



9401 Starcrest Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78217
Ph: (210) 483-9100
Fx: (210) 483-9299
www.smhall.org

Press Release

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Contact:

Elizabeth (Liz) A. Thompson
Director of Marketing & PR
(210) 483-9133
lthompson@smhall.org

Miss USA Visits Saint Mary's Hall to Talk About Recovering the Crown: Breaking the Cycle of Addiction

(San Antonio, Texas) - Tara Connor, Miss USA 2006, spoke to Upper School students about her struggles with addiction and her recovery during a special Assembly on October 2. She explained that her battle began when she started drinking alcohol at 14-years old. By the end of that year, Tara says she was hooked on morphine. Several years later, Tara began participating in beauty pageants where she says she found the perfect mask to hide all her insecurities and addictions. After being crowned Miss USA in 2006, Tara had everything she ever wanted, but says she felt emotionally bankrupt. Then, in the middle of her reign, the pageant drug tested her, and she failed. By the end of the day, Tara's addiction was being covered by every media channel, including ESPN. Donald Trump, who owns and helps manage the Miss USA pageant, supported Tara during this difficult time. He gave her the opportunity to "earn back" her crown by participating in a recovery program, which Tara successfully completed.

Along with sharing her story, Tara drove home the idea that everyone is or has experienced some form of pain. She says that it's the pain people feel that causes some people to turn to alcohol or other addictive substances, and she strongly encouraged students to reach out to adults in the school community for help of any kind. Tara also reminded students to give themselves a chance to succeed, saying, "I could be much [more successful] than I am now, if I hadn't used for all those years."

Her story affected many students. Form 12 student Sikander Zakriya said, "I thought Tara was amazing, and her story was very relatable to many of the students. She kept everyone engaged in a fun but serious manner and I know that she definitely changed a lot of students' minds." Tara was in San Antonio as part of a community education program sponsored by the Palmer Drug Abuse Program of Rise Recovery.

Saint Mary's Hall embraces our responsibility to openly and actively talk with our students about the social challenges of being a pre-teen and teenager ... drugs and alcohol, addiction, drinking and driving, driving and texting, internet safety, dating, and bullying. Having Tara speak about her experience is just one more way which we can teach our students about responsible decision making.

Since 1879, Saint Mary's Hall has set the standard for college preparatory education in San Antonio by providing a wide-range of exceptional opportunities in academics, athletics, fine arts, and core values education to create well-rounded students that are successful in college and life. Saint Mary's Hall offers exceptional opportunities for children ages 3 through grade 12.