

QUAKER WORKS

The Magazine of Friends' Central School

11:2 Fall/Winter 2019



Teaching Skills, Honoring
Student Voices: English at FCS

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by Alexa Quinn '98

SCIENCE CORE TEAM VISITS MIT'S SAXELAB
by John Gruber

SPREADING QUAKER VALUES
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The School observed International Day of Peace 2019 on September 20.

(At left) Lower School students walked down a pathway lined with peace doves to their Meeting for Worship, held outside. The peace doves were made by the students themselves; (at right) Jerome Allen '14, assisted by his sister Jai Smith '22, was the guest speaker at the Middle and Upper School Peace Day Assembly. He spoke about his experience working at the CTC 10 Safe Hub. CTC 10, founded to honor the memory of Chris T. Campbell '04, supports the CTC 10 Safe Hub, a soccer field and community center in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa. (See pages 12-13 for other recent visitors to campus!)

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ON THE COVER

Kade '25 and Jordan '25 participate in an animated seventh grade English class taught by Keino Terrell. Read about the FCS English curriculum and several of our "literary" alumni/ae on page 26.



FRIENDS' CENTRAL SCHOOL

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We welcome any comments, letters, photographs, and suggestions for future issues. Please send all communications to communications@friendscentral.org.

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Letter from the Head of School

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to *Quaker Works* Fall/Winter 2019! This issue hits your doors as the weather grows colder and we look ahead to the holiday season while reflecting on the myriad accomplishments and happenings at FCS and beyond since the spring of 2019.

Community is our 2019-2020 all-school testimony, and this publication highlights so much of what happens at FCS that relates to this testimony.

Read about the many successes of our award-winning students and faculty members – in classrooms, in competitions, in the arts, and in athletics. Enjoy three features written by FCS faculty members: Alexa Quinn '98 looks back on 45 years of the seventh grade Echo Hill experience; John Gruber describes the Science Core Team's culminating visit to 2019 Distinguished Scientist Rebecca Saxe's SaxeLab at MIT this summer; and Grant Calder shares how he, Dwight Dunston '06, and Al Vernacchio spend a few days each summer helping spread Quaker values to a group of international students as part of a State Department-sponsored program. We are grateful to Alexa, John, and Grant for contributing their time and providing a glimpse into some fascinating connections FCS has with the wider world.

This issue of *Quaker Works* also explores the career trajectories of a number of alumni/ae working in professions where literary skills are paramount and takes a deep dive into the English curriculum at FCS to see how such skills are nurtured.

Meanwhile, back on campus, we've been enjoying a tremendous fall season, with inspiring visitors, including 2019-2020 Distinguished Visiting Justice Leader Dr. Steven Larson, Co-Founder of Puentes de Salud. We've seen the launch of Plan 175, our new strategic plan to guide us into our next 175 years! We've also been witness to breathtaking theater productions by the Middle and Upper School drama departments (to be featured in the spring issue of *Quaker Works*), scientific and technical advances made by our own students, and athletic triumphs (visit friendscentral.org/news for all the details!).

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a healthy and happy holiday season, and I hope to welcome many of you to campus in the coming months.



Craig N. Sellers
Head of School



A perfect fall
day on the
City Avenue
campus

Campus Log

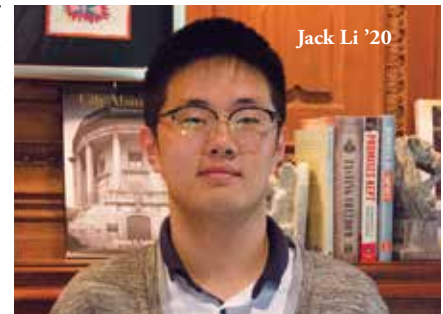
For more School news, visit friendscentral.org/news

Second Grade Walks for Water

In May, both second grade classes went on their annual “Walk for Water” along the Wissahickon Creek to raise money for Water for South Sudan. The first FCS “Walk for Water” took place in 2004 as a service project to help our second grade students develop awareness about what many children in certain parts of the world, including some countries in Africa, do every day: walk many miles to a watering hole to get water for their families.



The 8th Grade Showcase in May is a culminating event for Middle Schoolers. Students display their skills on stage as performers (such as Kokayi Jones, pictured here) or showcase their myriad talents in a gallery-style display.



Jack Li '20

DECA Success for Upper School Student

In April, Jack Li '20 participated in the international DECA competition in Orlando, Florida, where he placed in the top 20 for his event, Accounting Applications. Jack worked his way from the local and state level to competing at the national/international level. There were over 10,000 participants, with contestants from the US, Canada, and many other countries.

David Thomas, Keino Terrell, Dwight Dunston '06, Mariama Richards, and Katy Oh accompanied seniors Veronica Lin, Jade Halpern, Victoria Rosa, Genesis Johnson, and Mason Mosley to the NAIS Student Diversity Leadership Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, last December.

“Our students were rockstars at the conference. They were open and honest about their life experiences, and they worked hard with us to brainstorm ideas that can help to make FCS a more equitable place,” said Mariama.



Lower School Filmmakers Triumph!

In May, Lower School students in the Fall Elective “Adventures in Filmmaking” took second place in the Bridge Film Festival! There were 25 films submitted from 12 Quaker schools, most from middle and upper school students. Our students submitted two films – one PSA, *Be a Buddy, not a Bully* and one new media film, *Saving Baby Turtles*. The PSA came in second in its category, and the Turtle film was noted for its creativity and originality! Congrats to Benk, Miles, Jonathan, Nico, Kaia, Noa, Alejandro, and Tate.



Members of the Upper School Debate Team took on Head of School Craig N. Sellers and teachers Julie Plunkett and Brad Morris at the Debate Assembly in May.



Fifth Grade Science Fair 2019

There were some incredible projects on display at the Fifth Grade Science Fair in May; the students did a fabulous job presenting their work. Pictured here is Aleem '26 with his project, Building a Solar-Powered Car.



Newsies Wins Big

Congratulations to the cast and crew of the Upper School 2019 musical *Newsies*. Outdoing other area schools, they took home a total of eight prizes this spring – three Cappies and five Philadelphia Independence Awards. Cappies went to Julia Dani '20 for Best Featured Actress, Emma Gordon '20 for Best Choreography, and the cast won Best Ensemble. At the 2nd Annual Philadelphia Independence Awards, Julia Dani also won Best Featured Actress, Emma Gordon won for Best Creative Leadership, and FCS took home the prizes for Best Small Ensemble, Best Dance Ensemble, and Best Overall Ensemble!



Native Plant Pollinator Slope

Twenty-five different species of native flowering plants that attract pollinators and give a succession of bloom from May through October were recently planted on a steep slope between the FCC and the Language Building on the City Avenue campus that was previously covered with turf grass. During a three-minute observation this summer, at least eight species of bees and wasps (including honeybees) and three butterfly species were spotted nectaring on the flowers on the slope.

Turf grass is a non-native plant and thus a non-contributor to the local ecosystem, and it was also difficult to mow the steep slope. The new hillside meadow not only increases the health of our ecosystem, it also makes the lives of our grounds staff much easier!



Lower School students taste “Stone Soup” – the traditional culmination of October’s Harvest Fest week



Eleven Friends’ Central Students Earn National Merit Honors

Eleven seniors have been recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Program this fall. Six Friends’ Central students were named National Merit Semifinalists, and five students were named National Merit Commended Students. These students were among the more than 1.5 million who took the 2019 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). Of these, only 50,000 were recognized by the National Merit Program for their high scores. The top 16,000 students were named Semifinalists, while the other 34,000 high performers were named Commended Students. Semifinalists have an opportunity to continue in the National Merit Scholarship competition

and advance to Finalist standing by meeting a number of additional requirements, including SAT scores and high academic achievement in grades 9-12.

The six Friends’ Central students named National Merit Semifinalists are: Elisabeth Forsyth, Jade Halpern, Benjamin Lehrer, Rachel McCabe, Tristan Szapary, and Jane Whellan.

The five Friends’ Central students named National Merit Commended students are: Lucas DeSipio, Weitong (Jack) Li, Jonathan Roach, Evan Sweitzer, and Anna Volpp.



This year's outstanding Middle School spring production was *Hoodie*, a concept play by Lindsay Price that focuses on common issues as young people come of age: friendship groups, appearance & self-image, fitting in, and more.



Newsies was this spring's Upper School musical, inspired by the real-life Newsboys Strike of 1899 in New York City. See page 5 for details of the many awards garnered by students in this fantastic production!



Great job by fourth and fifth grade musicians and singers in their Spring 2019 Concert!



Directed by Emma Gordon '20, this spring's Grade 9 and 10 Play, *Legally Blonde*, was a huge hit. Great job by all involved!



The Middle School Spring Concert included fabulous choral and instrumental performances

Team Radio Phoenix is Heading to Hawai'i!

A team of Friends' Central School students has been selected by the Pulsar Search Collaboratory to present at the American Astronomical Society Meeting in Hawai'i this January.

Called "the Super Bowl of Astronomy," the Meeting of the American Astronomical Society (AAS) is the 235th meeting in the history of the organization. AAS members and colleagues come from across the globe to learn and to share their latest research with an audience of astronomers and space scientists at all career stages, as well as a select group of high school and college students. These students from Friends' Central, called *Team Radio Phoenix*, are five of the 26 individuals selected on 11 teams nationwide to participate in the AAS meeting in January.



