

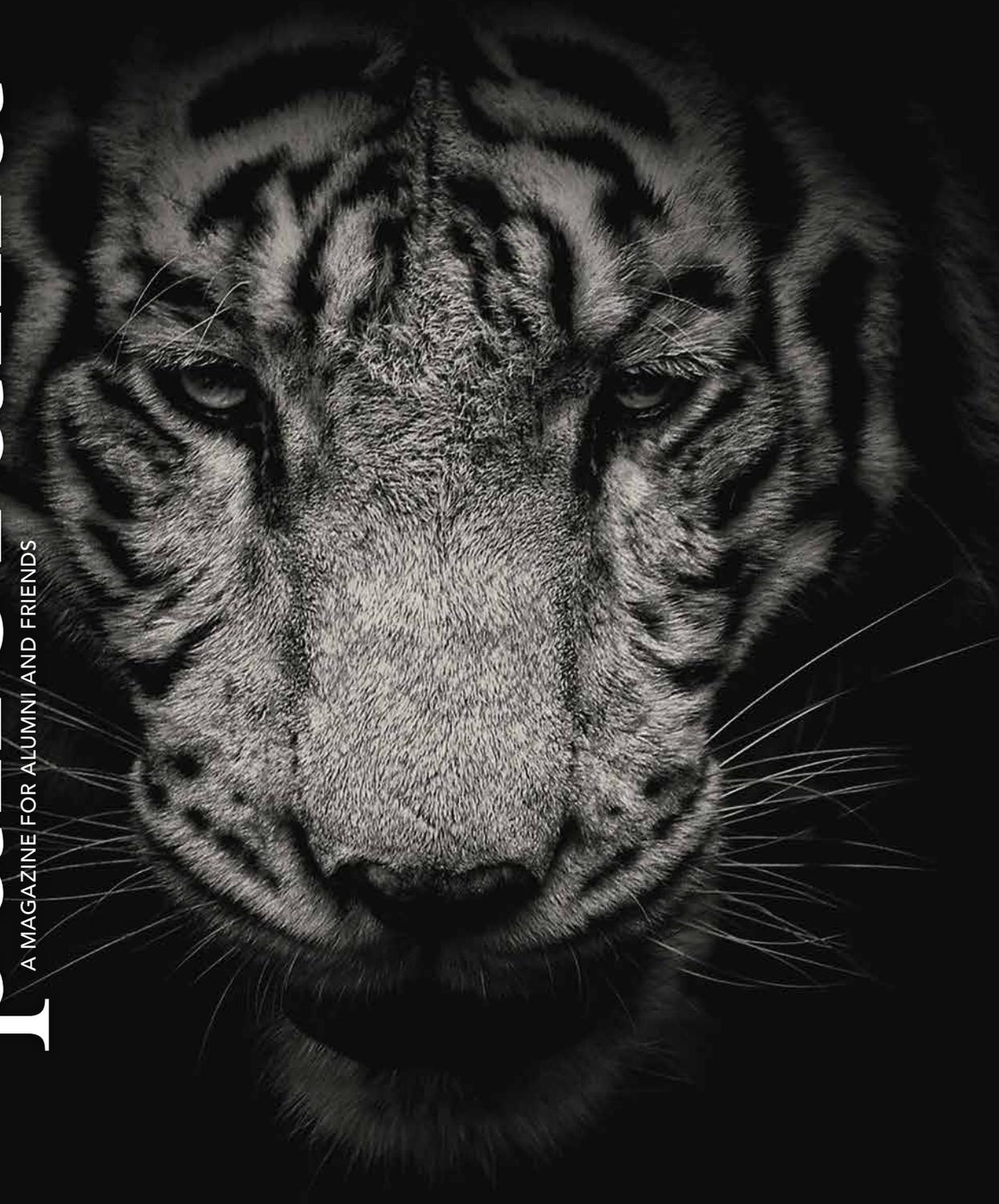


LEYSIN AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

2017 EDITION

# panorama

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS





LEYSIN AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

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YOUR GIFT TO THE LAS ANNUAL FUND, combined with those of other alumni, families & friends, ensures that we can continue to develop *innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world.*

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**Classes**  
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Switzerland offers safety, security, and natural beauty



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Students share their cultures and lifestyles

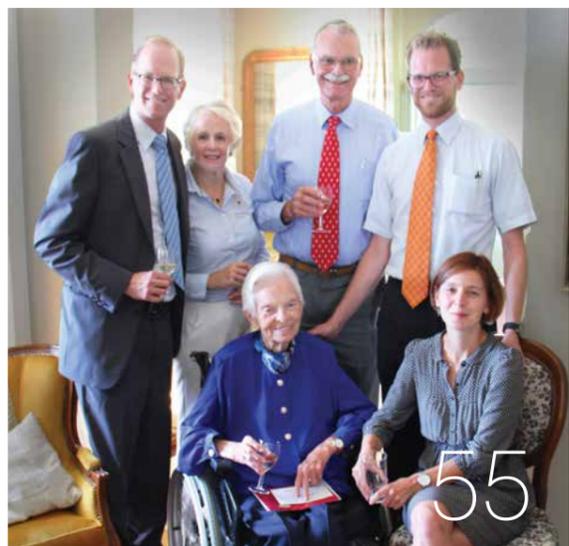
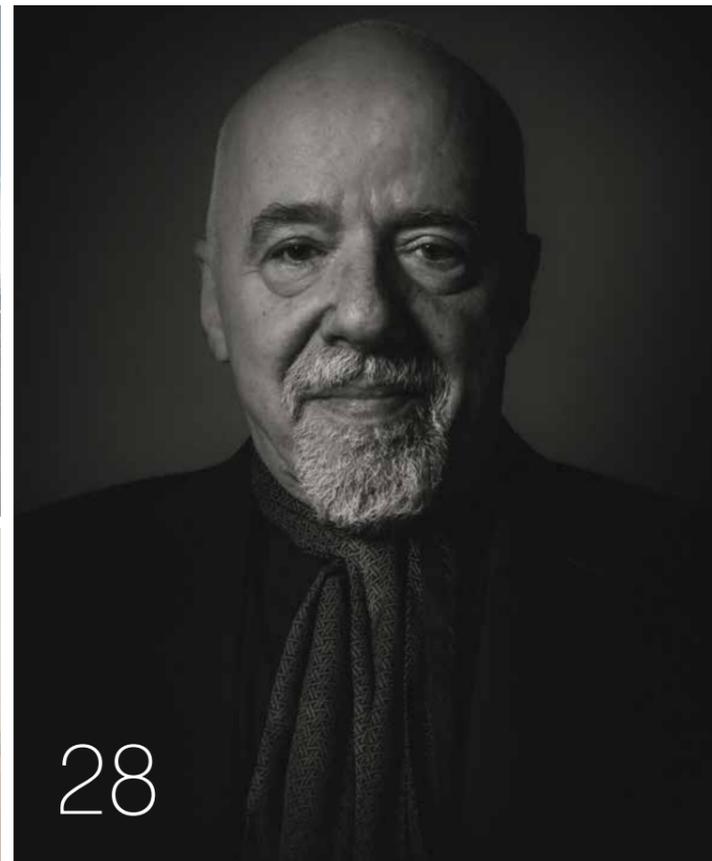
**Alpine Adventure**  
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**Alpine Exploration**  
(ages 12-14)

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## 2017 Edition

**On the Cover:** Animals in B&W  
Featured in The Guardian, winner of the prestigious Pulitzer prize.  
Photograph taken by alumni: Alex Teuscher '00



# Letter

## FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Alumni, Parents, & Friends,

The year 2016 was very eventful. At LAS, we graduated another exceptional class of students, completed our re-accreditation, finished the construction of the Magic Mountain Athletic Center, and celebrated the 100th birthday of my grandmother, our co-founder Sigrid Ott. Meanwhile, outside the confines of our quiet village, we saw two major shifts in the global political landscape and the continuation of several open conflicts. All these events remind us why our mission of developing innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world is so important.

The Class of 2016 continued the impressive trend of strong IB results and top tier college and university acceptances for our graduates. Our average IB score was 33 and we had two students score 44 points – just one point below the elusive perfect score. The success of our graduating class is always bolstered by our scholarship students.

In early Fall, we welcomed nine international educators to campus to assess our 10-Year Self-Study as part of our joint CIS (Council of International Schools) and NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation. As with past accreditations, we continue to identify areas of improvement, which will ultimately benefit our students by improving our academic and extracurricular programs, as well as our support services. One section of the accreditation protocol is titled, "Guiding Statements". Our mission statement is our main guiding statement, and the accreditation team was very impressed by how well we integrate it into our planning, program improvements, and our daily lives at school. Working through the section on guiding statements reminded everyone of our mission's importance and how it can and should drive school development.

A great example of school development being driven by our mission statement, was the renovation of our gymnasium into a state of the art athletic center. The Magic Mountain Athletic Center, or MMAC as it is now called, was inaugurated on September 23rd. We had the privilege of welcoming Mr. Gilbert Felli, former Executive Director of the International Olympic Committee and native of Leysin, as the keynote speaker. He gave an inspiring speech about the important role of sportsmanship and athletic pursuits in our lives. Inspiring words were also given by my grandmother, Mrs. Sigrid Ott. As co-founder of LAS, she inaugurated the first gymnasium at LAS in 1972. The inauguration ceremony also provided a perfect opportunity to celebrate my grandmother's birthday: she turned 100 years old on September 13th. It was a powerful moment when she cut the ribbon with my parents and Mr. Felli.

In the past century, my grandmother has seen tremendous changes. She saw the development and obsolescence of

telex and fax machines. When she first came to Europe it was by steamship. She has since seen the development and expansion of commercial aviation. Today, she lives in a world dominated by tablets and smart phones, both of which she uses regularly. Unfortunately, not all the changes she has witnessed were positive, with major political and social changes leading to two of the bloodiest conflicts in the history of mankind.

