

Also, the announcement was made in February, too late in the school year to transfer anywhere else desirable, she said.

"When I first heard that the school was closing, I started crying," she said. "Then something came over me. I said, 'My school will not close down. I had faith in God—and the alumni—that they wouldn't allow it to happen.'"

As it turned out, Hall's faith was well-placed. Five well-known local leaders—attorneys Keith Doley and Shantell Payton, Civil District Court Clerk Dale Atkins and Judges Piper Griffin and Edwin Lombard—reached out to the sisters to see if the school could somehow stay open a year, to make for a smoother transition.

"As we were negotiating with their lawyer, a message came back: 'If you want to keep it open, buy it,'" said Doley, 65, who graduated from the school in 1968, before it became all-girls.

The group didn't have the money to buy the school outright, but it soon became the steward of a nonprofit entity—5116 Magazine Street Preparatory High School Corp.—and negotiated a purchase with the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

The five shared a determination to keep the school operating.

"You have a 98-year heritage that could end. What do you do?" Doley said. "I don't think any one of us ever thought twice about that. It's like your child falling into a pool and you not knowing how to swim. You jump into the water and save that child. That's what we did."

New name, old traditions

Griffin said the Xavier Prep school climate was something precious that needed saving. She said the school is doing well now, though it still holds fundraisers to help provide scholarships to needy students, because not all of the families can afford the \$6,320 tuition charged for eighth-graders this year or the roughly \$8,300 tuition for the higher grades.

For legal reasons, the new owners couldn't keep the name Xavier Prep, so the stewards renamed the school for its founder, Katharine Drexel, who was canonized as a saint in 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

Beyond the name, though, the

school soon after the school-closure announcement, before the purchase was announced in April of that year.

That caused some cuts at the institution and some concern among alumni, who worried that the school might not be financially strong enough if the classes got too small. But the enrollment is rising again, to the point where Hall was assigned two little sisters this year in the 65-girl freshman class.

And when she's in her yellow-and-black uniform, she said, she is treated well by Prep alumni all across town. "So many places I go, I get discounts not only for myself but the people with me," Hall said.

The school's ties certainly run deep in New Orleans. The school's alumni roll includes two New Orleans first ladies, Sybil Haydel Morial and Mickey Laurie Barthelemy.

Recently, Judge Lombard came to speak to Hall's class and urged them to come to him for anything they need as they apply for scholarships for college or look for other opportunities after graduation. She told him about an internship she'd had with Juvenile Court; he suggested that she send him an email and learn more about the summer internships offered by his court, the Louisiana 4th Circuit Court of Appeal.

A fourth vow

Drexel, a Philadelphia banking heiress and philanthropist, devoted much of her life to the education of Native American and African-American students.

In 1915, she founded Xavier Prep; it was owned and operated by a group of nuns from the religious order she'd created, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. In addition to pledging to lead lives of poverty, chastity and obedience, women entering the order also made a fourth vow: "not to undertake any work which would lead to the neglect or abandonment of the Indian or Colored races."

Drexel purchased the school's Uptown site, formerly home to Southern University, which had moved to Baton Rouge. To make the purchase, Drexel had to go through a third party, because neighbors reportedly weren't happy to have another institution devoted to the education of black students in their midst. She also sent seven nuns to establish a Blessed Sacrament

and moved the university there. But the high school itself is also considered a landmark institution. Though McDonogh 35 Senior High School would open two years later, Xavier Prep was, at the time, the city's only coed high school serving African-Americans. St. Mary's Academy was already operating and educating black girls, but there was no other secondary school for Catholic boys until St. Augustine opened in 1950.

stage to get her diploma this spring, accompanying her will be members of the Class of 1966, which graduated 50 years ago. That's another lauded school tradition. Marching in the 50-year class will be longtime school volunteer Anatolie Bachemin, 67, a retired educator who graduated in a large class, totaling 183 graduates.

At the time she attended Prep, the tuition was \$20 a month, the Blessed Sacrament convent was

lytical thinking.

Griffin said she entered as a freshman with no idea of what she wanted to do in life. "I had no clue," she said. Soon, teachers helped her focus. "I was encouraged to do speech and debate, because I liked to talk," she said. She also played sports and was encouraged to broaden her interests by trying a wide range of activities.

She also learned to give back, to serve people, she said. "Some

that they formed their closest friendships there. "A lot of people think it's odd that my best friends came from high school; most of theirs came from college," Saunly said.

Griffin, too, said some of her closest present-day friends are ex-classmates from Prep. "You always have that sense of family," she said, using an oft-used expression.

"Once a Prepper, always a Prepper," she said.

PUBLIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Proposed BP Settlement Consent Decree and *Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill* Draft Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan for the Gulf of Mexico

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the *Deepwater Horizon* Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees (Trustees) invite the public to a series of meetings as they seek public comments on two documents. DOJ is asking for public comment on a proposed **Consent Decree with BP**. This Consent Decree sets forth a settlement between BP, the United States, and the five Gulf states resolving claims for federal civil penalties and natural resource damages related to the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

The Trustees are seeking public comment on the *Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill* Draft Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan (PDARP) and Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). The draft plan would allocate funds for restoration from a settlement with BP for up to \$8.8 billion for natural resource injuries.

There will be eight meetings—seven within the Gulf region and one in Washington D.C. Information about the Louisiana meetings listed below.

LOUISIANA PUBLIC MEETINGS		
Date	Times	Location
10/19/2015	5:30 PM – Open House 6:00 PM – Meeting	Courtyard by Marriott – Houma Versailles Parlour 142 Liberty Drive Houma, LA 70360
10/22/2015	5:30 PM – Open House 6:00 PM – Meeting	Hilton Garden Inn New Orleans Convention Center Garden Ballroom 10001 South Peters Street New Orleans, LA 70130

To download the proposed Consent Decree, visit <http://www.justice.gov/enrd/deepwater-horizon>. To view the Trustees' draft programmatic damage assessment and restoration plan, as well as a list of locations where copies of the documents have been placed for public review and a list of all public meetings, visit www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov. To facilitate public review of documents, information on the Consent Decree and a link for making comment is also posted at www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov

In addition to verbal comments received at public meetings, the public may submit written comments through December 4, 2015:

For the Consent Decree:

- Online: <http://www.justice.gov/enrd/deepwater-horizon>
- By U.S. Mail: U.S. Department of Justice, P.O. Box 7611, Washington, D.C. 20044-7611, and should refer to U.S. v. BP Exploration and Production et al, Civil No. 10-4536 (E.D. La.) (centralized in MDL 2179: In Re: Oil Spill by the Oil Rig "Deepwater Horizon" in the Gulf of Mexico, April 20, 2012), D.J. Ref. 90-5-1-1-10026

For the draft plan:

- Online: www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov
- By U.S. Mail: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 49567, Atlanta, GA 30345

MEETING CONTACTS:

STATE: Jenny Kurz, 225-342-0168, jenny.kurz@la.gov

NOAA: Courtney Groeneveld, 301-427-8666, courtney.groeneveld@noaa.gov

DOJ: Nanciann Regalado, 678-296-6805, nanciann_regalado@fws.gov

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this meeting is asked to advise the Trustees at least five days before the meeting by calling Nanciann Regalado at the contact information above.