Pictured with faculty advisor Debbie Skapik are (from left) Ha-Eun Choi '21, Sofia Diaz '20, Elisabeth Forsyth '20, Harper Will '21, and Alex Wang '20

In *Team Radio Phoenix's* written abstract, entitled "A Multiwavelength Study of Binary Pulsars: An Effort to Identify Companions," the students explain that a subset of pulsars is spinning extra fast – thousands of times per second ("millisecond pulsars"). Astrophysicists think the reason for the spin-up is that there is a companion star responsible, and the two stars are potentially passing material back and forth. In many of these cases, though, the companion theorized to be there hasn't been spotted yet. *Team Radio Phoenix* is working on a project to scrutinize infrared images of the regions near the pulsars to look for the stellar companions to the pulsars. Stars have certain infrared properties that pulsars do not.

Team Radio Phoenix began in fall 2017, driven by five students who were interested in astronomy, and in collaboration with physics teacher Deborah Skapik, they have become members of the Pulsar Search Collaboratory (PSC). To become PSC members, the students participate in an online course, led by world-renowned astronomers Dr. Maura McLaughlin and Dr. Duncan Lorimer (who discovered Fast Radio Bursts), that teaches them about pulsar science and radio astronomy to prepare them to become competent researchers. After they are trained, students gain access to radio astronomy data taken at the Green Bank Telescope, a 17 million pound telescope with a dish the size of two football fields that collects and amplifies the tiny signals received from pulsars.

In the last year, the five students in *Team Radio Phoenix* have been on a roll. Last May, three TRP members were three of only sixteen

students nationwide who attended a capstone event for the Pulsar Search Collaboratory, now in its 11th year, at West Virginia University. To qualify, each of them had to evaluate at least 50 data sets containing about 30 plots each. All three Friends' Central student representatives gave presentations on their work, one FCS student was approached about copyrighting her work (a board game to help train new students to identify pulsar signatures in data), and another was asked to digitize her pulsar art to be shared. They attended professional research presentations on everything from white dwarfs to gravitational waves, they toured physics and biology labs, and they enjoyed a career panel of astronomers, professors, and scientists.

Harper Will '21 explained what she enjoys most and what led her to joining *Team Radio Phoenix*. "I joined *Team Radio Phoenix* during my first year at Friends' Central because I am an avid science geek and had already been enjoying my physics class with Dr. Skapik ... At the end of my first year, our team went to West Virginia University for an event with other Pulsar Search Collaboratory students from all over the US. We got to speak with the astronomers we had worked with online and see their work in action. This event was what I have most enjoyed about the PSC so far. It provided me with an amazing opportunity to form new friendships with those who shared my interest in astrophysics."

The passion each of the five students (so far!) on *Team Radio Phoenix* has for science and astronomy is palpable. Co-leader of *Team Radio Phoenix* Sofia Diaz '20 said, "This team has been one of the most incredible experiences of my high school experience. It has given us the opportunity to do real research before we even graduate high school ... Being accepted to present at the AAS Conference means so much to us, and I feel honored to be a part of this group of girls in STEM."

Faculty advisor and Upper School physics teacher Deborah Skapik cannot say enough about this remarkable team. "I am very proud of this inspirational team. The way they work together is almost magical, rising above collaboration to something impossible to capture in words," Skapik shared. "Each young woman brings unique talents to the table which, when combined, results in an outstanding product."

Co-leader Elisabeth Forsyth '20 has been a member of *Team Radio Phoenix* for two years, and in that time, she has forged a bond with her teammates. "The group has to be by far one of the most supportive I've ever been a part of, and it's great because we are all massive nerds," shared Forsyth. "I've also found a place where I feel safe to take more of a leadership role. I'm naturally shy, but this group has helped me get out of my shell ... has helped me embrace who I am as a woman in the STEM field. ... And our research, while it might not make sense to many, is super exciting for us and I'm excited to see where it takes us." **QW**

(Excerpted from the original article; for the full article, visit friendscentral.org/news)

Upper School Physics Teacher Attends Summer Global Astronomy Conference in France

In an effort to enhance her teaching of astronomy, last year, Upper School physics teacher Debbie Skapik became a member of the Global Hands-on Universe (GHOU), and this past summer, she attended the GHOU Conference in Provence, France, thanks to a fund established by an FCS alumnus to help faculty enhance the math and science programs at Friends' Central.

GHOU is a non-profit organization that works to train educators on using modern tools and resources for teaching science, to engage students in scientific projects internationally, and to encourage the teaching of interactive projects among schools worldwide.

Shortly after becoming a GHOU member, Debbie received a call from Carl Pennypacker, a celebrity in the world of astronomy research, who was thrilled to see that Debbie, a high school teacher, had become a member. Pennypacker, a supernova research astronomer at the University of California, Berkeley, Prix Jules Janssen Award winner, and Gruber Prize in Cosmology co-winner, began the Hands-on Universe project back in the 1990s. He first invited some astronomers and educators to a meeting in Arizona to share ideas about improving astronomy education, particularly how making telescopes and telescope images available to students and teachers was crucial. When other countries became involved, the Hands-on Universe became the Global Hands-on Universe.

Debbie says that her GHOU experience in France was “life-changing. As you scan the landscape in the observatory in Provence – 300 out of 365 nights are clear – you can see for miles just how stunning the location is,” Debbie shared. “That site in Provence was chosen because the telescope in that location was the one used to detect the first exoplanet, 51 Pegasus (51 Peg b), in 1995.”

Part of the mission of GHOU is to engage educators and students in a real global cooperation. Debbie explained, “Everyone cares about people, the teaching of astronomy in real concrete ways, and paying attention



to the global community and the entire planet. That’s what I was so excited about - to be with these educators from all over the world and to be able to take this knowledge and bring it back to our astronomy research students at FCS.” (See page 8 for exciting news about FCS student astronomy research successes.)

Debbie wants to not only bring what she’s learned to Friends’ Central’s astronomy teams and programs but also to bring to FCS or the greater Philadelphia region an exciting event she learned about that took place in Japan last year – a Solar System walk, which she calls “one of the most profound takeaways from the conference.” Mitaka, a city right outside Tokyo, Japan, transformed their community into a map of the solar system. Debbie described, “GHOU members from Japan got the entire city excited about this project, where they divided the city into different zones of the solar system. Even local businesses got into it. That’s definitely something we could do on our campuses, in Lower Merion, and even in the City of Philadelphia.”

“This stipend program is so valuable, and I’m very grateful. I can take this knowledge and, hopefully, bring the connections I’ve made and the programs I’ve experienced to our community and around the world. It would not have been possible without the stipend program and these amazing experiences.” **QW**



FCS Teachers Present at Words & Works: Classics in the Makerspace Workshop

Middle School Latin and Prima Lingua Teacher Margaret Somerville '83 and Upper School Latin Teacher and Database Manager Alex Pearson, along with former FCS Makerspace Director Michael Darfler, presented at a workshop at the Classical Association of the Atlantic States in October. The workshop explored ways to approach the classics through works rather than words. The presenters demonstrated ways to create meaningful experiences for Middle and Upper School Latin students making three-dimensional projects from various materials in makerspaces. Margaret presented her Derivatives Project, Alex presented his Roman aqueduct project, and Michael Darfler spoke about principles of learning in the Makerspace.

Friends' Central Welcomes New Faculty & Staff



Friends' Central was thrilled to welcome fantastic new faculty and staff members to the School for the 2019-2020 school year.

Joining Friends' Central at the administrative level were Colette Kleitz, Chief Development Officer, and Margaret Metz, Director of Enrollment Management. Colette Kleitz served as the Director of Alumni and Parent Relations at Germantown Friends School for eight years before becoming their Director of Advancement. Recently, she was the Associate Vice President for External Relations at the National Constitution Center before joining FCS. Margaret Metz comes to Friends' Central with significant independent school experience, including serving as Director of Admission at the Nightingale-Bamford School and as Head of School at the Mandell School. Margaret has relocated from New York City where, most recently, she worked as an educational consultant.

On the Lower School campus, Friends' Central welcomed Kristyn Bennett, Director of the FCS Center City Extended Day Hub; Devin Coleman '11, Nursery-Grade 5 Physical Education; Jared Deveau, Kindergarten Assistant; Suchita Fiorillo, Nursery Assistant; Gianluca

Giarrizzo, Art; Galen Guindon '06, Nursery-Grade 5 Music; Samantha Kreindler, Pre-K Assistant; Danita Paulis, 3rd grade long-term substitute; and Caleb Shelton, Kindergarten Assistant.

Joining the Middle and Upper Schools on the City Avenue campus were Anthony Bowers, Upper School Art; Maryclaire D'Orazio, Upper School Administrative Assistant; Christina Frazier, Middle School long-term substitute; Monty Ogden, Middle and Upper School English; Jason Polykoff '02, Middle School Math Teacher, Varsity Basketball Coach, and Assistant Director of Athletics for the College-Bound Athlete; Lori Reed, Middle School Drama; and Megan Schumacher, Upper School English.

Friends' Central also welcomed three interns in Support Services: Ashley Brennan, who will work with Lower School students and faculty; Emily Koppenhofer, who will work in the Middle and Upper Schools; and Kayla Peters, who will support Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools.

We are also thrilled to announce the arrival, in October, of Kayla Camacho, our new Makerspace teacher. [QW](#)

Outstanding Educator Award for Julie Plunkett

Upper School Math Teacher Julie Plunkett was selected for the University of Chicago's Outstanding Educator Award in October. As the University of Chicago website explains, "UChicago gives newly admitted students the opportunity to recognize the educators who have made a difference in their lives." Of those nominated, a small number receive an Outstanding Educator Award. Nominated by her former student Alex Wu '19, Julie was among those educators who have made a difference. Congratulations, Julie!



Sonia Chin named an "A+ Educator" by *Main Line Parent*

In October, Upper School biology teacher Sonia Chin was recognized by *Main Line Parent* as an "A+ Educator."