In the post-World War two era, she and my late grandfather had a dream of bringing young people from all over the world together to build bridges and learn from one another. They deeply believed that we, as human beings, have much more in common than what separates us. It was through that dream and belief that they became among the first educational leaders to develop the concept of international education.

On June 23rd, when the Brexit referendum passed, I recall thinking that closed policy governments and the growing fear of globalization were now a part of our political reality. I began to wonder to what extent it might expand across the globe and what it would mean for LAS – a school founded on bridging cultural divides and openness. As the summer continued, it became clear in the run up to the US election that there was a large political divide among Americans and that the US might be next to follow suit.

On November 8th, the day of the US presidential election, I was in Iran visiting alumni, current parents, and prospective families. Needless to say, the mood amongst these groups changed the following day. Thankfully, the Iranian people are used to unexpected change and many took the election result in their stride. Within hours, I was told that one of the jokes on social media was that Iran would welcome American refugees. It is this sense of humor regarding the potential situation that gives me hope that the LAS message of international understanding and tolerance remains as relevant and important as ever.

Today, we welcome students from over 60 countries. The dream of my grandparents is a reality and their beliefs are strongly embedded in our values as our mission statement. In uncertain times, it is important to bring the conversation back to these values and to discuss why it is essential that we develop more innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world.

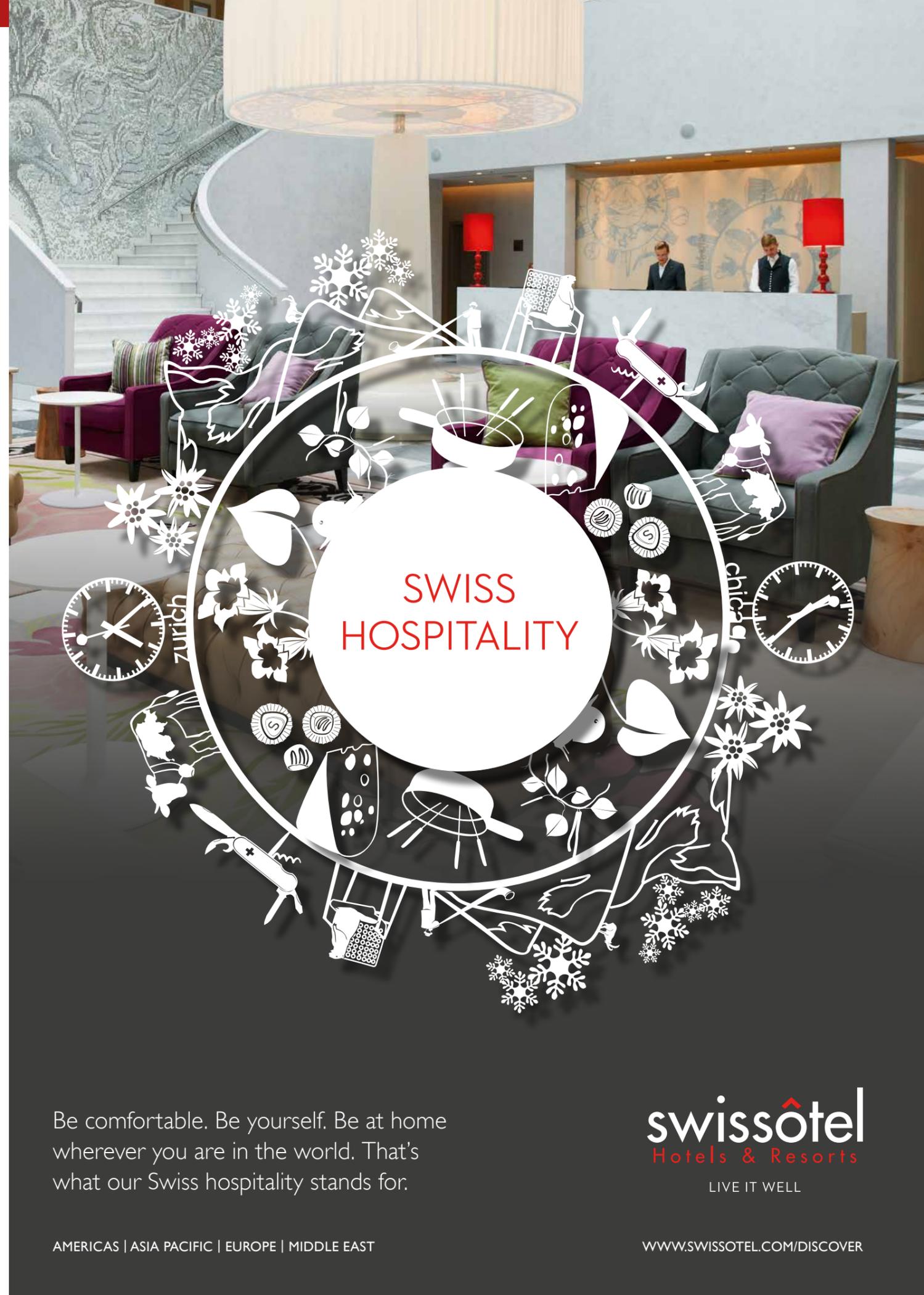
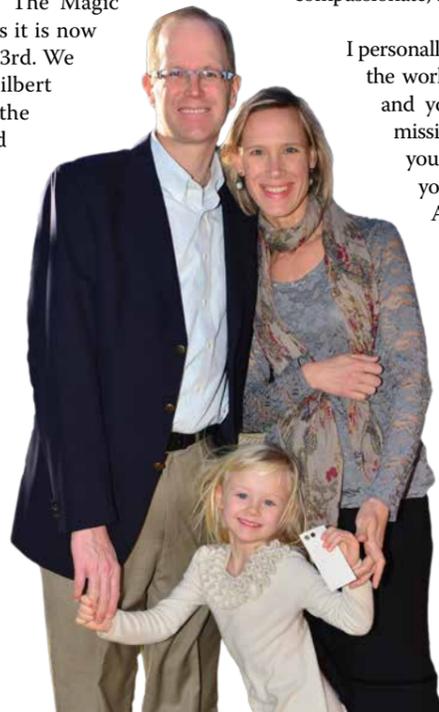
I personally continue to be inspired by our alumni around the world. You can all be proud of LAS, your school, and you can continue to show your belief in our mission and efforts by having conversations with your friends and relatives about LAS. You can share your ideas with us and refer potential students. And, when the time is right for you, you can support our fundraising efforts, which help us to provide the best educational experience to the future leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you for your trust and support of LAS. I hope to welcome you back to your school soon. I wish you all the best for 2017!

Cordially,



Dr. Marc-Frédéric Ott  
Head of School, Managing Director



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# Growth of the IB Program at Leysin American School

Mrs. Sabina Lynch  
Dean of Belle Époque Campus



OVER THE LAST EIGHT YEARS

**33 - 58**

Diploma Candidates

**78% - 89%**

Passing Rate

**30.1 - 33.0**

LAS Avg. Score

**29.6 - 30**

World Avg. Score

**39 - 44**

LAS High Score

At a recent IB conference hosted here on the Belle Époque campus, a participant commented on the beauty of the building - they asked whether it was something we took notice of each day, or if we eventually became inured to its magnificence? As we spoke, I realized again just what an amazing place in which we study, live, work, and play everyday. Most importantly, this amazing building is the face of the International Baccalaureate Programme at LAS.

The International Baccalaureate at LAS has changed rather significantly in the last eight years. First, we moved our IB studies to their own campus in the former Grand Hotel, now known as the Belle Époque campus. All students that studied in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme both lived and studied on this campus. Two years ago, the decision was made to merge all students in grades 11 and 12, US High School and IB diploma candidates, and move them to the Belle Époque campus. This was done for a myriad of reasons but the most significant was to allow all students access to the courses offered by the International Baccalaureate.

As a result, a student whose English language abilities were not refined enough to undertake the full IB Diploma Programme could access those IB courses in which they were particularly gifted. For example, an ELL (English Language Learner) student could enter into and complete a certificate in Mathematics Higher Level, which until this merger was impossible. In this way, we were able to significantly change

and improve the subject and course availability, allowing us to create a more tailored and personalized course program for all of our students.

As with any change, there have been many challenges that we have faced in the implementation phase of this endeavor. However, the challenges have been significantly outweighed by the positive impact that the merger has had on our student body and the opportunities that they are now able to explore.

This is not to say that we have finished with our changes; the ever shifting sands of education mean that we are constantly innovating and thinking outside the box to improve. We are currently looking to expand our course offerings in order to cater to an even wider variety of interests and areas of expertise amongst our students. We continue to strengthen our IB Diploma Core and endeavor to expose all of our students to the abstract nature of exploring ways of knowing, through the Theory of Knowledge, the community service of CAS, and the exposure to a university style research paper in the form of the Extended Essay (highlighted in Panorama 2016).

With larger and larger percentages of our students electing to enroll in the IB Diploma Programme, and more students accessing IB classes in order to gain IB Course Certificates, the International Baccalaureate at LAS is a growing and thriving program. We look forward to the future and to the changes that we will continue to see here on the majestic Belle Époque.

**In 1991, LAS became the first Swiss Boarding School to offer the IB Diploma.**

# Experiencing Education: The Preparatory Years

Mr. Phil VanDenBrink  
Dean of Savoy



As Dean of the Savoy Campus, it is my role to ensure a quality education for our students in grades 7 - 10. This does not simply mean the content of the classes, but the overall educational experiences of these students. Of particular interest to me, is the newly-named Preparatory Years (grades 9 and 10). The Preparatory Years are the bridge between the Middle School and the IB Diploma Years program.

In the Preparatory Years, we focus on experiencing education rather than rote learning (memorization and repetition). For example, LETS Day, or Local Elevation Transect Study Day, takes students outside of the classroom to focus on science during the fall semester. The students learn first-hand about the impact of climate change on the local environment. The results of their work will be part of a data set used for years to come.

To learn more turn to page 38 or see the LETS Day article in the 2016 Panorama.

