

## **Lizette Martinez Strom:** *developing students with caring hearts*



When Lizette Martinez Strom entered the 7th grade at La Reina High School in 1985, she was new to the Conejo Valley. One of her first impressions of the Sisters of Notre Dame was that they were “energetic and full of life. It was very clear how strongly

they believed in continuing what St. Julie Billiart started. The Sisters were vigilant in continuing her mission to educate, guide and instill strength in the young women at La Reina.” Lizette has fond memories of Lee Hubbard, her teacher for 7th grade homeroom, history and literature, before Lee became Sr. M. Leanne Hubbard. She recalls, “Miss Hubbard was special, and I knew it before she was discerning to be a sister. Something about her stood out. Her ready smile and energy warmed the room! She always took the time to listen and helped build my self-confidence.” During her high school years, Lizette was also impressed by the meaningful school Masses, her Confirmation in 8th grade, her Junior Ring Ceremony in 11th grade and her Senior Retreat, all imbued with the Notre Dame spirit.

After graduating from La Reina in 1991, Lizette earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Law & Society from University of California, Santa Barbara, and married Jeffrey Strom at St. Paschal Baylon Church in 1995. They have two children, Tristan, La Reina Class of 2020 (shown with her in the photo), and Brendan, who will be attending Crespi Carmelite High School in the fall. Lizette’s post graduate education includes a multiple subject teaching credential from California State University, Northridge; she is working on a Master’s in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies and an Administrative Credential, both to be completed in June, 2020. Her career in

education began at St. Catherine of Siena School in Reseda between 1999 and 2002. She transitioned to St. John Eudes School in 2003, where she continues to be the middle school math teacher. She has also been Student Council Moderator for 17 years and Assistant Principal since 2015.

As an educator, Lizette hopes to equip her students with confidence in themselves and in their ability to achieve. “I especially love,” she notes, “when the girls in 8th grade tell me stories of how in 5th grade they either hated math or felt that they weren’t good enough at it, but now they love math and it’s one of their best subjects. Hearing that helps to affirm everything I do.” She emphasizes further, “If I can help students figure out how to be successful on their own, then I am helping them to become strong independent young adults just like the Sisters of Notre Dame did for me. Perseverance is critical to success. Aside from providing the best academic experience possible, I also hope I’ve helped develop students with good, caring hearts, who will be good citizens of this earth.”

One way that Lizette helps to develop these traits in her students is by promoting community involvement. She encouraged her National Junior Honor Society students to participate in the recent SND Nun Run. They made signs supporting the sisters and were really looking forward to helping out; the heavy rains on the day of the event prevented them from attending. They were delighted when two months later, Sr. Lisa Megaffin, Sr. Louise Hlavac and Jen Coito arranged to hold a mini Nun Run on their campus. As Lizette describes this occasion, “the sisters gave out awards and cheered the students on. It was such a kind and unexpected gesture, and the students really appreciated it.”

Lizette finds her profession rewarding for “we are often told at the high school level that St. John Eudes grads are well prepared and are good, thoughtful, kindhearted kids. I am very proud of each and every one of them.”