One of her nominators, a Friends' Central Upper School parent, said the following of Sonia in *Main Line Parent*: "Sonia is hands down one of the most extraordinary and inspiring teachers that I have come across since my two boys started school in 1999. My younger son is currently in her Honors Biology class. While her advanced biology degrees could lead her to be bored teaching at a high school level, she clearly has a profound passion for teaching not just biology but the important processes of scientific thought and inquiry. FCS and Sonia's students are profoundly lucky to have her as a teacher." Congratulations, Sonia!



Celebrating Our New Lower School Principal

In April, Friends' Central was thrilled to announce the appointment of Melody Regino Acinapura as our Lower School Principal. Melody's compelling blend of expertise, humor, compassion, and leadership made her the standout in a field of strong finalists.

Melody served as our Lower School Assistant Principal for the last two years, and in that time, she has built a strong rapport with parents, students, and faculty. Melody came to Friends' Central in July 2017 after a seven-year career at Greene Street Friends School, where she served as Dean of Lower School, Director of



Student Support Services, and Lower and Middle School Counselor. Melody was also the Founding Executive Director of Horizons at GSFS, a six-week summer academic enrichment program that supports underserved youth in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia. In this role, she was responsible for hiring the inaugural faculty

and staff, developing the curriculum, fundraising, promoting the mission of the program, and creating partnerships within the community. Melody has a BA in Elementary and Special Education from Saint Joseph's University, where she was Magna Cum Laude, and a Master's in School Counseling Psychology from Boston College, where she received the Lynch School Dean's Award. She also received a certificate from the New and Aspiring School Leadership Institute at Harvard University.

When asked what drew her to Friends' Central, Melody responded, "I think there's a magic here – and the tricky thing about the word *magic* is it can sound effortless – but there is a magic that the teachers work to create here at FCS that I have never experienced at any other school. Our faculty and staff care deeply about our students, about one another, and about the integrity of what the School is doing. So for me, it's a combination of what we offer and who we are. It just feels like the dream job."

VISITORS TO CAMPUS

FCS welcomed authors, artists, scientists, and leaders who enriched our community this spring and fall, including the following:



Jon Grinspan '02

Author Jon Grinspan '02 is a curator of political history at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and a frequent contributor to the *New York Times*. His first book *The Virgin Vote: How Young Americans Made Democracy Social, Politics Personal, and Voting Popular in the Nineteenth Century*, uncovered the forgotten era when young men and women were the most engaged demographic in American politics. Jon visited Grant Calder's history class in April to hear about the students' research projects and to discuss his next book project – explaining how he developed the topic, talking about his sources and his thesis – all things the juniors had been working on in their own research papers.



Chinwe Onyekere '94

FCS alumna and current Board member Chinwe Onyekere '94 was the featured speaker at the meeting to kick off the 2019-2020 school year for all faculty and staff. Chinwe gave an engaging talk about learning to let one's Light shine. All attending felt inspired by her journey, both as a former student and as a current change agent in the public health sector. She is System Director, Health Equity and Graduate Medical Education for Main Line Health and Associate Administrator at Lankenau Medical Center. Chinwe is committed to transforming the way healthcare is delivered locally and nationally to improve the health outcomes of all underserved and low-income communities.



Artist & Author DyAnne DiSalvo

Artist and author DyAnne DiSalvo visited the Lower School in September to read her book *Grandpa's Corner Store* and discuss the true story behind it. *Grandpa's Corner Store* was the Lower School's All-School summer reading book in celebration of this year's Quaker testimony of Community. DyAnne will return to campus two more times this year for additional community events as the "Ambassador for Community." Students presented DiSalvo with a framed certificate in honor of her visit.



Plant Biologist

Doris Wagner, the Robert I. Williams Term Professor of Biology at the University of Pennsylvania, visited the Upper School Bio II SuperLab class in October to talk about her research, which focuses on the reprogramming of cell identity and function during developmental transitions and in response to environmental inputs in plants.



Author Raina Telgemeier

At a sold-out Children’s Book World event hosted by FCS in October, *New York Times* bestselling author Raina Telgemeier was on campus to talk about her brand new graphic novel, *Guts*, the third memoir she has published. Telgemeier has also written two works of original graphic fiction – *Drama* and *Ghosts* – and illustrated several books for the *Baby-Sitters Club* graphic novel series.



Neil Goldader '17

Neil Goldader '17 came to speak about his career to Greg Klein’s Upper School Intro to Computer Science class in October. Neil is currently employed as a software engineer at Lacuna Technologies, a rapidly growing startup based in Palo Alto, CA.

NASA Technologist & Data Scientist

A part of the launch for National Geographic’s “Explorer Academy” book series, National Geographic sent out 10 real explorers out across the USA to talk about exploration. The Middle School was thrilled to welcome one of them – Jennifer W. Lopez – who came to talk to students about her work as a NASA technologist and data scientist. The event was co-sponsored by Children’s Book World.



2019-2020 Distinguished Visiting Justice Leader

Dr. Steven Larson is our 2019-2020 Distinguished Visiting Justice Leader. He is Co-Founder and Executive Director of Puentes de Salud, a nonprofit organization that promotes the health and wellness of Philadelphia’s rapidly growing Latinx immigrant population featured in the HBO documentary *Clínica de Migrantes*. Dr. Larson is also Assistant Dean for Global Health Programs and an Associate Professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Larson spent some time with Lower School students on October 29 before coming to the City Avenue campus in the evening for a screening of the powerful documentary and a discussion of his life and work.



Save the Dates:

2019-2020 Distinguished Visiting Humanities Lecturer Daniel Immerwahr '98:

Wednesday, March 18, 2020 • 7 pm

2019-2020 Distinguished Visiting Scientist

Helen White: Thursday, April 16, 2020 • 7 pm

Athletic News

Fall 2019 Varsity Girls' Cross Country Wins Friends Schools League & State Championships; FCS Girl-Boy Duo Takes First in FSL Race!



Lydia Russell '20 and Diego Spielman-Rodriguez '21



Congratulations to the Varsity girls' cross country team for winning their 5th consecutive FSL Championship! FCS made history at this exciting match – girls' cross country's Lydia Russell '20 and boys' cross country's Diego Spielman-Rodriguez '21 each finished first in the Friends Schools League Championship, becoming the first FCS duo to win FSLs.

Russell paced a dominant run by the Varsity girls' side. The finishes of sophomore Micah Trusty (3rd), sophomore Miracle Price (4th), senior Rebecca Wusinich (5th) and junior Natalie Neuhaus (6th) meant the

Phoenix finished with 19 team points in the race, just one off the best possible score. It was the fifth straight league championship title for the Phoenix girls, who've become a force to be reckoned with under head coach Venetia Ricketts.

The girls' cross country team also took first at the PAISAA state cross country championships on October 26. This was the first state title for the girls' cross country team in FCS history. Lydia Russell '20 took home the gold in the state champs.

Spring 2019 Friends' Central Shines at FSL Track Champs – 4th Consecutive Title for Girls' Track & Field

The Friends' Central track and field teams produced an abundance of standout results at the spring 2019 Friends Schools League Championships and PAISAA Championships, qualifying seven FCS athletes for New Balance Outdoor Nationals – Lydia Russell '20 in the Championship 5000M and two mile run; Rebecca Wusinich '20 in the Emerging Elite 2 mile; Micah Trusty '22 in the Freshman 800M run; and the 4X100M relay team of Bailie Stovall '21, Isabel MacFarlane '20, Julia Burd '22, Maya Garrett '22 in the Emerging Elite relay.

At the Friends Schools League Championships, the Friends' Central Varsity girls' track and field team earned their 4th consecutive FSL title, finishing with 147 points. Phoenix standouts included: Bailie Stovall, second in 100M and 200M; Micah Trusty, second in 400M, first in 800M; Isabel MacFarlane, third in 400M and 800M; Lydia Russell, third in 800M, first in 1600M, and first in 3200M; Rebecca Wusinich, second in 1600M and 3200M; Anna Gullace '21, third in 300M hurdles; 4X100M relay (Stovall, MacFarlane, Burd, Garrett) first place; 4X400M relay (Gullace, MacFarlane, Burd, Trusty) first place; 4X800M relay (Russell, Bendsky, Anna Volpp, Micah Trusty) first place; Maddie Anderson '20, first in discus and second in javelin; and Inara Shell '21, third in high jump, first in long jump and triple jump.



The Friends' Central boys finished in second place at the FSL Championships by just 1.5 points. Phoenix standouts were as follows: Alex Veith '20, second in 400M; Noah Thomas '22, third in 400M; Diego Spielman-Rodriguez '21, second in 1600M and 3200M; Ryan Ellison '21, second in 110M hurdles, first in 300M hurdles; 4X100M relay (Ibraheem Ahmad, Mekkhi Gardner, Jaman, Klein) third place; 4X400M relay (Thomas, Loudini, Veith, Ellison) second place; 4X800M relay (Spielman-Rodriguez, Veith, O'Connell, Malone) first place; Zakaria Loudini, second in shotput, first in discus, third in javelin; Matteo Lewis '20, third in pole vault; and Noah Thomas, second in long jump.



Athlete of the Week: Justin Rubin '21

Justin Rubin '21 was named Main Line Athlete of the Week for the week of April 19, 2019. One of Friends' Central's leading hitters as a freshman, Rubin kept up the pace last spring, hitting 17-for-30 with 24 runs scored and an on-base percentage of .689 in his first 12 games. As a pitcher, he began the season going 4-0 with a 1.94 ERA in 18 innings pitched (as of April 15), with 20 strikeouts and only two walks.