Another important event in autumn, is LYMUN or Leysin Youth Model United Nations. It is a Model United Nations event put on by LAS for LAS. Each year about 90 of our students participate. They act as real county delegates, some of which they are from, to discuss/debate current world issues and formulate compromises and solutions to create positive growth. It is a great opportunity for these students, who will no doubt be future global leaders, to learn at an early age how to build consensus and manage conflicts diplomatically.

Winter Projects give students the opportunity to explore topics of personal interest in an academic setting. Students learn preparation skills directly applicable to the IB program, have a topic of interest, and present these topics to the school community. Students in grade 10 write research essays on a topic of their choosing, while grade 9 projects are more science based. Preparing them for GLOBE Day (Global Learning and

Observations to Benefit the Environment). Last year's grade ten essays included such topics as: the impact of divorce, rocket science, automotive engineering, and diabetes, while grade nine projects explored such topics as: glaciology, tourism, and precipitation levels in Leysin.

In the spring, beginner French students will spend the day in Thonon, France. They will use their language skills to shop at a weekly street market, eat in restaurants, and complete a real-world classroom assignment. Using the resources which surround us as means to learn, brings the curriculum to life. This culminating experience encourages students to utilize what they have learned in the classroom and apply it to their everyday lives.

At LAS, we recognize the importance of every student's cultural heritage. One great way for students to explore their heritage is through reading, especially in their native language. On the Savoy Campus, we have built 70 minutes per week into the academic schedule for reading. This will also help the students prepare for the demands of the Diploma Program by allowing them time to focus on reading to become more efficient learners. It is not often a school encourages students to read in a native language for the sake of pleasure. There are no required assignments, rather it is meant to teach students the joy of developing their own preferences.

In all of these activities on the Savoy Campus, students work with adults and attain the confidence necessary for the adult world. They are guided and mentored on how best to present ideas and further stretch their education. Being a twenty-first century learner is more than using a computer for researching, it is about finding good material to use, developing on these concepts, and communicating these ideas to people outside of his/her comfort zone. It is a collaborative model. The real diversity is in the freedom to explore his/her interests and share these interests with the community.

# The Policeman, The Detective, The Judge and Jury

Mr. Paul Fomalont  
Dean of Students



When I introduce myself to parents during our initial meeting at the beginning of the school year, I always start out with the line: “my job here is the policeman, the detective, the judge, and the jury.” Everyone always laughs, but there is a lot of truth in that statement. The Dean of Students in almost every boarding school has this reputation and is often perceived by students as the “bad guy”. When I walk into a classroom and ask to see a student, a hushed silence falls upon the room, a whisper by a nearby friend will break the silence, “what have you done?” A common phrase used to inspire compliance by teachers is, “I’ll send you to see Mr. Fomalont!” This is how new students first impression of me is created.

All of this is very natural. A general theme is that young people are going to resist authority, take risks, and test limits, whether ours or their own. Research tells us that the frontal lobe of the brain develops last in humans and is not fully mature until our 20’s. This is the part of the brain that controls responsibility. To put 340 teenagers together with 75 supervising adults means a strong discipline structure has to be created. An easy analogy of a discipline structure is that of a prison, where freedoms are curtailed in order to create security. Boarding schools have long utilized aspects of serving consequences to control student behavior. Many years ago, this may have been physical punishment, but as time has passed and educators have themselves learned,

the evolution of punishment has changed to loss of freedoms, including detention or frequent check-ins.

While this type of discipline system is the time honored method of the boarding school, there might be a better way. There is a shift from a culture of compliance to one of community. As I enter my 18th year working in boarding schools I have experienced nearly every situation one could imagine. I appreciate the consistency and structure that a discipline system provides and agree it is difficult to argue that it is not effective. However, sometimes I imagine what would happen if this system disappeared. Would it be Armageddon? Would the students never go to bed at an appropriate hour? Would they wear hats in class? Would they ever complete their work? I personally disagree with this doomsday scenario. Here at LAS, I think you would hardly notice a difference.

At the very root of a discipline system is a precept. I would lean on the great political philosophers to give us the spectrum of social systems. On one extreme is Machiavelli or Thomas Hobbes, with a very pessimistic view of our nature, where we are selfish creations only interested in our own self satisfaction and preservation; strong control keeps society intact. On the other side is John Locke who suggests we are willing to unify for a common good and that logic and common sense will allow a workable system to evolve. We make these same assumptions with children when we build a discipline system, and there is no doubt in my mind that we have leaned more on Hobbes in the past to create our system. I recently have watched that change to a process much more resembling Locke’s, and now think we are ready to move closer to a more ideal system that begins with a premise that children are innately good and want to do right.

I work most closely with our dormitory heads and over the years we have had countless philosophical discussions about education. We all agree that students want to behave and be successful. They want the same things that we do; to be trusted, respected, and listened to. Over the 5 years that I have been the Dean of Students at LAS, there is one goal we have never changed: to create a positive climate for all of our students. We want to spend our time supporting our students experiences so that they learn how to live and succeed in an international school, and have fun whilst succeeding. Our team all agree that if we had to choose between having our staff spend their night making nachos with the dorm, or making sure that each student serves their consequences by remaining in their room all night,

nachos would win the respect of the students every time. With this in mind we have very intentionally tried to create a less draconian system. Conversations now often replace consequences. We focus more on teaching students skills to meet expectations rather than punishing for not. We recognize positive contributions not just negative behaviors.

You might now be scared that we have absolutely no rules or authority to control the children that have been entrusted to us. While our system is still traditional our new philosophy has been seeping into the school and slowly begun working. If you look at the exceptional conduct award that we give at the end of each school year to students with 0 infractions, the numbers have increased continuously over the last 4 years. This is the first time that we have had merits outnumber infractions by nearly 2 to 1. There are also more merits less than halfway through the school year than every year but 1. Our student surveys, on a scale of 1 to 10, this year have general happiness at a school average 7.4, something we are very proud of and hope to improve.

Exceptional Conduct	
Year	Number
12 - 13	9
13 - 14	28
14 - 15	29
15 - 16	40

*“The number of students who have been asked to leave the school has dropped. In early November of 2016 we reached our 1000th merit of the year, another huge increase from the previous 6 years.”*

MERITS BY YEAR										
06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17
124	288	819	1148	91	338	338	411	632	760	1120

While it is always challenging to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of social programs, I am greatly encouraged by the data. I think that we are tremendously lucky that we have great students who work hard and are well behaved and have such supportive parents. I am fortunate to get to work with an amazing team of dorm heads who are passionate about their care of students and incredibly knowledgeable and skilled in their art. I am very lucky to have a supportive group of teachers who not only want to teach an academic content but also want to help mold young people into responsible young adults and are willing to live in the same community as them. What does the future hold? I don’t know, but my dream is that every night in every dorm there is a plate of nachos waiting for the students to snack on as they return in the evening to study.



# Editor's Note: The Art Of Being Well Rounded

LAS Development Team

In Leysin, we rely heavily on the environment for our well-being as a community and school. It's not called the Magic Mountain for nothing, nor are our athletes named the Goats without reason. But face it, most education takes place within our school's many walls. In this year's Panorama, we're emphasizing the school's "well-roundedness", a trait exemplified in our motto and seen in every article in the following pages. This includes the Dean of Students' monumental task of progressing toward a more liberal disciplinary structure, including focusing on teaching skills to students on how they can learn to meet expectations, rather than punishing for them for not meeting them. We also showcase our growing IB program, our increased strength in academics, and the many ways we take learning outside of the classroom in programs like the International Award, LETS Day, and our amazing cultural trips. LAS is proud that each student leaving this school has had a

far-reaching education. They've learned that no goal is too difficult to reach nor any problem too difficult to overcome.

The Panorama Magazine has always been quietly geared towards our alumni, for you are the visible proof of our success in teaching "well-roundedness." We have highlighted four of you in the last two editions, including Ines Taittinger, a Le Mans race car driver; Alex Krakoski, a young entrepreneur; Alex Teuscher, a renowned photographer; and Paul Carduner a programmer, coder, and entrepreneur who is as happy influencing Facebook's decisions as he is climbing a mountain.

So thank you for sharing your stories, visiting us in Leysin, and meeting with us as we travel the globe. And a special thanks for being a part of our "well-rounded" international community.

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General Manager,  
Van Straten Medical  
Alumnus 1996

**Viktor Göhlin**  
Founder,  
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# THE ARTS AT LAS

## LAS Arts Team

Education in the arts is a fundamental part of individual human growth. An education in the arts also nurtures global civilization and advances the human condition. The arts serve to make us complete; in fact, participation in the arts is what makes us human. The arts, however, cannot be learned via sporadic or random exposure any more than for the studies of math or science. Therefore, arts education is considered an important educational program for students at LAS.

Several changes have been set in motion this past year to improve arts opportunities for students at LAS. An Integrated Arts program has been designed and initiated for our new Middle School (grades 7 and 8), and a Digital Imaging class is now offered for students at the Belle Époque campus (grades 11 and 12). Learning spaces have been reconfigured and additional display areas have been dedicated at the Savoy and Belle Époque campuses to maximize learning and expand areas where student artwork is showcased.

The key to an effective arts education program is found in a team of skilled arts instructors. At LAS, our arts teachers believe in the students and expect them to thrive and succeed. We endeavor to support each student by setting high academic expectations in learning environments that allow creative processes to emerge. Individual teaching styles may differ, but LAS arts teachers are skilled to help each student reach their full potential.

## VISUAL ARTS

### Amor Cabato

The Visual Arts in Savoy grades 9/10 is designed to provide students with a solid foundation in two-dimensional and three-dimensional art. Students are introduced to visual practices, including drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, craft, and design. Students also engage in exploring different approaches and strategies relating to visual organization and composition. Students develop basic skills and vocabulary necessary to critique a work of art.

