



From Sports to Sales

JOANNE GAGNON
Financial Sales
MHS Class of 1985

“With your personality, you should go into sales!”

That confidence boosting phrase was augmented by Joanne Gagnon’s sudden discovery of her own intellect and athleticism while at MHS. “I lacked confidence. I didn’t know I was smart. I didn’t know I was athletic. At MHS they take each child and encourage them so much.”

Joanne had an outgoing personality, but she never knew what gifts she had until she went to MHS and John Storm, then the School’s principal, told her. At MHS, Joanne was motivated to do well because people like John Storm believed in her, and motivated her by focusing on the positive.

Today, Joanne has a successful career in sales of financial products in the Northeast. For her job, Joanne, this woman who once lacked confidence, visits four customers a day, and manages 500 accounts a year. Connecting with her customers comes easily because MHS taught her to value diversity and to see everyone as an equal person.

At a time when trust in the financial industry is at a record low, Joanne attributes her continued success to the strong ethical grounding she got at MHS.

As Joanne began her personal quest for confidence, MHS offered her a nurturing and structured environment. Through their nurturing and her own commitment, she excelled at schoolwork and sports, running cross country, track, and managing the swim team. The confidence she built through these activities enabled her to apply for admission and ultimately, go to an Ivy League college. She studied marketing and finance at Cornell University giving her the basis to launch her career. Despite her demanding career and a family with two children, Joanne does what she can to give back to others. For example, she has run two New York City Marathons to raise money for cancer research. She also serves on the Milton Hershey School Alumni Association Board of Directors. She served from 1999-2003 and again from 2007-2009.

She also finds time to go back to the school to reconnect with her schoolmates. “Many people are close to their college friends. For me, my MHS friends are the most important. We still stay in touch, and they are some of the closest friends I have.” She concludes, “MHS really saved my life.”