Athlete of the Week: Ryan Lynch '21

Ryan Lynch '21 was named Main Line Athlete of the Week for the week of October 3, 2019. Lynch, who was a 1st team All-FSL selection as a center mid last year, was moved to center back this season, leading the Phoenix defense in several key early-season victories. Head coach Luke Nowell said, "Aside from being a tremendous physical and defensive presence in the back, Ryan brings incredible technical ability and composure on the ball to her position. She has a great soccer IQ and is able to calm the game in tense situations and make things easier for her teammates. Ryan is a natural leader ... incredibly vocal in keeping us organized on the field and encouraging all around her."



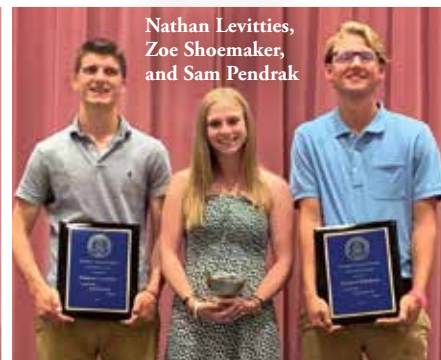
Lindsey Schweitzer '20 Named PhilaFH Student-Athlete of the Week

Varsity Field Hockey player Lindsey Schweitzer was named Student-Athlete of the Week by Philadelphia Field Hockey during the week of September 6, 2019. For four years, Lindsey has been a dedicated member of the Phoenix field hockey program. Named the MVP during the 2018 season, Lindsey is also a focused, outstanding student in high academic standing and carries a rigorous course load this fall including Honors Physics, Honors Biodiversity, Honors History of Architecture, Honors Calculus BC, and Honors Spanish History. "Lindsey has a strong and caring presence on and off the field," said FCS Co-Head Coach Lisa Mansure. "In the offseason, she was a dedicated captain always communicating with me and her teammates about opportunities to get extra ball touches in order to prepare for the 2019 season. She is a strong defender and ball distributor at the midfield and also an integral part of our defensive corner unit with her speed and great field awareness."



Varsity Girls' Tennis Doubles Team Wins FSL Invitational

Thea Volpp '20 and Emma Malone '20 won the FSL Invitational Doubles Championship during the weekend of September 14-15, 2019.



Summer 2019 Athletic Highlights

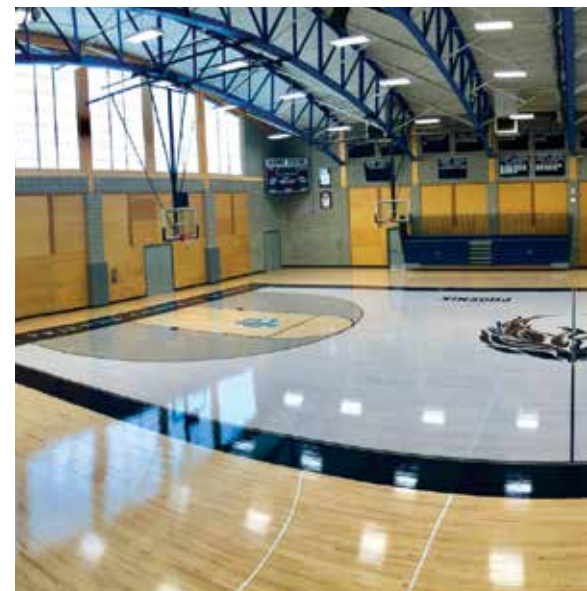
Hugh Shields '22 competed in the 2019 World Paddleboard Championships on July 28 in Molokai, Hawaii. The 32-mile race is considered to be the most extreme in the world!

Congrats to Quin Stovall '24 (silver in 800M in 2:13.63), Micah Trusty '22 (gold in 1500M in 4:41.7), and Miracle Price '22 (bronze in 1500M in 4:51.1, 4th in 800M in 2:12.4) at the AAU Track and Field National Championships.

Ed Holland '21 helped lead his AAU Basketball Team Philly Pride AAU 16U to win the Under Armour Association 16U National Championship in Georgia last July.

Honoring 2019 Varsity Spring and Senior Athletes

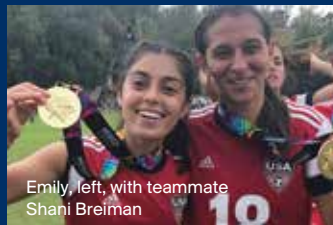
On May 22, 2019, Varsity spring athletes and coaches, as well as outstanding senior athletes, were honored for their hard work and dedication to FCS athletics. The following athletes received the Most Valuable Player Award for their respective spring sports: John Bradbeer '20, golf; Zoe Shoemaker '19, softball; Ben Kollender '19, baseball; Brynne Menen '19, lacrosse; Zak Loudini '19, boys' track and field; Adam Serota '21, boys' tennis; and Lydia Russell '20, girls track and field. The following athletes received the Most Improved Player Award for their respective sports: Thea Volpp '20, girls' lacrosse; Anna Volpp '20, girls' track and field; Diego Spielman-Rodriguez '21, boys' track and field; Bailie Stovall '21, girls' track and field; Luke Buscaglia '22, baseball; Dylan Posencheg '22, baseball; Holden Kopcsik '22, golf; Erik DeBaun '19, golf; Thaddeus Bashaw '20, golf; and Bradleigh Bell '20, softball. The Outstanding Senior Athlete Award was presented to Zak Loudini '19 and Phebe Guenther '19. The Florence Jackson Memorial Award was presented to Zoe Shoemaker '19, and the David Kirk Memorial Award was presented to Nathan Levitties '19 and Sam Pendrak '19.



ALUMNIAE ATHLETES IN THE NEWS



Ava Forman '18 took 3rd place in 400MH and the 4X400 relay to help her Washington University Track & Field team win the UAA Conference Championship!



Emily, left, with teammate Shani Breiman

Emily Lorry '18 won the gold medal as a member of the US Women's Open Soccer Team at the 14th Annual Pan American Maccabi Games in Mexico City last summer.



Congratulations to **De'Andre Hunter '16** on being selected 4th overall in the 2019 NBA Draft. He is a starter with the Atlanta Hawks.



Jonathan Lawton '15 is playing professional basketball for the Garvey Tralee Warriors in Tralee, Ireland.



Ben Shapiro '15 of Dickinson College, selected from a pool of student-athletes nominated by the Conference's 11 member institutions' SAAC groups, was named the 2019 Centennial Conference Individual Sportsmanship Award winner.



Amile Jefferson '12 has signed a two-year NBA contract with the Orlando Magic.

This fall, the gym in Shimada Athletic Center got a new look!



FCS Students Design and Implement Their Own Brain Experiment at MIT's SaxeLab

BY JOHN GRUBER

In April, our 2019 Distinguished Visiting Scientist Rebecca Saxe offered a deeply engaging lecture on Theory of Mind and the directions of cognitive neuroscience research related to how we form thoughts about other people's thinking, perspectives, and intentions. Upper School Science Core Team students had spent six months engaged in weekly seminar meetings to build a deeper understanding of the brain and neuroanatomy, the place of cognitive neuroscience in our growing understanding of how we think about and perform different mental tasks, and the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) as a tool to explore when and how specific areas of the brain are being used when subjects are differently engaged in mental activity. Alongside the public lecture, Dr. Saxe spent a busy day in several sessions that included open-ended questions and conversations, along with shared reflection on science research in general, many aspects of neuroscience and ways of asking questions about the brain and the mind, and what makes this kind of work so endlessly fascinating.

At the end of the year, 30 Friends' Central students traveled to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to spend two days at SaxeLab, Dr. Saxe's Social and Cognitive Neuroscience Lab at MIT, as the culminating experience. Dr. Saxe gave the students a remarkable opportunity, challenging them to design their own experiment and have two students scanned in the fMRI scanners to see what we could learn about their brains in relation to different kinds of thinking. During the year, students had learned that some very specific regions of the brain – especially the right and left temporoparietal junction (TPJ) and the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) – are specifically and selectively activated when subjects think about other people's thoughts and emotions. Having an opportunity to design an experiment to explore this effect in our own students' brains was extraordinary.

Several weeks before the Cambridge trip, students met to write questions that our scan subjects would read while in the MRI scanner. These 'stimuli' were meant to distinguish thought



(From left) Rebecca Saxe addresses the group outside the SaxeLab; FCS Science Core Team members with Rebecca Saxe (front center) at the SaxeLab

processes that focused on objects from those that focused on other people's state of mind. For example, one short story might relate a student's frustration with group members who were not contributing adequately to a group project while another described a tree outdoors having its last leaves blown away in an autumn wind.

At the McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT, the students' stimuli were preloaded into a program to display them in the fMRI scanner and two students, Lindsey Schweitzer '20 and Tristan Szapary '20, were chosen by lottery to be our fMRI scan subjects. After a detailed discussion of how MRI scanning works and key safety precautions, two groups watched from the control room as our student subjects were scanned while reading the stories authored by the team. Members of the Saxe Lab worked overtime to process all the scan data so the group would have a chance

back messages about their visit to Rebecca Saxe, including the following from Lindsey Schweitzer '20: "Science Core Team trips continually excite me. They have inspired me to want to pursue a career in science, and they have shown me real ways that I can continue to learn as I become an adult. This trip not only showed me how cool neuroscience is and how much I want to know more about it, but it also exposed me to incredible women scientists that I can look up to and aspire to be like."