### Thomas Padick

The Digital Imaging program at LAS is currently offered on both the Savoy and Belle Époque campuses. At Belle Époque, students can enroll in a class that provides opportunities to explore and develop skills in photography, video production, digital imaging manipulation, and compositing and graphic design, using Adobe Creative Suite and various other software programs. Students have access to an extensive collection of DSLR and video cameras as well as studio lighting equipment, graphics tablets, and both wireless and wired audio recording systems. Savoy students can enroll in an after school activity that focuses on video production. Students also learn how to optimize and edit videos using their smartphone cameras.

### Brian Rusher

Visual Arts and Design studies at the Belle Époque Campus allows students to explore 2D and 3D mediums

and elements of graphic design to develop visual communication and problem-solving. Assignments are based on observational, expressive, abstract, and imaginative forms, using drawing, painting, collage, printmaking, ceramics, photography, digital media, and sculpture. Students develop the skills and techniques necessary for understanding the elements of art and design, art history, and creative personal expression through art making.

IB art students follow the IB Visual Arts diploma program across a 2-year period incorporating creation of independent project artworks as part of a Process Portfolio, development of a Visual Arts journal, completion of a written artist comparative study, plus curating an exhibition of their work. This course is for those students who are particularly interested in Art and Design, where many go on to pursue it further after school and in the creative industries.

Studio art classes allow students of all abilities to explore a variety of general Art and Design projects, experimenting with different media and focusing on a variety of artists and art genres. This provides a general practice and appreciation of Visual Arts and Design without students working towards any certification.

Art portfolio building is an after-school activity that provides students with the opportunity to develop their portfolios further, whether they take part in the other Visual Arts programs or not. In addition, workshops led by guest artists and art trips are offered to LAS students at all grade levels.

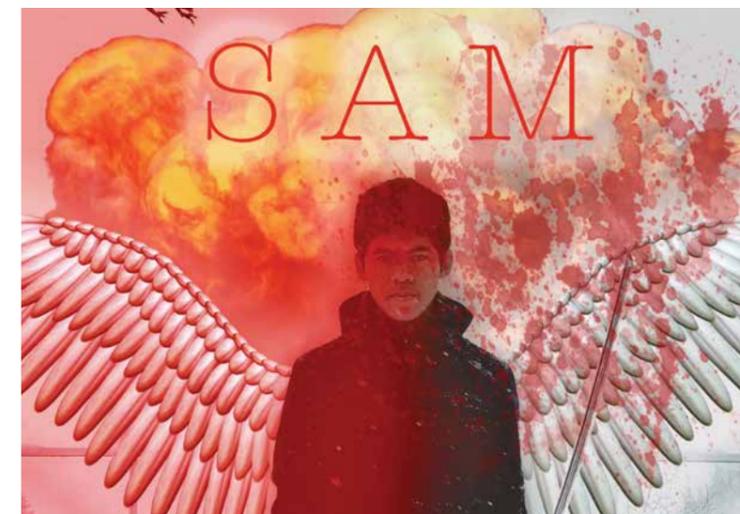
Other unique and exciting creative projects include the Life Jacket Project where students, faculty, parents, and friends contributed creative works to the American School of Barcelona's RefugArt initiative. Also, the Land Art Project is an ongoing collaboration with the Director of our Alpine Club, John Harlin, where students work with the contemporary Swiss land artist known as 'Saype', using bio-degradable materials to develop an artwork incorporated into the landscape at Sunnyside (Chaux de Mont), close to the summit of Berneuse.

## THEATER

### Bryan Albertson

The Theater Arts/Drama department at Leysin American School gives students the opportunity to learn about the background and history of Theater Arts and Drama from around the world. They explore the origins of both from the perspective of different cultures and peoples. They will learn and understand the various inspirations and muses for actors and actresses and the various venues and places they performed.

As the school year transitions to the second semester, students will apply what they have learned and begin to practice acting styles and techniques. They will perform monologues and dialogues as well as work in groups to explain culture and society through stage work. The year will culminate with the writing of original screenplays and research into how best to produce them.



TOP: Student Artwork in progress  
MIDDLE: Digital artwork by student Ana Paula P. '18  
BOTTOM: Student artwork by Sam R. '18



Spring Theater Production

Many of these students will also put into practice what they have learned in the after school theater activity. They will perform two plays or musicals while also supporting the other performing arts through stage and set building, as well as helping in the production of these performances.

**Jen Beighton**

This year's LAS Yearbook team is a dedicated group of eight grade 9 and 10 students. It's been a busy start to the year for our team, first students learned how to use the DSLR cameras, by understanding how to manipulate aperture, shutter speed, and exposure, they are now able to make decisions about what kind of settings to use for different types of pictures. These skills were put to

use almost immediately documenting the wide range of school events that take place during the first semester. In addition, students have completed a training course with our yearbook representative giving them a great start using the specifically created design software needed to put together the yearbook. Currently students have been assigned roles within the team such as editor, photography managers, and a creative team to work on different aspects of the yearbook design. We have a great team this year and we're looking forward to seeing the outcomes of their hard work later in the year.

**MUSIC**

**Kelly Deklinski**

Students in the Preparatory Years program at the Savoy campus have the opportunity to take a new course in 2016-2017 - Creative Music. This course is an innovative approach to music through varied approaches like composition, production, recording, performing, critiquing, and analyzing. Students in Creative Music learn to write music electronically and with standard notation, they complete projects in recording and production, explore acoustics, music and movement, musicology and genres, and examine the cognitive and societal effects of music across cultures and time periods. Each student also chooses either the piano or the guitar as their performance instrument throughout the year and learn a variety of practice techniques as well as music theory. Ms. Deklinski is also pioneering a course for the new



Middle School program. Integrated Arts, taught to all 7th and 8th graders, explores music, theater, and visual arts and their reciprocal relationships. The course is taught over three marking periods, each having a specific focus area (music, theater, or visual art) and is combined with complementary mini lessons in the other two areas. Combined with special arts excursions to museums and performance events, LAS hopes this approach will bring a breadth of experience and appreciation to our youngest students in the arts.

**L. Ira Bigelow**

Dr. Bigelow teaches Piano Keyboarding and Guitar at the Belle Epoque campus. These classes are for beginning and developing students seeking to start or increase their skills on the piano keyboard or acoustic guitar. Classes focus on the development of introductory or expanding piano performance techniques, music literacy, music theory, and stage deportment. The units and concepts covered in our piano/guitar classes include an introduction to the principles of piano keyboarding and guitar, the elements of music, music notation, effective practice techniques, music literature, performance and audience deportment, historic eras, composers, and artistic evaluation.

**LAS ARTS PERFORMANCE AND EXHIBITION SCHEDULE FOR 2016-2017:**

Family Week Art Exhibition and Concert  
Tuesday, February 14, 2017: 5:45pm Art Exhibition;  
6:30pm Concert  
Savoy Black Box Theater and Gallery

IB Art Exhibition  
Friday, April 7, 2017: 6:30pm  
Belle Epoque Grande Salle

Spring Theater Production  
Thursday and Friday, April 13 and 14, 2017: 7:00pm  
Belle Epoque Grande Salle

Evening With The Stars  
Friday, April 21, 2017: 6:30pm  
Belle Epoque Grande Salle

LAS Film Festival  
Thursday, April 27, 2017: 6:30pm  
Savoy Library

**LAS ARTS TEAM:**

- Dr. L. Ira Bigelow '12P, '13P, '15P, Department Chair
- Mr. Thom Padick, Digital Imaging
- Ms. Kelly Deklinski, Music
- Mr. Bryan Albertson, Theater Arts
- Ms. Amor Cabato, Visual Art
- Mr. Brian Rusher, Visual Art
- Ms. Jen Beighton, Year Book



**TOP:** Design by IB Visual Arts HL2 student Teddy L. '17 for RefugArt Life Jacket project.

**BOTTOM:** Sultan Aldabal '16 performing Feeling Good by Nina Simone during Evening With The Stars

**OPPOSITE:** Solo piano performance during LAS concert series



## SPORTS ROUNDUP

*In the previous Panorama, the history of the LAS athletics logo was explored and a teaser of the new logo was shared. Recently we unveiled the new LAS athletics logo on our social media platforms, and we are now happy to share it with you on print.*

Mr. Mike Brinkmeyer | Athletics Director

At our recent sports awards ceremony, in our beautiful new Magic Mountain Athletic Center, I had the pleasure of honoring those student athletes selected by their coaches as the 'best performers' on their respective teams. While I enjoy seeing our athletes perform well and our teams win, I would argue that the lasting lessons from sport come not from the wins but from the close matches lost, and the struggles that all athletes and teams face on their journeys to personal and team improvement.

Over the past three months our coaches have taught LAS student athletes to persevere and never give up. This is true not only in a game, where it looks like the chips are stacked against you, but also during a team practice where students struggle to get a new skill just right. It is my hope that our student athletes develop the discipline and self confidence that will serve them well beyond their days in a LAS uniform.



Lessons learned on the field or court will help them to stay focused and achieve their goals later in life.

Our teams are part of two sports leagues: The SGIS (Swiss Group of International Schools), which is made up of all the international schools in Switzerland, and the ADISR, which is the "local" league of international schools in the French-speaking region of Switzerland. Below are a few highlights from play in both leagues this past semester:

This year our **Girls Volleyball** squad, under the leadership of coach Gadiel Rachelson, was one of our most successful teams. The girls finished fifth of eight teams at a very competitive SGIS tournament, and then came back strong to win the bronze medal for their third place finish in the ADISR tournament. Seniors Iulia S. '17, Annelie R. '17, Teresa T. '17, and Carlota V. '17 showed great leadership and set excellent examples for our talented group of younger girls. A special recognition goes to Johanna R. '18, for her continuous positive attitude and her ability to motivate her teammates.

The **Boys Volleyball** team, coached by Daryl Hitchcock and Laura Sommariva, had an excellent outing at the SGIS tournament here in Leysin, winning the bronze medal. The boys showed tenacity and determination to stay in contention in close matches. They were led by seniors Simon M. '17, and Yuma Y. '17. Special recognition to junior Louis B. '18 for his excellent play throughout the season.

