

## **2017 Young Alumni of the Year – Gina Hinders, Class of 2010**

Gina graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign with a Bachelor's degrees in Spanish and Psychology and a minor in Art Education in May, 2014 where she was a James Scholar. While at Illinois, she studied for one year in Barcelona, Spain, earning the Alvaro Monserrat Scholarship and the Foundation for Global Scholars Scholarship. She also received the University of Illinois Mom's Association Humanitarian Award. Gina was a Resident Advisor at the Newman Center, on the Provost's Committee and selected as a University of Illinois New Students Programs student leader.

After graduation Gina did a work/study for one summer in Italy. In 2014-'15 she taught Spanish in both St. Matthew's Grade School and Central High School. Gina spent the academic year of 2015- '16 living/working in Barcelona, Spain where she taught Art and English at Col-legi La Vall, a Catholic girl's school. She is currently a 2016- '17 Fulbright Fellow and Cultural Ambassador, teaching and studying in El Oro, Mexico at Escuela Preparatoria Oficial Numero 2.

Gina is active in charity and her religious life. She is involved with Communion and Liberation (CL)- a lay ecclesiastical movement within the Catholic Church. She has participated in CL in Spain, Italy, the United States and now Mexico. While in Barcelona, Gina worked weekly with both CL serving the poor and with the Sisters of Charity in their soup kitchen. Gina tutored female students aged 8-14 at Terral, a school with students of low socioeconomic-status, in math, science, art and English and taught both basketball and volleyball to girls who had never played either sport. In high school and college, Gina had a hair accessory business, where she donated all of her proceeds to Catholic Charities.

Gina stands out as an artist while she promotes and inspires art and artists wherever she goes. As part of a mission trip with Gospel Roads Service Team from the University of Illinois, she and a group of college students spent Spring Break 2012 working at a low-income school, Our Lady of Prompt Succor, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Gina helped organize and led art lessons for students, K-8, and aided in school restoration projects. She loved working with the children so much that she and her sister, Christiana, and two girlfriends packed up a minivan full of art supplies (glass for mosaics, paints, paper, etc.) and drove on their own to New Orleans again in May, 2012 to work with the children for another week! She gave her talent and love of art that had been fostered and developed throughout her life growing up in Champaign, to the less fortunate children of New Orleans. Now in El Oro, at the Casa de Cultura, she continues her passion for art. She started a weekly painting class where she instructs children ages 6-12 while speaking only Spanish.

Gina is fluent in Spanish, speaks Italian and has a knowledge of the Catalan language. Wherever she goes she creates water colors on location. Her love of languages was fostered by her STM instructors Senora Stewart and Senora Quinton and her love of art was cultivated by Mrs. Pagel. Her dedication of service to others is a direct reflection of her service and learning at The High School of Saint Thomas More.