While in Cambridge, students also had a second very meaningful science experience when Daniel Yahalomi and Hayden Gruber (Class of 2014) met us at the Harvard Science Center for a night of astronomical observing on the Clay Telescope and two smaller instruments. On a perfectly clear night, students had a chance to make observations of the Whirlpool Galaxy on the

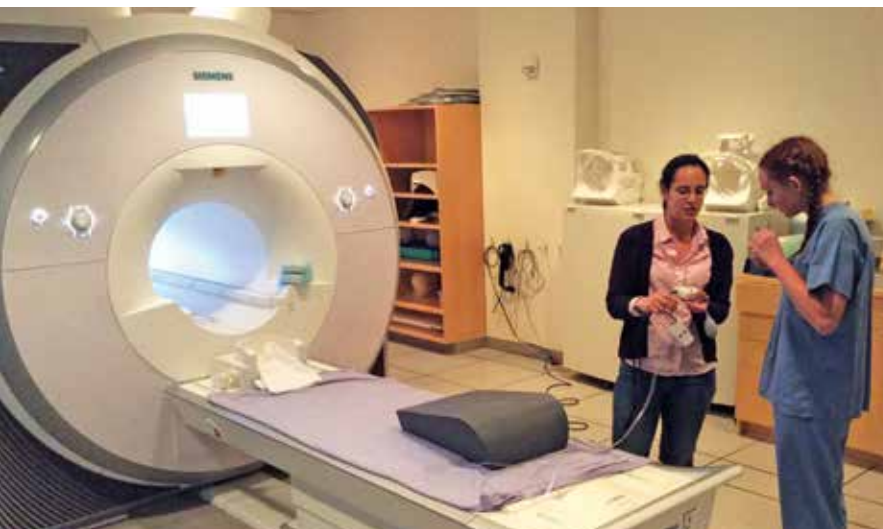
"This trip not only showed me how cool neuroscience is and how much I want to know more about it but it also exposed me to incredible women scientists that I can look up to and aspire to be like."

- Lindsey Schweitzer '20

to see the results the following day. After reading many neuroscience papers in the course of the year, students were thrilled to see results from their own experiments (and their own brains) that showed the selective activation of regions in the Theory of Mind network in the brain scans.

We are deeply indebted to Rebecca Saxe and the members of her lab for creating a truly exceptional visit and rare opportunity to not only visit the McGovern Institute but also to take part in actual fMRI scanning and see the results. Many FCS students sent

Clay telescope and looked at the moon and Jupiter on two other telescopes that were set up for us on the roof. Students agreed that seeing the telescopes and being part of that night of observing was unforgettable. In the words of Daniel Saligman '22, "It was one of the most enlightening and amazing nights of my entire life. To be able to look at the moon in such clarity, to look at Jupiter, so clearly, something that just looked like a distant light. Seeing the galaxies and being able to observe was incredible." [QW](#)



(From left) Lindsey Schweitzer being shown the MRI machine; Tristan Szapary with his brain scan

Echo Hill & FCS at 45

BY ALEXA QUINN '98

Forty-five years ago, our first group of Friends' Central students and teachers left City Avenue for an adventure at the Echo Hill Outdoor School on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The Echo Hill trip is a week of adventure in the outdoors, doing activities like "scanoe" (swamp canoe), survival class, Chesapeake Bay Studies, the zip line, the giant swing, milking cows on Mr. Payne's farm, and so much more. It is also a week of self-discovery, skill building, and connecting with nature and classmates alike – one that countless alumni/ae share as a formative part of their FCS experience.

In 1972, FCS Lower School Principal Charlotte DeCosta wrote a letter to Peter Rice, Sr., the Lower School Principal at Sidwell Friends School, inquiring about Peter's son's outdoor education experiences. She went on to say that Friends' Central was looking for a trip for its 5th or 6th graders. Echo Hill was founded in 1972, with Quaker principles in mind, by Peter Rice, Jr. Peter is a graduate of Sidwell Friends, and the values of Echo Hill and Friends education have much in common. In the spring of 1974, the first group of students from Friends' Central ventured to Echo Hill. Amazingly, Peter Rice, Jr. still has the original letter from Charlotte DeCosta and photographs of the first group of FCS students (*pictured overleaf*).

At Echo Hill, students learn about valuing both individual's contributions and the strength of the community, and they explore the importance of environmental stewardship. The learning is deep and meaningful because it is entirely hands on, and the staff

of Echo Hill make sure that joy and "challenge by choice" are at the heart of each activity. Although the curriculum at Echo Hill focuses on the Chesapeake Bay, everything students learn can be applied when they return to Philadelphia and the comforts of home. Each year, students share that the Echo Hill experience helps them to feel more connected to the environment and empowered to make small choices that have a significant cumulative impact. In a year when we gain many students who are new to FCS, it is also an invaluable opportunity for students to make new friends and come together as a class at this crucial point of Middle School.



Memories from Echo Hill are often part of FCS seniors' yearbooks and graduation speeches, demonstrating the enduring impact of that experience for me and many other FCS alumni/ae.

We are so proud to continue this special tradition – one in which our students make life-long memories and connections – and grateful to this 45-year partnership with the Echo Hill Outdoor School. [QW](#)



(Top four photos) the first FCS group to go to Echo Hill in 1974; (bottom two photos) seventh graders in the Class of 2025 at Echo Hill this September

Your Tax Dollars at Work, Spreading Quaker Values

BY GRANT CALDER

Three Friends' Central teachers – Dwight Dunston '06, Al Vernacchio, and I – spend a few days each summer working (indirectly) for the United States government.

For many years, the Department of State has paid for small groups of young scholars and graduate-level students from select countries to visit the United States for several-week sessions to study our history, and our political and social systems. Locally, the program is overseen by the Dialogue Institute based at Temple University. They have designed a multidisciplinary exploration of the relationship between church and state. Participants waded into difficult discussions about the topics presented, they get to know each other and us, they are encouraged to question their views and preconceptions, and to learn more about our efforts and struggles as a complex, multicultural, multiracial, and religiously pluralistic society.

The students in the program come from countries facing profound political and social challenges. The group we worked with this past summer hailed from Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, India, and Indonesia. Most were Muslim, representing multiple sects. At least one was Christian and another a self-described religious “skeptic.” But they were all passionately committed to building diverse and tolerant communities.

Dwight Dunston met them at Pendle Hill, and he and his musical partner Brian Jordan, who make up the group City Love, worked with them on some queries:

- What is one obstacle to equality and justice in your country?
- What does it mean to belong?
- What makes/would make you feel respected in your home country?
- How do you/could you show respect for others who are different in your home country?

As Dwight reports, “We also played pieces from our song catalogue that center on diversity, equity, and justice. There was so much open, honest sharing and joy in the space. We also facilitated a song-writing exercise that invited everyone to write a line or two that would be performed during a closing all-group song. It was an amazing experience. There’s so much I learn and so much perspective that I get from the brilliant participants. I think one of the biggest takeaways for me is just remembering that there are amazing folks all over the world striving to create thoughtful, inclusive communities wherever they are.”

Al Vernacchio notes that he and Debra D’Allesandro, “co-presented our session on LGBTQ civil rights in the U.S. Debra is the Director of Public Health Training and Technical Assistance at the Health Federation of Philadelphia, and is also the longtime host of Amazon Country a lesbian/feminist radio show on WXPN.

“Our presentation began with a brief review of historical milestones in US LGBTQ history through the lens of important court cases and events. We stressed the fact that the LGBTQ civil rights movement has been built on the back of both the

US racial civil rights and women's rights movements. The second half of the presentation was about what it's like to live as an LGBTQ individual in the US (and how the answer to that question varies greatly depending on where you live in the US). Many of the participants had never met an openly LGBTQ person before and had misconceptions, some fears, and lots of questions. 'Do we have children?' 'Is it *fair* to a child to be raised by same-gender parents,' and 'Who is the man and who is the woman?' in our relationships. Many questions touched on the intersection of religion and sexual orientation."

My own assignment was to discuss the origins of American democracy and religious pluralism. Because of some scheduling changes, we weren't able to split the day into a morning and afternoon session as usual, so the students worked with me from 2 pm until 7 pm with just a couple of breaks. I am always amazed at their appetite for the material. Much of my part of the program comes straight out of Friends' Central's American

history course. The participants had already been introduced to Willam Penn, and with me, they read the opening section of his *1701 Charter of Privileges* in which he makes a powerful statement about the centrality of religious freedom and toleration. We also read some Thomas Paine and analyzed sections of the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, and we studied the U.S. Constitution, all of which our 11th graders also do.

The students often ask for our email addresses, and some follow up with questions and stay in touch long after the sessions. According to Al, one participant from an earlier group, "a young man from Iraq has gone on to be a fantastic advocate for gender equity in his country and around the region."

The United States Supreme Court upheld the Trump administration's so-called "Muslim ban" in 2018, but our messy, sprawling society and government are not monolithic. Some doors may close for a time, but others stay open, and people interested in peacefully transforming the world find ways. [QW](#)



Dwight Dunston '06, in his second year with the program, and Brian Jordan (*back, center*) are pictured here at Pendle Hill with this summer's participants. Grant Calder and Al Vernacchio worked with the same group. Grant, in his 10th year in the role, held his sessions at the Constitution Center, and Al, in his fifth year, was based at Temple University.

In Support of Scholarships

Through the Friends Education Equity Collaborative, a partnership with 20 Pennsylvania Friends Schools, FCS donors can convert state tax dollars into financial aid dollars with the EITC program. It's a powerful way to multiply the impact of your gift. Contact Kim Emmons-Benjet at 610.645.4499 or kbenjet@friendscentral.org to learn more.

"We're thrilled to be able to support FCS through the Friends Collaborative. EITC donations go directly to the students who need it most, and after tax credits and deductions, our donation is effectively matched 16-to-1. It sounds too good to be true, but it's not!"