The **Girls Football** team was a young squad this year, with many players new to the sport. Coaches Rachel Galvin, Oscar Dias Mota, and John Bray did an excellent job of cultivating not only football skill but also the right attitude on the field. This was evident in games such as a late-season

match against Haut Lac where the girls never gave up and played on despite the cold, snow, and miserable conditions. The highlight of the season was winning the season-end tournament held at GEMS Academy. The team was led by senior Annelie R. '17 and junior Tiara S. '18.

The **Boys Football** team was under new leadership this year with coaches Ben Hall and Kevin Jennings taking on coaching responsibilities. Both coaches helped our team improve skills on and off the field and instilled a sense of teamwork and pride in our boys. Our team lost several close matches this year against highly competitive teams in the ADISR, but like the girls, they came back strong and won their season-ending tournament. The team was led by seniors Manuel M. '17 and Enrique T. '17, as well as by the fine play of juniors Nathan S. '18 and Thomas S. '18.



The **Girls Basketball** team was led by our new coach and PE teacher Nicola Stewart. She brought her own high level of enthusiasm to our girls team and helped instill that in each player. The girls team was young this year with many players who were new to the game. Despite this, the girls played well and showed great sportsmanship throughout the season. The future looks bright! The girls team was led by seniors Asal RS. '17, Ayotomi B. '17, and Annelie R. '17.

The **Boys Basketball** team, coached for the last few years by the very knowledgeable and experienced James McKenna, also had a "building year" with a young team on the court. The boys fought hard at the ultra-competitive SGIS Championship, narrowly missing the final four and finished in sixth place with a close final game against Lausanne. They played extremely well at home, in our new Magic Mountain Athletic Center, for our ADISR league tournament, defeating the same team from Lausanne and losing some close games to schools from Geneva. The team was led by seniors Yung-Pei K. '17, Alvaro Y. '17, and Ezrie H. '17.



The **Boys Rugby** team continues to develop under the leadership of coach Ben Hall, assisted this year by Tom Cosgrove. This year Coach Hall saw the fruits of his labor as many players who began to learn the game three years ago are now seniors who have developed into accomplished rugby players. The boys had some good matches against rival Le Rosey and their level of play improved throughout the season. The team was led by seniors McHale W. '17 and Michael P. '17. Special recognition goes to Kirill K. '19 who was named the most improved player.

Our **Cross Country** team, led by runner extraordinaire coach Alena Kovarova, trained hard on the undulous roads and trails of high-altitude Leysin. Using the roughly 15% less oxygen to their advantage of growing stronger and fitter. The runners ran several local road races and were led by top age-group finishes from Sai C. '19, Pepper K. '18, and Ting Han C. '17. The runners will continue to train over the course of the spring and enter more races such as the Lausanne 10k in April.

Both the **Tennis** and **Swim** teams began training and competition this fall and will continue throughout the winter and spring. The tennis team played to solid results at our Leysin singles tournament. Senior Antonella B. '17 finished third in the girls draw and Natdanai T. '17 won the boys tournament.

The **Swim** team, coached by Mike Brinkmeyer and Mark Kolman, has competed in one meet thus far, the Neuchatel Invitational, where there were many strong individual performances. The team was led at that meet by Juniors Louis B. '18 and Pepper K. '18. Sophomore Andrey M. '19 was the top male swimmer in his age group at the Neuchatel meet. The swimmers will continue to train throughout the winter and compete in two more events in Basel and Zurich.

We will also report at a later date on the results of our **Ski** team led by coach Andie Flett.

A big thanks for the hard work of our coaches, which has resulted in not only many successful teams, but also a group of over 120 student athletes who have learned the values of teamwork, sportsmanship, and the importance of developing strong character.



INTERVIEW

**Annelie R. '17** is an IB senior from Mexico with family roots in Germany. She has been a student for two years at LAS and she is one of the first student athletes we have had in many years to play on three different sports teams in one season. She was awarded the MVP award for the girls football team this year, was the top scorer on the girls basketball team, and was one of the leading blockers on the volleyball team. We caught up with her to find out more about her experience in athletics at LAS.

**What brought you to Leysin American School?**

I came for the international culture and travel opportunities, to ski, and to practice my German and learn French.

**Last year you were on the volleyball and football teams. Why did you decide to try basketball?**

I have actually played basketball for over ten years. Volleyball was my new sport at LAS. I wanted to play on three teams in my junior year but I thought it would be too much work with my commitments as a student. This year, I just went for it and it was a great experience. It has been hard work but it was totally worth it!

**What does sport mean to you? Why do you like to play team sports?**

I love the atmosphere of playing team sports and being part of something bigger than me. When you play a team at LAS you are part of a family, especially on a smaller team like the basketball and volleyball teams. I have learned a lot from my teammates, which has helped me develop my leadership skills, commitment level, and teamwork. However, one of the most important lessons I have learned from being an athlete is knowing that my teammates are depending on me and using this to shared knowledge to work with each other to do our best as a team.

**Have the skills you developed in one sport helped you in another?**

Absolutely! The first year I played football I became a goalkeeper because of my reflexes from basketball

training. My time as a goalkeeper and my jumping ability as a basketball player then helped me to be a good blocker in volleyball.

**What was your proudest/best moment this year as an LAS athlete?**

It would have to be in volleyball during our most recent tournament. We lost several players to injury and had to adjust and come together as a team. We had to trust each other fully to overcome these difficulties and we finish in second place.

**Was it difficult balancing all you have to do as a student at LAS and playing on three sports teams?**

Yes! I like to keep busy. In addition to sports, I was in the theatre production, part of event planners, and I helped with the newspaper on top of my classwork as an IB senior. There were some difficult days with so much on my plate but I feel like overall it was a rewarding experience.

**What are your hobbies / pastimes outside of sport?**

I love to draw, paint, and read. My family and friends are also a big part of my life.

**Why should an LAS student participate in our school's athletics program?**

Being a part of a sports team gives you something that goes beyond being just a student here at LAS. You meet other students you might not normally interact with, which is especially useful in adjusting to LAS as a new student.

4<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL  
LAS SHORT FILM FESTIVAL



THURSDAY APRIL 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017

The LAS Arts department is pleased to announce that for the first time we are inviting all current and former LAS students and faculty to submit videos and films for possible inclusion in our fourth annual film festival. Originally this event featured only films and videos produced by current students. With so many former LAS students having continued or developed their skills in many different aspects of the film and video industry, we have decided to expand our showcase of cinematic talents.

Screen writers, cinematographers, directors, producers, editors, and others involved in the creation or production of original works are invited to submit entries. Work can be of any length as the show may be expanded to a full day event based on the entries that we receive. Films in any language may be submitted. For more information or to submit work please

**FOR MORE INFO PLEASE CONTACT**

Thomas Padick at [tpadick@las.ch](mailto:tpadick@las.ch)

# COMING FULL CIRCLE:

STUDENT, TEACHER, AND PARENT AT SIS  
MRS. KIRA JOHNSON '89

In 1986, I stepped off of the cog train from Aigle into the magic of Leysin. I was excited, nervous, and dazzled by the scenery. Most of all, I was a 15-year-old alone in a new country and very unsure of what to expect. Countless students have shared these same emotions as they began a new adventure at Leysin American School. Whether coming as a full-time student, or for the Summer in Switzerland (SIS) program, the initial experience of stepping off the train and into a brand new world is life changing. Regardless of how they arrive, inevitably, students leave with a new sense of self that I am convinced cannot be found anywhere else. Like the students before, and those after me, I left the mountain with confidence, self-awareness, empathy, and a global view that still guides my personal and professional life today.

Leysin became my home and the people became my family. Three decades later, I am still drawn to the beauty, community, and the climate of acceptance, growth, and learning that Leysin American School embodies. There are

current and former students, faculty, and parents spread the world over that share my love for LAS and the community of Leysin; however my situation is unique. My relationship with LAS has truly come full circle, from alumna, to teacher, and now parent. This past summer, I was given the opportunity to teach at SIS while my children attended the SIS Alpine Adventure and Alpine Exploration programs. This perspective has given me personal and professional insight into LAS and the SIS program like few others.

As a teenager being introduced to Leysin and the ways of LAS, my nervous anticipation quickly turned to excitement and happiness. I was immediately folded into

an inclusive community. It wasn't always easy, with challenging classes, strict schedules, and no familiar faces. Although we were from all over the world, we quickly found common ground as our new "family" brought us together. Our faculty parents took us on excursions around Switzerland and most importantly, gave us a feeling of home through evenings spent together sharing meals and playing games. My favorite

**"THE SMALL VILLAGE ATMOSPHERE COMBINED WITH THE BREATHTAKING MOUNTAINS, BECAME MY DEFINITION OF PARADISE."**

memory was night skiing down the mountain, with a torch in my gloved hand, and ending with a fondue dinner. The small village atmosphere combined with the breathtaking mountains became my definition of paradise. Skiing became my passion and I would be out on the mountain as often as possible. Days were spent exploring, laughing, and learning about other cultures through our newfound friendships. This type of personal growth can only occur organically, in environments that foster the positive aspects of diversity and a global perspective. Those friendships have endured time and distance. We are now scattered all over the world but still maintain the strong bonds formed at boarding school. As an adult, I now fully understand and appreciate the global awareness that is such a huge part of me. This is an awareness that I developed through my time in Leysin.

Leaving to attend college was bittersweet, but as an 18 year old I was ready to start my life. I spent my undergraduate career at the University of Puget Sound and met my future husband. He still remembers the first time we met as a freshman. He asked where I was from, and I said, "Switzerland. Home." After graduating, we moved to his hometown of



Boulder, Colorado. The mountains were back in my life and I knew this was a perfect place for me. After teaching skiing, I decided education was my calling and received my Master's degree in Elementary Education from the University of Colorado Boulder. I've now been teaching for twenty-one years and in that time have also added three wonderful boys to the family.

