

Friday, February 26, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

Our daughter, Mia Lawson, is currently a student at St. Mary's School in Medford, Oregon. Prior to January, 2016, however, we lived in Bartlett, Tennessee, and Mia attended Bartlett High School there. We relocated to Oregon for a job opportunity. Although we decided this was a positive move for our family overall, it was not easy for Mia to change school not only mid-year, but also mid high school.

Mia has lived in Bartlett and attended local schools there her entire life. She is a bit reserved, so moving her away from the only home, friends, and family she has ever known was terrifying. We heard repeatedly how resilient kids are and that she would be fine, which is always easy for people to say when they aren't the ones doing it to their kids. We were so fortunate to bring her to Oregon and find St. Mary's. She has been welcomed warmly by both the students and adults in the building.

When she recently decided that she wanted to participate on the track team, we were thrilled. She has never expressed any interest in the sport before, and we felt that her decision was a great step in the right direction towards her becoming a real part of the school community at St. Mary's. It is our hope that being part of a team will have a great positive impact on her in all the ways that is typical for a kid; developing a sense of commitment, rising to challenges, seeing hard work pay off, and learning more about herself in general. However, for us, as parents who have felt so guilty for taking her away from home, this offers additional benefits. We realize that being part of a school team will be of great benefit to Mia socially, as nothing like it helps to build strong bonds between kids. Simply put, we could not care less whether she ever wins a race; we just want her to build good solid friendships here in Oregon, so that she really feels that she is a part of the group, rather than forever being the new girl on the periphery who would prefer to be back in Tennessee.

We hope that Mia will be allowed the opportunity to participate in athletics at St. Mary's, particularly since we see this as a huge step towards her adjusting positively to this major change in her life and furthermore beginning to embrace Oregon as her new home.

Thank you for your consideration.

Johnnie and Becky Walker

*Rebecca Walker*  
*John Walker*