- Rachel and Alex Rolfe '01

"We are grateful to be able to support Friends' Central financial aid through the Friends Collaborative. We want to share access to the wonderful education our children experience at FCS with more students. Donating to the EITC program helps us amplify our gift to be many times what it would be otherwise."

- Amy and Rob Geary, P '32, P '33

"Our family didn't hesitate for a moment when we had the chance to support Friends' Central School through the Friends Collaborative. We were so happy to be able to support the mission of Quaker education that our first grade twins, Ava and Ethan, get to experience every day. It is a joy for us to see the enthusiasm for learning that our twins exude by having the opportunity to experience FCS. Knowing that through the Friends Collaborative we are directly able to provide this same FCS experience to students who need it most is beyond gratifying."

- Dana and Seth Goldblum, P '31

"As parents of two FCS lifers who are now alums, we have experienced the value of a Friends' Central education.

"As a member of the Board, I have chosen to make FCS a personal philanthropic priority, and participation in the Friends Collaborative has enabled us to be even more generous in our support of the School through EITC. Importantly, the funds we contribute are designated for financial aid, which helps make a Friends' Central education accessible to talented students who might not otherwise be able to afford to attend the School."

- Betty Bard & Jay Adelsberg P '15, P '19



GENEROUS ANNUAL GIFT BY BRYN MAWR TRUST

Head of School Craig N. Sellers is pictured here with Jessica Demchak from Bryn Mawr Trust after she delivered Bryn Mawr Trust's generous annual gift to financial aid. It is Bryn Mawr Trust's 13th year of supporting Friends' Central through the Pennsylvania State Tax Credit programs (EITC and OSTC), and they have supported FCS for over two decades.

Plan 175



Plan 175:
An aspirational path forward, true to our mission and vision, to expand the excellence of Friends' Central School into the next 175 years.

friendscentral.org/plan175

THE “KEY TEAM” GIVES BACK

Jacqui and Earnest Key '00 have launched an innovative program to partner with their clients to support local schools. Long-time realtors in the Philadelphia area, the “Key Team” is contributing 10% of their gross commission back to the school of their client’s choice. They were inspired to make an impact on local schools, including Friends’ Central, in order to provide students in our communities with the materials and opportunities they need to succeed. In recognizing the scholarship support that he received while a student at Friends’ Central, Earnest has “always envisioned a time in my career that I would find a way to ‘pay it forward.’” The Keys are thrilled to be in a position to partner with their clients to improve the lives and educational experiences of students across Philadelphia.



Jacqui and Earnest Key



Al Vernacchio engages Upper School students in a book discussion

Teaching Skills, Honoring Student Voices: English at FCS

FOR A RELATIVELY SMALL SCHOOL, Friends' Central can claim a surprising number of alumni/ae who are making a living in literary, academic, and artistic fields where writing skills are key. Is there something in the water here? *Quaker Works* sent out a call to alumni/ae in college and in professions that require writing ability to share their career experience and FCS memories, and we spoke to current faculty in all three divisions to explore the School's approach to the teaching of English skills.

Leah Franqui '05, author of *America for Beginners* released in July 2018, and *Mother Land* to be released in May 2020, was among those who responded to our request for reflections on English at FCS. "Friends' Central nurtured my love of storytelling because our literature classes introduced me to so many writers whose diverse methods and ideas opened up my sense of what writing could be," she said. "It was only later when I got to college that I realized how radical, inclusive, and diverse the works I read in high school were. Friends' Central introduced me to García Márquez, Rushdie, Kushner, Woolf, Faulkner, Morrison, and so much more."

A more recent graduate, Julian Shapiro-Barnum '17, reflected on his own FCS English experience. "I remember (Teacher) Monty led a seminar class about climate fiction and writing about the environment ... It was the first time I felt like what I created and read had political agency. Reading classics are important, but something about reading works regarding the now got me so excited, and it was the first time I wrote a short story I loved."

In the Upper School, there are a range of teachers with a range of different styles, explained Laurie Novo, who currently teaches 12th grade English and has taught all four Upper School grades in her 27 years at FCS, "but we are pretty united as a department on how important it is to write, not just to learn about a book or be able to give information about it, but to find ways of using writing

to express what you think." For Laurie, this has been a hallmark of the English experience throughout her years here.

Katie Dickerson, Upper School English Department Chair, concurred, "Everyone (in the English department) wants kids to enjoy reading and talking about books and writing about books. Everyone wants to be student-centered. The way we make meaning from books and the way we craft our writing comes from the student."

"The thread that's common among all of the Lower School teachers is that the writing is driven by student voice and student choice ..."

Encouraging students to explore their own voices through writing starts in the very earliest grades. "The thread that's common among all of the Lower School teachers is that the writing is driven by student voice and student choice – what the students are interested in, what they're good at – and then working from those areas to help them develop as writers," noted Christie Kapothanasis, Fifth Grade Literacy Specialist.

Beginning in Pre-K, students keep journals – expressing themselves however they can, even before most can actually write. It's an approach that ensures that writing is creative and self-directed from day one. Laurie Novo shared, "From the perspective of a parent – as someone who had kids who went all the way through FCS – I do think there was an orientation that started in the Lower School, where there were so many opportunities for expression in language and in art."



Keino Terrell teaching his seventh grade English class

Lower School Principal Melody Acinapura explained that a shift in the approach to English teaching is starting to happen in the Lower School, with a move towards a greater focus on technical skills that they feel will only enhance the creative expression of the students. “There’s been this real push to take on Writer’s Workshop (an interdisciplinary writing technique which builds students’ fluency in writing through continuous, repeated exposure to the process of writing), which fifth grade is now doing to its full integrity since last year,” said Melody. And the aim is to progressively move the program into the younger Lower School grades, with teachers receiving the intensive training that the program requires.

Christie Kapothanasis, who along with Lower School Learning Specialist Jackie Merchant, has played a key role in the implementation of the program, added, “The students have all these great ideas; there’s no lack of creativity, but to sit down and write a piece that is well organized, where they’ve thought about the audience and they have the mechanics, and they have varied sentence structure. I think that’s where Writer’s Workshop can really come in and support our writers.”

In Middle School, a rigorous approach to technical skill building has always been central to English teaching, but it continues to go hand-in-hand with a respect for the voice of each student.

“Even though it’s student-centered, we’re still designing the assignments,” said Middle School Assistant Principal and English teacher Keino Terrell. “We’re giving kids options and allowing them, as often as possible, to write about things that they’re passionate about. And that may mean dissecting a piece of literature, finding the piece that resonates with them, and building a thesis around it, or having them write reflections in ways that speak to the relationship that kids have with the literature. All of that gives them agency.”

In Middle School, students also learn a critical skill, Keino explained. “How do you actually support an argument? We’re not short on opinions around here, but supporting those opinions in a way that is limited to the text becomes the challenge. Can I find the evidence that I need to support a claim by only using this source?”

“One of the many interesting assignments in Middle School happens in eighth grade,” said Keino. “We have kids write about the justice topic that they’re most passionate about. And that’s just the beginning; that’s not the graded part. Their final paper must defend the opposite perspective. What it requires them to do is to really try to understand another person’s perspective. That’s a tough one. It’s really difficult for them, but it’s one of the assignments that the kids feel that they get the most out of.”

In the Upper School, Katie and Laurie described the teaching techniques as varying to some degree based on teacher style and student grade level. However, both mentioned the common element of “stealth” assignments for younger students – assignments that Laurie described as “very analytic but not scary, so kids don’t have

When it comes to book choice in the curriculum across all divisions, it’s a dynamic process. The selection of texts is under regular discussion and evaluation, with the concept of Mirrors and Windows at the forefront.

this immediate fear – ‘Oh, no, I have to write a paper!’ They don’t always realize that they’re being analytic; but they’re actually developing the skills. An example would be the 10th grade book, *Of Mice and Men*, which has these pretty deep moments of ambiguity. It’s told objectively, so you see everything that’s happening, but you don’t get much insight into the characters’ heads, so you don’t always know why it’s happening.” Students might be asked to explore in a writing assignment questions they have about the motivations behind the actions of a particular character.

“We move to more abstract books over the course of the year,” said Katie, “so we let them build up their confidence and their skills and apply them to increasingly difficult material. And that’s true over the course of the whole curriculum.”

When asked what she most enjoys about teaching at FCS, Katie responded, “I really like the students’ initiative and their desire to learn. There’s a quote I read somewhere to the effect that your class should be run in a way that, if you leave, it’ll keep going. I really see that with my students and their desire to learn and their desire to work together to make meaning of texts. As an example, we’ve started a practice this year in some classes, for large group discussions, where one student will be the clerk and will run the discussion and another will be the recording clerk, and they’ll take the notes. We did one recently in one of my 10th grade sections for a chapter in *Of Mice and Men*. They’re really working on developing the skills needed to be part of that listening and speaking interaction.”

MIRRORS & WINDOWS: HOW BOOKS MAKE IT INTO THE FCS ENGLISH CURRICULUM

When it comes to book choice in the curriculum across all divisions, it’s a dynamic process. The selection of texts is under regular discussion and evaluation, with the concept of Mirrors and Windows at the forefront. As Katie Dickerson explained, “Students should be able to see themselves reflected back in books



MAYA FRANCIS '03

Now a brand strategist and public relations professional who also uses social media to express her views, Maya Francis graduated from Friends’ Central thinking she would go into journalism and aspired to become a magazine editor.

Reflecting on her professional trajectory, Maya pointed to circumstances such as the national recession, the evolution of the magazine industry, and the explosion of the internet as forces that created obstacles and served as catalysts for her own growth.