Two summers ago, we decided that our boys needed to visit my "home." During our time in Leysin, I was asked, "Why aren't you working here?" Which started the wheels turning. I wanted my boys to have a greater understanding of the world and the place that helped shape who I am, and if there is one thing LAS taught me it is that the best way to understand the world and those who live in it is to get out and explore! I wasn't sure how it would work out, or if it would at all, but the pieces fell into place perfectly and I found myself with a teaching position and the opportunity to bring two of my boys, 10 and 12, with me. I called it our "adventure." Would they enjoy it? Would it broaden their minds? Would they want to return? As soon as we stepped foot in Leysin, I knew the answer was, "Yes." As a mom, I wanted more than anything for their experience to be nothing less than remarkable. If you are a parent, you know that one of the hardest things to do is to hand your child over to strangers. You hope they

**WOULD THEY ENJOY IT?  
WOULD IT BROADEN THEIR MINDS?  
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will support, care for, and dry tears when needed. My 12 year old in Alpine Exploration was entering his first extended time away from home. I would be somewhat close but how would he feel with a roommate and so many new faces? I can honestly say that he thrived and grew in many

ways. Was he homesick? I'll admit that the Fourth of July, US Independence Day, was difficult. The fireworks immediately made him miss home. There were tears. If your child is upset, so are you. I worried. My mom instinct wanted to make everything better for him. Luckily, I thought back to my time as a student, and reminded myself, "He will be okay." Sure enough, his dorm head, Mr. Scott, stepped in and took him under his wing. Soon my son was happily exploring again and spending his days with new friends.

My job was with the younger children, Alpine Adventure. In this case, I was mom and teacher. My 10 year old was in the program with me. I wasn't worried about him because I knew I was near but I felt the concern of those parents delivering their children to us. Some came in ready to tackle anything. Many came in not wanting to leave their families. I felt an instant bond with these kids. I knew how their parents were feeling too and this unique perspective was vital. In particular, two boys had a very hard time the first three days. They simply missed mom and dad. However, with the support



of other amazing staff, we sat up at night with them, found some comfort items, and in the end, these boys were two of the happiest most confident boys in the group. The amount of growth in three weeks was amazing to witness and speaks to the adaptability of children. This growth also occurred with my own son. He tends to be an observer, a quiet kid. He was worried about how he would communicate with children who didn't speak English. That worry evaporated on the first day when he noticed a boy who spoke very little English and was having some trouble because of it. Empathy took over and in no time I watched my own child doing all he could to communicate with another. I saw this happen repeatedly with other children too. They found ways to help each other, regardless of their country of origin or language. Day after day, I watched my child grow into a more understanding, creative, and compassionate person.

A teacher of young children needs to be understanding, creative, and compassionate themselves. My profession demands this every minute of the day and is why I love my job! During the regular school year, I teach all subjects to my twenty-five third grade students. At SIS, I had the opportunity to focus on math. My students ranged from fluent English speakers to very limited proficiency. The small class size (my largest was 9) and the combination of languages could have been seen as a difficult challenge however I chose to view it as an exciting learning opportunity. My teaching style is creative and this worked perfectly for this group. Each day I learned from my students while also teaching them new concepts in math. We used our time to not only work on our math but also to discuss it. These discussions provided students with the chance to use new

vocabulary and for me to learn to convey concepts without a common tongue. Professionally, the learning communities offered by LAS for teachers, and the variety of students, helped me to grow and become a better teacher.

I am incredibly fortunate to be connected to LAS in such a unique way. As a student and alumna I have always appreciated the values held and taught each day at LAS and now to help share and deliver those same values as a teacher at LAS has been a profound professional experience. The most remarkable part, however, has been to see LAS pass those same values and experiences to my own children.

**“THE SPECIFICS OF MY JOURNEY MAY BE UNIQUE, BUT THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF LAS IS NOT UNIQUE, IT BEGINS EVERY TIME A YOUNG PERSON TAKES THEIR FIRST STEPS IN LEYSIN!”**

This is the story of my personal journey and the lasting impact LAS has had on my life and that of my family. The specifics of my journey may be unique, but the positive impact of LAS is not unique, it begins every time a young person takes their first steps in Leysin! I am incredibly fortunate to

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# Honor Roll of Donors

## January 2016 through Spring 2017

Leysin American School greatly appreciates the generous support we have received in recent from our alumni, family, and friends. This support has allowed us to continually increase the quality of our programs and facilities while supporting our students as they strive to become Innovative, Compassionate, and Responsible Citizens of the World.

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# Development Update

Mr. Benjamin M. Smith  
Director of Development



**T**hank you, thank you, thank you. There is no better way to start a conversation about development than by saying thank you. Thank you for your time, thank you for your effort, and thank you for your resources. So - alumni, parents, faculty, staff, and friends of LAS - thank you.

Here on the Magic Mountain we continue to work to build a more robust development program for the benefit of our alumni, and for the school itself (i.e. the students and faculty). We continue to make investments in our team infrastructure; including recently completing a full database review, which helps us to have a more complete idea of which alumni we can reach and which we cannot.

The school has launched a redesigned webpage including a new alumni section. The new format should be more intuitive making information easier to find. In relation to this new webpage, we are conducting a school wide review of our information systems. After a solution is identified, we plan to launch an alumni relations platform that will ideally: communicate with our and your social media platforms, include a modern directory function, up-to-date events calendar, and simplify the donations process.

Our outreach to alumni will continue to grow on an annual basis. This means more alumni events worldwide, more personal visits, and heavier social media communication. This year we planned nine alumni events and even added a 10th due to popular demand. There are also several independent reunions upcoming, including one for late 70s alumni in Las Vegas. Next year we plan to add more events to the calendar and continue to host 10th Reunions in Leysin. All these events could not take place without the assistance of your fellow alumni and classmates. Whether providing recommendations on location, taking the lead on scheduling, or simply encouraging people to attend, we could not do it without them. The next time we are in a city near year, please reach out to your friends and encourage them to join us, even if you can't yourself. Also, if you have an idea for an event, please be in touch.

Participation has been the buzzword of our fundraising efforts in recent years. As we continue to express the importance of participating to our faculty and parents, we also want to stress this to our alumni. It's the act of participating that matters. By making a gift, you are telling us that we are moving in the right direction. As this message has taken hold with our faculty and parents, we have seen participation rates grow from less than 50% to almost 80%, and from less than 5% to over 12% respectively. At the same time, we continue to maintain 100% participation from our board and senior leadership. Yes, big transformative gifts matter and we are extremely grateful for them. However, participation demonstrates we have built strong lasting relationships and that our mission - developing innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world - is meaningful.

### NEW BENEFIT - FAIRMONT LE MONTREUX PALACE

*As part of our work to bring greater benefits to our alumni and parents, LAS is proud to announce its first preferred partnership agreement with the five star Fairmont Le Montreux Palace hotel. All alumni and parents who mention LAS when booking directly with the hotel will receive a 15% reduction on the best available rate. Thanks to Tamara Blickisdorf '03, Director of Group Sales, for helping make this partnership possible.*

*Fairmont*  
LE MONTREUX PALACE

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**ALEX  
TEUSCHER**  
PHOTOGRAPHY, a SILENT DRAMA



staff members, and students.

*"I enjoyed the mountains, the teachers, I really liked how certain teachers truly cared."*

When asked about his first impression of LAS and Leysin?

*"Small. Keep in mind, I was coming from the hustle and bustle of a large city like Manila, so everything about Leysin felt small in comparison. What really stood out to me in contrast was the freshness of the air."*

Each individual's time on the Magic Mountain shapes them in one way or another; some fall in love with the opportunity to interact with the mountains, whether that be climbing, skiing, or hiking. Others find solace in their beauty and express this through art.

*"I've always been a creative person, and started drawing and painting from a very early age. I've also always been interested in the 'how-to' of things. Photography became a natural extension of this creativity and my interest in the technical aspects of things. My first serious camera was given to me by my father a few years ago and I was instantly hooked. Here was a combination of two things which interested me deeply. In the beginning, I would take photos of everything, and see pictures online and wonder how they were taken. This is pretty much how I taught myself the art of photography - an intense interest to know how to take beautiful and technically sound photos."*

Alex's love for creating and inquisitive personality is what truly led to his success. Similarly to any startup, there was no easy path to becoming a professional photographer and Alex questioned his ability to succeed more than a few times. In 2010 Alex decided to pursue a career in photography and since has grown his client base across a broad spectrum of luxury

brands, celebrities, Michelin-starred restaurants, and 5-star hotels. He is currently a senior photographer for luxury watch magazine Haute Time, which he considers his "big break". His personal projects have been featured in The Guardian (Animals in Black and White, as seen on the cover photo; and his work in New York Above as Below), Vanity Fair, GQ British, L'Officiel, ELLE Belgique, and Digital Camera world. He can be found on Facebook, Instagram, and 500px where his photos have accrued over 1.1 million views total.

The luxury goods industry has been Alex's staple over the last 7 years; that, and becoming a Geneva local and working for Haute Time have given him incredible access to some of the world's most beautiful and finely made timepieces.

His client list includes: Cartier, Hublot, Ralph Lauren, Prada, Hugo Boss, Hyundai, Turkish Airlines, Dorchester Collection, Aurora Aviation, and National Geographic, to name just a few.

Although photography can be a means to an end, it rarely starts as such, and though creating travel opportunities and the ability to meet people from all walks of life is often not the sole purpose of a photographer's aspirations, Alex has photographed celebrities, authors, and business and world leaders such as Clive Owen, Adriana Lima, David Feuerstein, Al Gore, and Paulo Coelho none of whom require an introduction. What he took from their interactions?

