

## Message from MARJO

October 1, 2018

Dear Members of the Maret Community,

Over the past several years, we have seen countless reports about people who exploit positions of power by abusing those around them. In light of the widespread coverage of these issues during the past week, Upper School Director Steven Tejada addressed our students in Grades 9 through 12 at morning Convocation:

*It's really important to remember that the topics of sexual assault and consent can trigger many different emotions in people for a variety of reasons. For some, processing these events and topics can be deeply personal and incredibly painful. I want to remind everyone about the layers of support here at Maret. If you are concerned about yourself or a friend, please make sure to reach out to your advisor, our Director of Counseling, or any other trusted adult in the community.*

Just as these reports can be upsetting for students currently attending Maret, we recognize that some of our alumni, parents, and other community members may also find themselves struggling to deal with thoughts of past events and behavior.

Our school is committed to a culture that is healthy, open, responsive, and reflective. In my 25 years as Head of School, about a dozen individuals have come forward to report concerns about sexual misconduct or abuse, either in the home or at the School. Therefore, periodically – as now – I write to you about the high standard we apply to people who hold positions of power and trust.

Each report has been taken seriously, addressed immediately, and conveyed to the authorities as appropriate. We also make available support and counseling options. No allegation about Maret staff has ever concerned students attending the School at the time of any reports; and no adult ever mentioned in these accounts currently works at Maret.

Please understand that, except for reporting to public safety authorities as mandated by law, we cannot share details about any allegations – out of respect for the privacy of anyone who has come forward in confidence. The School works hard to maintain an appropriate balance between the goal of transparency and the needs of those who have asked us to safeguard their confidentiality and privacy; we remain mindful that reporting abuse is an act of courage.

Returning to the present, it is important to share with you our ongoing efforts to keep today's students safe from abuse:

- All Maret employees are trained to maintain appropriate boundaries with children. Our **Faculty Resource Guide** and our [Crisis Procedures \(HERE\)](#) establish these boundaries clearly and state that the School WILL report any possible abuse. We bring in outside experts annually to run workshops about this, so that even a rumor can be dealt with properly and swiftly.
- We commission background checks on all employees hired to work at the School.
- We teach students and faculty how to identify and stop an abusive situation before it happens; what predatory behavior looks like; and how to help a friend if you are aware of any unsafe conduct.
- Our school Counselors are well-known to all students and operate in an environment in which asking for help is encouraged.
- We are continuing to introduce new curricula about ethics and respect; healthy and unhealthy relationships; Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills for difficult conversations; and self-protection/self-defense. (Learn more [HERE](#) about Maret's [SEL, Human Development, and Human Sexuality program](#).)

Along with many independent schools, Maret partners annually with Community of Concern to remind families of the laws and dangers around allowing drugs and/or alcohol to be consumed by teens at parties in homes.

Even with all of this in place, we know that abuse and harassment are extremely serious issues. Therefore, we will continue to evaluate our programs with the goal of implementing best practices for prevention and outreach at our school.

For everyone in our Maret community, both past and present: if you or your child has ever experienced abuse from any individual at Maret, we encourage you to share that history with me (202-939-8819); or with the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency (202-671-7233); or with the Metropolitan Police Department (202-715-7300). We are here to provide resources and assistance, including access to law enforcement and counseling.

We strive to provide a culture of openness, reflection, and awareness to keep Maret a safe and healthy school for all children, faculty, graduates and their families.

Thank you for your partnership.

**Marjo Talbott**  
Head of School