While at the University of Maryland, Maya had internships at *Philly Weekly* and *Philadelphia Magazine*, but when she graduated, the landscape had changed. She was offered what was then a typical step to a full-time job: an unpaid internship in New York. Her parents resisted this option and, with the recession looming, Maya accepted a job in the insurance industry, a decision that she says “was humbling.” It was a sound choice in many ways, but she says, “it felt crushing” not to use her degree. Undaunted, she pursued a Masters in Liberal Arts at Penn in the evenings and, upon earning her degree, she headed to Washington, D.C., for a paid internship in public relations.

Maya describes the career she shaped in the subsequent years as “an organic progression.” She got good at Twitter in “the moment everyone became a brand.” She used Twitter to reach out to editors and other writers. Her live tweeting was spotted by CNN, who then invited her to provide commentary. She describes the world of internet opinion as a phenomenon that builds upon itself. Her goal in that world – to do good that is recognized.

Although she claims the universe “conspired in her favor,” clearly, the quality of her work is driving her success. Throughout her working life, as a teacher at Mighty Writers in West Philadelphia, an intern at *Philadelphia Magazine*, a consultant at Johnson and Johnson, and now, as a branding and marketing professional, Maya is leading by writing. And, she believes, knowing how to write well has been the key to her opportunities.

Maya says she has come to understand and appreciate FCS as a unique place. She came to FCS from Catholic school, knowing that she needed more freedom. “When you are educated in a space like FCS that asks you what you want to do, you get more comfortable asking yourself questions.” – a skill Maya thinks was important and formative.

Though Maya believes that good fortune and being in the right place at the right time have helped her along, it is clear that her adaptability, skill, and willingness to seize opportunities are the source of her success.

You can follow Maya at mayafrancis.com.

sometimes, and they should also be able to use books as a window into other people's lives.

"We're always conscious about diversifying texts in our curriculum," Katie continued. "For ninth grade, we changed *Kindred* to *Homegoing*. *Homegoing* is a little more modern. It follows two sisters – one sold into slavery; one who marries a slave trader – and all of their descendants up until 2000."

"In the Middle School," said Keino Terrell, "over the last five to six years, we've switched out almost every text. A few have 'survived' because they're still very relevant – among them, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Breadwinner*. The literature in the Middle School is very diverse in terms of author and perspective, so we have this rich racial and cultural diversity that's found in the texts that is providing a lot of different world views."

"Middle Schoolers are grappling with a lot of questions about themselves and how they fit into the world," explained Middle School Principal Alexa Quinn '98, "and being able to read about characters who are also grappling with similar questions can help them in their own process of discovery."

In the summer of 2018, Middle School English teacher Laurel Burkbauer received a Farraday Mastership stipend to further develop the seventh grade curriculum as a whole, which included a thorough review of the literature selections. Laurel sought to explore whether the texts were vertically integrated and if they supported the analytical skills being taught in the literature program. She also looked at the books being taught and considered the balance of literature that would engage seventh graders while teaching them the skills they'll need in eighth grade.

Laurie Novo described the 12th grade texts. "We start with *Oryx and Crake*, and now we're reading *Frankenstein*, and then it will be *Beloved* and *Hamlet*. So it's a virtually perfect curriculum! All four books really speak to each other in these very interesting ways, so they're a great package. And they're also the right books at the right time because they're very much about what happens when you step out into the unknown without a support system, as an independent choice maker, which is what all the seniors are thinking about doing."

The book choice across all divisions is clearly successfully engaging students on both a personal and an intellectual level; it's also helping foster empathy. Katie Dickerson mentioned, "Something I end up writing about in a lot of students' recommendation letters is how empathetic they are to characters in literature. I do think that must partially come from a Quaker education – the SPICES and the way we talk about interacting with other people. When I write their letters, I go back and look at things they said during class or things they wrote papers on, and a lot of it is trying to put themselves in the character's shoes, debating a character's decision and trying to see the character's side."

"An important part of the English curriculum in Middle School," said Alexa Quinn, "is using literature to better understand ourselves and to better understand the world around us. And that can be through characters that are similar to us or characters that are really different from us. So literature helps us to not only do a self-exploration but also to develop empathy, and that's a key part of, in my opinion, being an English teacher." **QW**

DAN SEGALL '11

Dan Segall '11 has made some changes in his life. Nashville has become his new home, and Harrison (his middle name) is sometimes used as his last. I am happy to report, however, that the humor, passion, and determination that we remember from his student days remains. Dan is writing. Writing doesn't mean only words, of course, and Dan is an example of putting two talents together. His writing finds expression in the combination of text and music. Through song, he creates images, stories, and emotional states of mind. This path comes as no surprise to those of us who remember his dedication to music while at FCS. He was a member of the jazz band and a student of music theory. One of the assignments in that class was to write a song, and it was apparent from that exercise that the talent was clearly there. But, as he admits today, which I like to think he heard Carl Bradley and me say, talent is only a fractional element, a starting point in the creation of art. What comes next is the work. The work to perfect one's craft is the necessary key in the ongoing endeavor to produce meaningful art. From a recent conversation with Dan, this is clearly what is happening in his new life in Nashville. He has changed his city – after college at Wake Forest, he decided he wanted to be in the south – and he has added his middle name Harrison to the final position.

Dan is taking full advantage of the rich musical life in his new town and striving to make his new name known. Eager to express some of the genuine emotions of country music ("a lot of nostalgia and loss," Dan says), he performs, writes music, and is committed to contributing to the musical life of Nashville. He credits his education here at FCS, and notes that the climate to be intellectually curious fired his desire to pursue his musical and literary aims.

The goal is to establish himself as a singer/songwriter by finding his own voice and expressing what he wants to say. While Nashville is a fertile environment for music, the crowded scene there makes it difficult to stand apart. Dan seems poised to do just that.

BY JIM DAVIS, ARCHIVIST & FORMER TEACHER



GWEN LEWIS '10

From the time she was five years old, Gwen Lewis knew she wanted to be a writer. Writing was, “just something I did.” Her career path has been a thoughtful and intentional quest to marry her innate creativity and writing skills with the technical and managerial expertise she has gained over the last several years.

Gwen says her love for writing was fostered at Friends' Central. She describes her classes, especially Writers' Workshop with Laurie Novo, as environments where students were challenged and also taken seriously, affirming her identity as a writer. She remembers powerful moments in a classroom environment that was difficult, safe, and entertaining. “Ms. Novo set the tone and the expectation that what we had to say was valuable, unique, and important. From the assignments to the way we workshoped them, the class made each of us feel like a writer.” She went on to say, “Being treated as if our opinions mattered had an incredible impact – our ideas were validated. FCS students get used to being treated that way; it builds their confidence.”

Gwen believes her experience at FCS more than prepared her for Penn, where she majored in English. There, she found herself “alongside so many super smart kids,” but she was ready “for the volume and the type of work.” And she was also ready to speak up. Having been trained by her teachers at FCS to think, share, and interact with respect, she was “used to operating with confidence.”

Gwen chose to major in English because that is what she cared about, but she was also mindful of the need to support herself. During her time at Penn, she looked for ways to translate her skills into a job that would value her creativity and also allow her to support herself. Real Arts, a Penn program that connects students to companies needing their creativity, afforded Gwen an important opportunity in “the kinds of companies where you might normally find Wharton students.” She used her summers to build marketable experiences. During the school year, she reveled in her focus on creative nonfiction, taking courses on arts, popular culture, and long-form journalism. Her work in the Kelly Writers House exposed her to amazing authors like John Barth and Buzz Bissinger.

Through a series of internships with employers like the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Google, and Shore Fire Media, and in her first “real” job at Comcast, Gwen discovered that is vital to her that an employer is interested in its employees' unique gifts and work style preferences (cubicle or bench? Collaboration or solo work?) as opposed to expecting employees to conform to their culture.

When she graduated, Gwen took a position as a product manager at Comcast in technology and product development. She explained that, as a product manager, she built relationships with designers and tech



people to personalize the user or TV viewer's experience. At every stage of a user's experience, product managers are making decisions based on research and testing.

While she valued production and tech as interesting, meaningful work, something was missing – finding time to be creative, cerebral, and reflective was difficult due to the full-time demands of her job. She knew she didn't want to be a journalist, but

what did she want? She had turned down an offer from Google to stay on the East Coast but decided that a corporation that would be attentive to individual employees, encourage collaboration, and perhaps give more space for her creative and cerebral style was worth the move. She accepted a position at YouTube, a division of Google, where she was asked to think strategically and solve problems. At YouTube, Gwen also appreciated an environment, not unlike FCS, that paid attention to the “uniqueness” of individuals and intentionally sought the most inspiring workplace for each person. Ultimately, though, it was not the kind of creative expression she was looking for.

Gwen went on to reflect on her Friends' Central experience. She said, “FCS encourages students to think about themselves and what they want to do. There were so many opportunities to discover and do the things I think of as my ‘super powers.’ Teachers go so far beyond what they have to do to forge connections and champion students. I think this was true for all students, including those interested in math or science. They had their chances to find their super powers too.”

Last spring, Gwen made a bold and intentional move toward her ultimate goal: a career that blends creative expression and technical skills. She gave herself a sabbatical to write and reconnect to her own creativity. She has found these months of exploration and focus on her next choices intense. Her search for the right next step has been well supported by the Penn career counseling department. She has been working on a collection of personal essays and a book proposal, something she would have found very difficult while working full-time. She also took a three-month course, *The Artist's Way*, designed to help artists reconnect to their creativity, and she has networked actively with Penn alumni.