*"I'm always impressed by how nice and down to earth everyone is. Perhaps it's because they are photographed so often."*

There is no question about Alex's quick rise in the photography world - a world becoming oversaturated with photographers due to increasing technology, technological affordability, and rapid globalization

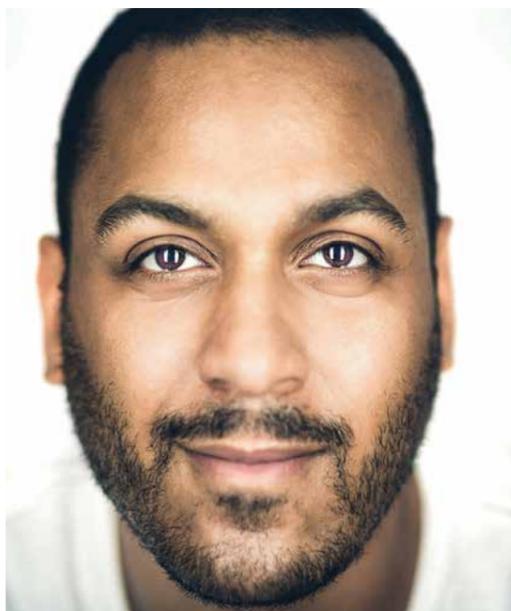


Photography is a silent drama, a relationship between the subject and the photographer. One providing a story, the other translating that into a snapshot of a singular moment in time. Some photographers have the magical capability of translating these stories into something people can connect with, whether it be an object, a place, a person, or a landscape. The ability to be able to tell a story, no matter what the subject, is what separates LAS alumni Alex Teuscher '00 from others.

For Alex, photography has been an inspiration that has taken him around the world. From a Buddhist monastery in Cambodia, to the streets of New York, to the photo studio in Geneva where he resides, Alex has built a reputation from his strong, diverse photographic capabilities.

Alex is American and Swiss; his father is from Thun, Switzerland and his mother is from Trinidad and Tobago. Like many other LAS students and alumni, Alex was already a world citizen before coming to LAS. His father worked in the hotel industry and their family spent most of Alex's childhood in Asia - primarily China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the Philippines. Alex recounts his time in the Philippines as extremely memorable.

*"I loved my time there, perhaps a little too much, to the point where I was starting to lose focus. Because of this, my parents believed it was best for a change of environment, and what better*



*change than moving to a boarding school in the Swiss Alps?"*

Leysin is situated in such a place rarely seen by students first arriving. Few have spent time in a quaint Swiss ski village with half a dozen restaurants, a few grocery stores, and barely enough infrastructure to keep the quietest of individuals busy. However, it is exactly this small size that helps form bonds between teachers,

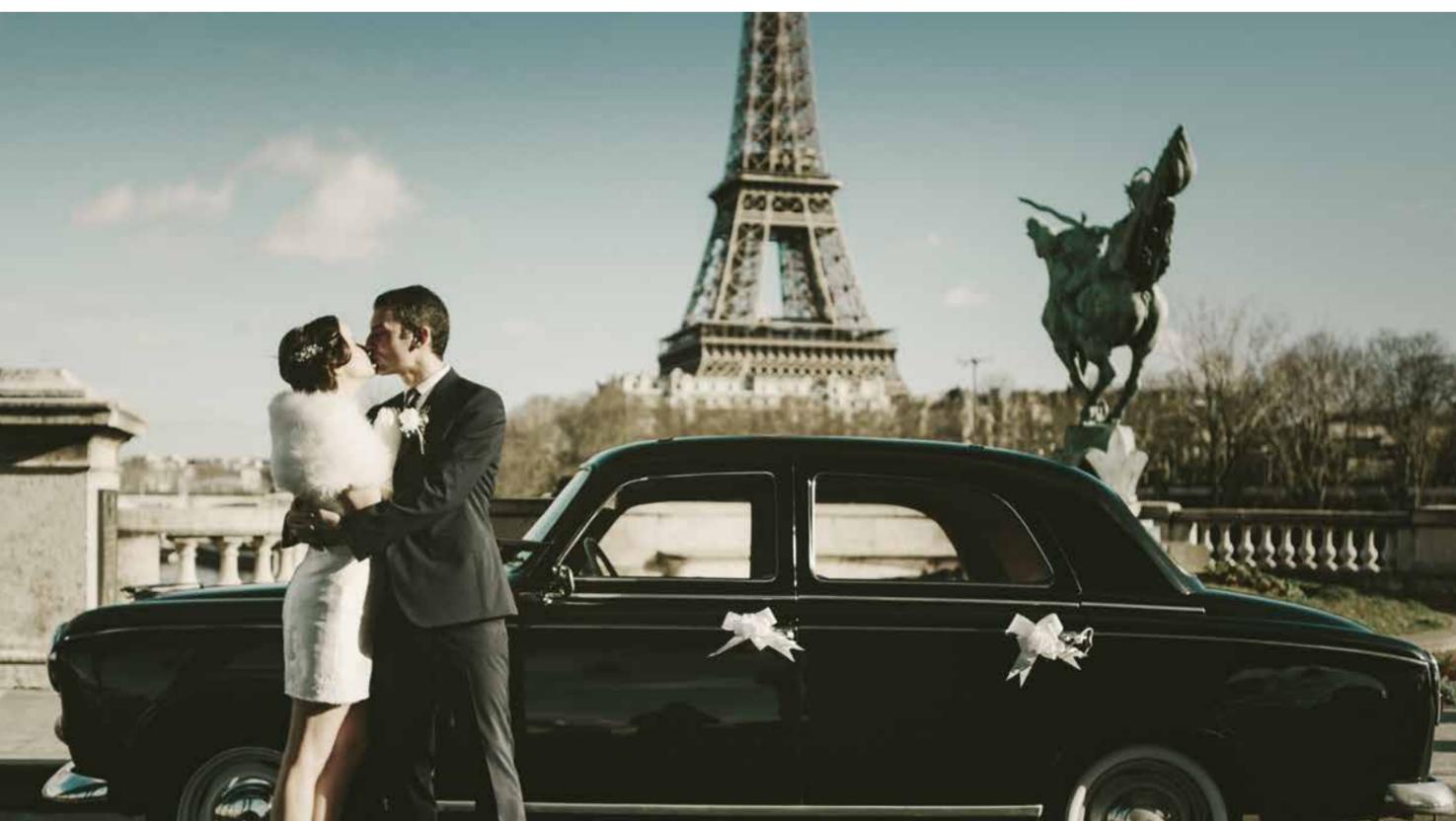
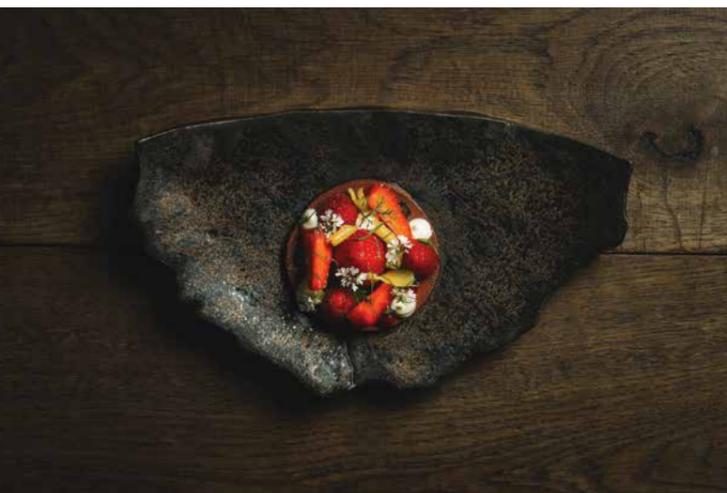
and travel capabilities. What once was a game of photographing what has never been photographed before has now become a much more well rounded game, requiring skill sets out in the field, in the studio, or on the computer. Often a photographer is much more apt to discuss his personal projects, and so the question was prompted: "where to next?"

With a glimmer in his eye, clearly creating a mental image of pictures he'd like to successfully take, Alex describes less travelled places like Antarctica, Iceland, and Myanmar, all of which provide unique characteristics for a photographer, as well as challenges. As for current projects, Alex would like to use his well-received images of Cambodia and Angkor Wat to raise money and awareness towards further growth in education in Cambodia - something that resides well with Leysin American School and our goal to educate the leaders of the future. Seeing successful alumni and wanting to know what

they have learned at LAS and taken with them into the world, what was Alex's most memorable experience at LAS?

*"Definitely the friendships that were made. As any LAS, or boarding school student can attest to, the bonds that are formed with people when you live in such close proximity are very strong. Having moved around a lot before, and making new friends every move, the fact that I was living with my friends made the bonds very strong."*

Alex is still in touch with classmates today and is always ready for a drink whenever they visit Geneva. Maybe to share a story or two, as any good photographer has learned how to do through his photographs. Photography is a silent drama, a relationship between the subject and the photographer, which Alex is all too happy to be a part of.



## ON THE COMPUTER OR IN THE OUTDOORS

# PAUL CARDUNER

Alumni Spotlight | 2005 Graduate | By: Anthony Leutenegger | Development

"I only know Mark Zuckerberg professionally from the occasional product review meetings that he would participate in and the Friday Q&As he would do. He is by far the most intelligent person I have ever interacted with and a surprisingly well mannered leader compared to his peers among Fortune 500 CEOs."

**A** Alumni Paul Carduner '05, his wife Meghan Urback, and friend Jessica Conrad were off on an adventure. They were trailing Paul's historical roots in the Basque region of south-western France, in particular Saint-Jean-de-Luz, a fishing town walking distance away from the Spanish border. They ended up slowly making their way to Chamonix, France and then onto a very special place for Paul, Leysin and Leysin American School, where I showed him around his old stomping grounds, and offered a climbing session on our new climbing wall in the newly built Magic Mountain Athletic Center.



Paul, I'm assuming with cheek in tongue, introduces himself on Facebook as: "a house husband who likes to go outside." Something we shouldn't take too seriously. Maybe this is his unassuming, truly relaxed American West Coast manner, but Paul's success in the startup and programming world, along with his passion for mountain-related outdoor sports means there is a strong drive within; one that has led to his current life in Seattle, USA, a place where tech is trendy and climbing mountains equally so.

