

# 'Hope' scholars are finding Mercy challenging

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Last spring, Andrea Evans was reluctantly anticipating going to East High School after finishing up her studies at Frederick Douglass Middle School.

It wasn't that she thought East was bad in any way, she was just worried that she wouldn't find it challenging enough. "I was doing good (at Frederick Douglass) but I thought I wasn't learning as much as I could in one year," Evans said.

Evans's homeroom teacher suggested that she attempt to win a Hope Scholarship from Our Lady of Mercy High School. The scholarships, established last spring, are geared to economically-disadvantaged students who are academic achievers. Each scholarship covers tuition, uniform, book, supply and service costs for a four-year period.

Evans was one of several hundred applicants who took the scholarship exams: When she found out she had been one of the 13 girls chosen, she was elated. "I didn't really think I was going to get the scholarship at all," Evans said. "I was happy. I was ecstatic."

Evans credited her mother with encouraging her to do well in school. "My mother always tells me when I'm around my friends to encourage them to do better, to be a good role model, to always use



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier

**These four Hope Scholars have found Mercy to be both stimulating and friendly. Clockwise from left: Andrea Evans, Virgen Martinez, Katrina Thomas and Sarah Coit.**

proper English in the presence of an adult," she said.

Evans hopes to pursue drama and sports while at Mercy, noting that she had to adjust to the school quickly. "It's a lot more work than I'm used to," she said, adding that she gets a lot of personal attention from her instructors at Mercy because of

its small size.

Virgen Martinez had also planned to attend East when she received word she'd won a Hope Scholarship. Martinez listed social studies and science as her two favorite subjects, and noted that she wanted to become a lawyer someday.

"I like to argue over things and win the arguments," Martinez said of her underlying career motivations. When asked what type of lawyer she'll be, the student replied, "crime-buster." Why? "It's interesting — there's so many kinds of crime that I can't keep track of. Something new comes up every day."

Sarah Coit, another Hope scholar, com-

mented that she is learning something new every day in her history and literature classes. "I just like finding out about the roots of everything," she said, adding that the Dark Ages is a favorite historical period. "So much was happening and so little was recorded about it."

Her interest in medieval history is reflected in her love of J.R.R. Tolkien's medieval-like fantasies. "You can see all of the connections between people in the Dark Ages and people in the books," she remarked.

Like Martinez, Coit enjoys a good argument and plans to hone her skills in the speech and debate club. "I like to argue because I can find a way to disagree with everybody," she said.

Hope scholar Katrina Thomas has so far enjoyed Mercy, but could argue with the color of the school's uniform. "It's okay, but maybe blue is not my color," she said. "Blue is boring ... (It's) a boy's color."

Thomas has reason to be concerned about her appearance because she's hoping to be a model someday. She may have some help already. A junior she met at the scholarship awards ceremony has agreed to hook Thomas up with a local modeling school, she said.

Unlike the other scholars, Thomas prefers gym to her other classes. "I want to play basketball," she said. "I'm pretty tall, and last year I didn't play at any time, but my gym teacher kept asking me about joining the team."

All four girls remembered the warm welcome they received at their new high school, and exclaimed they were glad to be there. Evans summed up her fellow students' manner as friendly and "really mellow."

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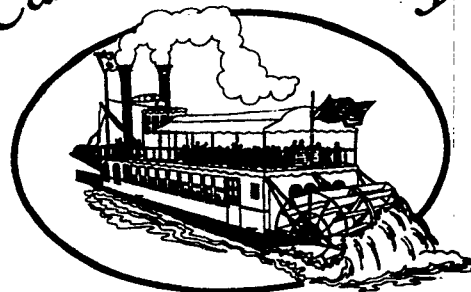
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