leadership in its truest form. He is someone whose perspective I value and seek out. He brings perspective, institutional memory, and integrity to every conversation. When he has a concern or sees an opportunity to improve our school, he brings it forward directly and respectfully. He does so not through complaint or gossip, but with a sincere desire to help this community grow. He chooses what is right

over what is easy, and what is good for the whole over what is comfortable for the individual. In doing so, he elevates the culture around him.

Over the years, Todd has served this community in countless other ways. He has overseen discipline, coached baseball, softball, volleyball, and more, always stepping forward when needed. He had an idea that ultimately led to what we now know as Freshman Forum, a program that shapes the experience of every new Cavalier, helping students enter high school with confidence, connection, and a sense of belonging.

Recently, a hashtag has surfaced that pretty much sums it all up:
#ToddDoesItAll.

On a lighter note, Todd and I also share something that matters deeply: we are among the few Gen X faculty members on staff, or at least at the end of the lunch table. He gets my references, and I get his. He laughs at the right things, and he is, without question, my most reliable source for excellent television recommendations.

It's this blend of seriousness and humanity that makes Todd such a gift to this community.

When you look at Todd's life at Mount de Sales, you can see echoes of the generations who came before him. In the Sisters of Mercy, who arrived in Reconstruction-era Macon with nothing but a mission. In the teachers whose names fill our stories, those who taught, coached, mentored, and built the traditions that define this place. In the people who understood that doing what is right matters more than doing what is easy, and that their work was part of something larger than themselves.

I've told you before, I once had a conversation with Todd about what we sometimes call the "greatest generation" of Cavaliers, the giants whose footsteps echo through these halls. You know the names: Pierce, Slocum, McLachlan, Tate; there are really too many to name. And almost simultaneously, we realized something important: the people who would follow them were already here. The next names. The next stories. The next legacy.

You're it, man. Freeman is one of those names. One of those stories.

This award is named for Sister Mary Aquin, whose life of service shaped this school in profound ways. She carried the mission of Mount de Sales wherever she went, quite literally, as symbolized by the traveling trunk that once accompanied her in her ministry.

Beginning this year, that trunk becomes part of this award. Each recipient of the Sister Mary Aquin Mission in Mercy Award will keep the trunk in their classroom or office for the semester. Before passing it on to the next recipient, we ask that they add a reflection or memento that represents their experience of our Mercy mission. Over time, it will become a living legacy archive of the educators and staff who have carried the heart of Mount de Sales forward, year by year.

Todd, it is fitting that you are the first to be entrusted with this tradition.

In addition to this honor, the recipient of this award also receives the Aquin Cup. Catherine McAuley believed deeply in the power of a “comfortable cup of tea,” the idea that hospitality and care often begin with noticing and responding to what someone needs in the moment.

The Aquin Cup symbolizes that same way of showing up. And Todd shows us, again and again, what that looks like in practice.

In addition to these symbols of our Mercy tradition, Todd will also receive a cash award, very generously sponsored by Prince Manufacturing, in gratitude for his extraordinary service to our community.

Todd, you strengthen our mission.

You strengthen our community.

And you strengthen all of us who are fortunate enough to work alongside you.

On behalf of Mount de Sales Academy, and in deep gratitude for the countless ways you embody our Mercy heritage, it is my great honor to present you with the Sister Mary Aquin Mission in Mercy Award.

Congratulations, Todd, and thank you for the extraordinary heart you bring to this extraordinary place.