Gwen's investigation into a career that will blend her technical and business skills with the creativity that fuels her has resulted in a new position with the Walt Disney Company, where, as a Product Marketing Manager in NYC, she will work on defining the voice of Disney's new streaming product, Disney+, and creating creative messaging and campaigns to communicate its value to users.

TIM & PETER CHAWAGA

Brothers Tim Chawaga '06 and Peter Chawaga '09 are both writers. Their approaches, interests, and chosen genres are different, but their outlook is united by a shared appreciation for stories and the incredible challenge of crafting good writing.

Tim and Peter describe their childhood as immersed in stories and surrounded by books. Steve and Laurie, their parents, read a lot, and Tim and Peter remember them talking about books all the time. Their mom, FCS English teacher Laurie Novo, read aloud to them and carefully selected books to give them. Tim remembers being introduced to the world of sci fi and fantasy with works by Diana Wynne Jones, Philip Pullman, and Brian Jacques. In fact, Tim says the *Redwall* series by Brian Jacques, with pages dedicated to lavish feasts and shocking situations in which beloved characters actually die, was something of a revelation to him. Peter laughed and said the *Redwall* series was comprised of intimidatingly fat books, and they, by contrast, have always been attracted to a sparse writing style. He recalls *The Giver* being the book that turned him into a reader himself. "It was the first book I read that didn't feel like homework."

While the brothers always liked English, Tim was also drawn to drama, playwriting, and acting and went on to study acting at Tisch, whereas Peter enjoyed working on *Focus*, the FCS student newspaper, and gravitated to journalism. Peter describes a summer internship at the *Philadelphia City Paper* the summer after his first year at Wake Forest University as a revelation. He remembers thinking, "Wow, if this is something people can do for a living, it's for me." On the way to this career, Peter tried his hand at fiction, publishing some short stories in what he modestly describes as "lesser publications." He describes the challenge of writing fiction: "When you create from nothing, you could go in 10 million directions!" He prefers the structure provided by journalism and editing; additionally, he appreciates the collaborative aspects of

CATHERINE WEINGARTEN '09

For Catherine Weingarten, there is no such thing as a typical week. Catherine is a published playwright who is now extending her creative reach to short form comedy. Though she tries to spend some part of every day writing, she says that days are more different than the same.

When Catherine graduated from FCS, she thought she wanted to pursue acting. At Bennington College, she found a mentor – noted playwright Sherry Kramer. With her guidance, Catherine widened her thinking and became interested in creating and exploring beyond acting. When she graduated, she spent a year practicing her craft and then went on to pursue an MFA from Ohio University, where she focused on dramatic structure. She completed her MFA in 2017 and moved back to New York, where she has been busy. Her plays are comedies that make a statement about the world in a fun way which, she says, "can be challenging in the New York Theater world." And yet they have been embraced and performed in many venues and have been award winning.

Her short play, *Pineapple Upside Down Cake* was a KCACTF National Semi Finalist, and her work has been developed with The Last Frontier Theatre Conference, Abingdon Theatre, and others.

Catherine says, "Part of being an artist is expanding yourself so the work you do frees you up and makes you better." In that spirit, she has tried



journalism. As an example, he described the satisfaction of nurturing a story idea through writing and editing to publication and working with designers to create the accompanying artwork. You can read Peter's work at *Bitcoin Magazine*, where he is currently a writer and editor.

Tim says he always knew that he wanted to be a writer. Since his time in Upper School, where he felt his creativity was encouraged and nurtured by Terry Guerin, he has been writing and acting. After graduating from Tisch, he and a group of friends formed a small theater company, AGGROCRA. More recently, he has begun writing short stories. Tim has had a number of tech jobs, each in the service of being able to write during his free time. This summer he was awarded the George R.R. Martin Scholarship to attend Clarion West, a prestigious six-week speculative writing workshop in Seattle. Now back home in Brooklyn, he is thinking about next steps, putting finishing touches on a short story, a work of speculative fiction recently published on *Escape Pod*, a science fiction podcast magazine.

When asked if they give each other feedback on their writing, they laughed and said they are excited to see one another published and have no desire to critique. Tim said to his brother, "You are a real life editor; I would be nervous if you were critical." Peter replied, "I know how hard it is to publish, so I am so psyched to read Tim's work and just admire the execution."



her hand at stand-up comedy and short form comedy. Most recently, her work was published in *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*.

As she thinks back to her time at FCS, Catherine says that her experience in literature and the arts "was just amazing.

We were exposed to interesting literature from around the world, encouraged to speak our mind and to be curious."

She was particularly a fan of Terry Guerin's amazing drama program and how Terry would bring in actual theater troupes like Pig Iron Theatre Company to work with students. "Terry was always so encouraging of my need to express myself and my passion for theater. I really think all the amazing English teachers at FCS helped foster my appreciation for the written word and a greater understanding of classic literature and plays."

You can find Catherine's short form humor writing on *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, and you can learn more about her work at catherineplaywright.ninja.

FCS alumni/ae reflect on English at FCS, teachers who influenced them, and current career paths

JULIAN SHAPIRO-BARNUM '17

"I remember (Teacher) Monty led a seminar class about climate fiction and writing about the environment. It was the first time I felt like what I created and read had political agency. Reading classics are important, but something about reading works regarding the now got me so excited, and I feel like it was the first time I wrote a short story I loved.

"Terry Guerin exposed me to a ton of dramatic literature. I am now an actor, and I feel like I got a huge base knowledge of plays from her."

CASEY CIPRIANI '01

"In the journal writing elective towards the end of senior year, I discovered that, hey, I could actually be pretty funny. Writing about how many times I get out of bed to go to the bathroom at night or weird dreams that I had made other students laugh and helped me realize my weird quirks can be lighthearted and not so anxiety-inducing."

LEAH FRANQUI '05

"Friends' Central nurtured my love of storytelling because our literature classes introduced me to so many writers whose diverse methods and ideas opened up my sense of what writing could be. It was only later when I got to college that I realized how radical, inclusive, and diverse the works I read in high school were. Friends' Central introduced me to García Márquez, Rushdie, Kushner, Woolf, Faulkner, Morrison, and so much more. Beyond my literature classes, taking Drama introduced me to Suzan Lori-Parks, Ionesco, and Chekhov. These writers are the people I aspire to come close to, on some level, as a writer myself, no matter how absurd that dream might be. The creative writing seminar I took with Laurie Novo in the second half of my senior year activated my own interest in writing as more than a distant concept or something that other people did. I didn't know it at the time, but Friends' Central put me on the path to my current life.

"While I had a lot of amazing teachers at Friends' Central, one of the literature teachers that had the strongest impact on me was Tom MacFarlane. I happened to have him twice – in my final year of Middle School and in my first year of Upper School, and he also advised the Lit Mag, for which I wrote and edited. A generous, brilliant, empathic, and kind teacher, he was a constant source of information, a wonderful instructor, and he made learning dynamic and fun. Jim Rosengarten was also a magnificent teacher who taught me how to explore Shakespeare through *Othello* in a way that would inform my reading for years. While not a literature teacher, Dr. Kelley Graham was one of the most amazing teachers I ever had, and her perspective on history through human use and economic patterns is something I still think about constantly when I read and research historic topics. Terry Guerin and James Davis both fundamentally changed the way I understood story by presenting me with many forms of storytelling through music, movement, and drama."

KATE FUSSNER '05

"I very clearly remember when Taylor Mali came to perform and led a poetry workshop at FCS for a small group of students. Two years ago, he came to the school where I'm now a high school English teacher and writer, and I got to share with him that I had first worked with him through FCS. I also remember that I developed my deep love of literature with Dr. Patterson and Liza Ewen, who both pushed me in the best ways.

"I'm a high school English teacher and writer based in Boston, MA. I've published personal essays in *The Boston Globe*, WBUR's *Cognoscenti*, *The Manifest-Station*, *Brit + Co*, and elsewhere. I'm currently pursuing my MFA in Creative Writing for Young People at Lesley University, where I am working on my first novel."

ANNE GRAY LIVERSIDGE '84

"I was inspired by the teaching of Ray DeSabato while he was an English teacher when I was in Middle School.

"I am the owner of Sign Class, LLC. This is a creative venture that I started after years of teaching American Sign Language. My interest in languages and four years of Spanish at FCS inspired my love for languages. See my website signclass.org, and contact me if you wish."

ED REHFELD '82

"FCS's requirement that I write one essay (theme) a week from the trimester I entered FCS (Fall 1976) until I began my senior project (Spring 1982) was the concrete in the foundation of my development as a writer. The process of going through an outline, rough draft, and final draft, and the discipline of doing it every week were invaluable.

"I now serve as a speechwriter/ghostwriter for the head of one of the largest trade unions in North America – a job I love – and the core writing skills I gained at FCS are a very large part of the reason I am where I am today."

BOB LEVIN '60

"When I was in sixth grade, my teacher Miss Griffith (Later Rev. Beamon) called my short story 'Dog Net' a 'biting satire on *Dragnet*' to the attention of Mrs. Woerner in the Upper School, who published it in *The Literary Supplement*. The rest is history.

"I am the author of five published books and numerous stories and articles. I have received awards and grants from the NEA, CCLM, and Pushcart Press and been a best-of-the-year selection from the rockbound coast of *The Village Voice* to the shining shores of *The Oregonian*. To learn more, visit theboblevin.com."

CLARKE DUNHAM '54

"If it were not for Richard Burgess and Hobson Pitman, I doubt that my theatrical career would have happened as it did. Dick Burgess raised my interest in the theater. Hobson Pitman did the same for my interest in art and design. Both of these influences helped lead to my 60-year (and still counting) Broadway and International Opera Design career."

Have a literary/writing career or FCS English memory you'd like to share?
Contact us at communications@friendscentral.org



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