



Creator of the Family Environment She Never Had

DEANNA SLAMANS
MHS Houseparent,
MHS Class of 1991

Deanna Slamans, a houseparent at MHS, has been married for 14 years. She has a daughter, 7, and son, 4, both of whom she adores. That may not seem like an unusual feat, but for someone who never witnessed a loving, supportive relationship, it is unlikely. Many women model their family life after what they learned from their own mothers. Deanna's role models were her houseparents at MHS.

Before entering MHS, Deanna's experience with "home" and marriage was one fraught with tumult, struggle and challenge. Her mother struggled with bipolar disease and depression, leading her to several suicide attempts and ultimately, death from one such attempt when Deanna was only seven years old. Deanna's father had his own demons, suffering from schizophrenia which ultimately landed him in prison for a time. Her parents' disabilities made it impossible for them to enjoy a stable, loving relationship and near impossible to provide stability for their children.

Upon her mother's death, Deanna and her siblings first lived with their grandmother, who suffered from alcoholism...another unstable environment. Then, they went to live with an aunt. While their aunt had the best of intentions, raising three young children on a single income proved very difficult. Recognizing that Deanna needed an environment that provided a more stable social and emotional environment, her aunt enrolled her at MHS in the eighth grade. While Deanna learned many things at MHS, she treasures learning how to have healthy relationships and gaining the knowledge that individuals can choose the lives they want to live.

Post-graduation from MHS and while in college, Deanna worked for community organizations to help girls at risk. This work changed her life...intensifying her passion for helping others and introducing her to her personal passion, her husband Andy.

Andy shared Deanna's passion for helping others and ultimately, together, they made it their life's work.

"It was Andy's idea to become MHS houseparents. At the time, I thought of MHS as a stepping stone. It never crossed my mind to work there. But when Andy suggested it, it just seemed to make sense." That was 10 years ago. Today, they are houseparents to 13 boys in grades nine through 11.

Houseparents play a unique role for students at MHS. They become substitute parents for the students while they are on campus. Houseparents provide day-to-day guidance and teach the students life skills from making beds, cooking breakfast, and cleaning the house to how to manage finances. They attend teacher meetings and athletic events as well. As a couple, the Slamans endeavor to create a close-knit family and show the students how to work through disagreements in a calm and respectful manner. A book Deanna recently wrote, "Faith's Pursuit," includes highlights from her background as well as their approach to the job of being a houseparent.

Deanna loves her job and sees herself as being a houseparent for another 10 years.