Paul's connection to LAS started in his junior year of high school when he chose LAS over many other boarding schools, primarily for the skiing. His parents, working for the US government, had options to relocate to Peru or Senegal, and asked Paul his preference. He'd heard through the grapevine that there was a school in Switzerland where skiing was part of the curriculum. After some research and a visit to Europe, the decision of his family's relocation was made by Paul himself. It probably helped that his elementary school friend, alumni Chris Folmsbee '05 and future roommate was going to attend LAS himself.

Paul thrived at LAS, more so than he thinks he would have at a school in the US. Due to the flexibility of the school's courses, he was able to take pre-calculus which led him into the field of math. He even won the best math student award at LAS, something he hadn't envisioned happening.

Following LAS, Paul left for Whitman College as a math major, but after an arduous battle with pure math and a change to a more practical math education, Paul decided to take a semester off and went to Thailand for two months.

Upon his return, Paul started working with a startup called Divvyshot, a photo sharing site,



Photo Credit | Cory West

which gained good traction in 2009 after a rebuild and launch. His enjoyment working for Divvyshot prompted his decision to not return back to University. In 2010, Divvyshot was acquired by Facebook along with Paul and his skills in programming and knowledge in photo sharing. It was the most feasible way for Facebook to continue growing and Paul became one of the leaders of the photos team. His team managed over 100 billion photos and, unknown to the rest of the world, moved all of them over to another program without a glitch. After this success, he pushed for the creation of a videos team. His thought process was guided by the economics of attention, meaning: people only give so much time to something; the lower the quality, the less time they will spend interacting with it. By improving the video portion of Facebook they were set to continue solidifying their strength in the social media industry and become more profitable. According to Paul it was another success, and if you'd like to blame him for something, it's the autoplay feature on Facebook, which you'll notice if you hover over a video and it begins playing. Later, Paul moved

on to become a site lead for Facebook Seattle, which involved creating a culture and vision at that specific site. Paul describes it as being a very difficult position and after 4 years at Facebook, a greater time period than approximately 90% of the employees at that time, he left.

"It was a true reset after Facebook, I quit my job, and had no plan." Paul recounts to me via a Skype interview. He claims to have barely touched a computer for six months and delved into the world of outdoor adventure sport, including enjoying the Pacific Northwest in Washington State, hiking, rock climbing, and alpine climbing.

During the "mud months", or in between seasons, Paul began programming again, volunteering his time working for projects in computer science education, and teaching math to students through the lens of computer science, such as through the creation of video games.

He began enjoying using his computer again and had started some independent consulting work when Hadi Partovi, a renowned tech entrepreneur, investor, and CEO of the education non-profit Code.org, called. Code.org is dedicated to expanding access to computer science, and increasing the participation of women, underrepresented minorities, and students in the field. As highlighted in the article "EDgility - Beyond the classroom: Expanding the notion of self-regulated learning", Page 44, Code.org was used by LAS to help build their own programs. The parallel between Paul's renewed passion for educational programming and Code.org's mission-driven platform was a perfect fit.

Currently, Paul spends half his time working for Code.org and the other half on his own projects and consulting. There are definitely some exciting projects in the works and LAS looks forward to sharing these projects with the world as they come to fruition.



## THE BELOW Q&A FEATURES PAUL AND HIS INTELLECT, DRIVE, AND PASSION:

**What is the one thing that you took from your time at LAS that you have brought with you into your professional and personal life?**

Probably the idea that the world is vastly more complicated than it may appear to you in the moment, and universal truths are hard to come by. As a corollary, your time is better spent learning about the things you don't know than trying to argue with others about why your worldview, which is inherently based on incomplete information, is the "correct" one. Being part of a student body as diverse as LAS's definitely makes this idea readily apparent, not to mention all the great discussions we had in Fred Sharp's ToK class.

**If you were to go back in time, to LAS in 2005, what is one thing you'd have done differently?**

Gone on more field trips. It's amazing how quickly the opportunity to travel around Europe diminishes once you return to your "home country" and the closest place where they speak a different language or have a different culture is over 3,000 km away. I remember spending a day in Venice during Carnival, and to avoid paying for hotels we just took the night train there and the night train back and we didn't even miss any school. That sort of trip is just not remotely possible now.

**You said one of the primary reasons for your choice of attending LAS was the ability to ski in the alps. Are you still progressing at skiing or enjoying the mountains in Washington State?**

After a long hiatus from mountain sports while I focused on my career, I finally took the last year to get back into the game, picking up backcountry skiing, mountaineering, alpine rock climbing, and ice climbing. My goal for this spring and summer is to summit all five of the major volcanoes in the Pacific Northwest. Hopefully, I will be able to make it back to the alps in 2018 to tackle Mont Blanc and the Haute Route. I am incredibly envious of current LAS students who have the opportunity to participate in the new alpine climbing program. And while I greatly miss taking a midday ski break to eat a croute mayan, I have a great appreciation for the relative remoteness of the cascade mountains here in Washington.

**You've been involved with a few startups now. How was the startup life? What advice would you give an entrepreneurial student soon graduating from LAS who would like to follow their passion into the startup world?**

The startup life is grueling, exhilarating, and depressing all at the same time. It's an experience that I would highly recommend to anyone who isn't satisfied by the linear path of academics and professional degrees. My advice to students would be to start early, expect failure, and keep trying. You don't need any degrees or special training to start a business, just a strong willingness to learn from your mistakes. I remember some students at LAS making quite a bit of pocket money selling American candy at incredible markups to their fellow students during study hall. That's a great example of a "business" that you can start while you are still in school - no MBA required.

**Working at Facebook during the earlier years must have been an interesting, fast paced experience. It's supposed to be one of the best companies to work for, how would you describe your experience there? How well do you know Mark Zuckerberg? Did you make a cameo in "The Social Network"?**

Ha! Unfortunately, they had already finished filming "The Social Network" by the time I joined the company but I'm sure they would have cast Ryan Gosling for my role. I would absolutely agree though that Facebook is one of the best companies to work for. The people are incredibly smart and it's the best implementation of a meritocracy that I've ever encountered. Nobody cares about your title or the number of degrees you hold, only about your ideas and the impact you have. I only know Mark professionally from the occasional product review meetings that he would participate in and the Friday Q&As he would do. He is by far the most intelligent person I have ever interacted with and a surprisingly well mannered leader compared to his peers among Fortune 500 CEOs.

**What do you hope the future ideally looks like for Paul Carduner?**

I try not to think too much about the future, and spend most of my time focusing on the present, trying to live my life according to my values and prioritizing what is truly important to me. Right now that means engaging with my local community and developing a sense of home here in Seattle: something I've never really had while spending the last 3 decades moving from place to place. I hope that by investing in a "permanent home base" I will have a greater opportunity to make a positive impact on the world around me without having to worry about where I'm going to end up in 2 years time.



## MINDFULNESS: LAS EMBRACES A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

Ms. Brittany Holsapple - Learning Support Specialist  
Mrs. Kellie McGill - Health Center Director

**M**indfulness has found its way into countless arenas such as healthcare, education, sports, and major international corporations. It's been featured in news reports, academic journals, and is widely talked about on social media. But what is it exactly? How does it help the individuals who practice it?

Mindfulness can be defined as one's ability to pay attention to their emotions, thoughts, and sensations in the present moment, without judgment. It helps individuals develop and strengthen their minds while increasing their ability to focus, recognize, and manage emotions, make better decisions, improve relationships, and learn to respond rather than react in difficult situations.

Mindfulness-based interventions are supported by more than 35 years of research and development with bodies of evidence ranging from the medical field to kindergarten classrooms around the world. In 1979, John Kabat-Zinn developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction while at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. The practice was later adopted by the mental health professionals in the early 1990s.

Mindfulness made its way into education in the late 1980s and has continued to spread to classrooms around the world. Elementary and secondary curriculums were developed in the early 2000s and continue to

grow. While researchers are still exploring the impacts of mindful education in schools, there are growing bodies of evidence that show mindfulness in schools increases student concentration, lowers stress and anxiety, boosts impulse control, and increases empathy and self awareness, as well as develops conflict resolution skills (Mindful Schools, 2015).

### WHY LAS HAS JOINED THE MINDFULNESS MOVEMENT?

The world we live in is full of stressors and distractions. Individuals spend countless hours increasing their knowledge of the world around them and strengthening their bodies through a variety of activities, sports, and exercise. But what about our minds? Many students and staff at LAS have turned to mindfulness for the solution. With a positive school culture in mind LAS adopted Mindfulness as the theme for the 2016/2017 school year .

"The moments when I feel that I am living mindfully are better than when I am not. By better I mean that I enjoy these moments more, I feel that my work is of a better quality, and I am more appreciative of life's simple pleasures. I feel lucky to work at an organization that is making mindfulness a priority."

- Alice Patton, BeauSite Dorm Head

Brittany Holsapple and Kellie McGill teamed up as LAS resident scholars to bring mindfulness education to both students and faculty. They received their K-12 Mindful Education training through MindfulSchools, a US based organization that has trained educators in mindfulness in over 100 countries. Both Brittany and Kellie have a strong desire to improve school culture, and became eager to implement mindfulness at LAS. As a learning

support specialist and counselor, Brittany and Kellie frequently use mindfulness techniques with students and in their own personal lives. They have experienced firsthand the lasting benefits of a mindfulness practice and they are firm believers in its efficacy. They are contributing to the growing body of evidence in support of mindfulness in schools.

The new middle school program offered the perfect setting to introduce this practice to our students. Throughout this year, Brittany has been teaching middle school students the importance of mindfulness in their daily lives. Every Monday morning during homeroom, students focus on topics such as regulating emotions, response versus reaction, gratitude and appreciation, mindful breathing techniques as well as many others. The aim is for students to reconnect with themselves and gain insight into the workings of their minds in order to stay calm and focused in the busy world of today. The skills these students will develop over the course of the year have the potential to help them build caring and lasting relationships and handle the stressors they encounter both inside and outside the classroom.

Kellie's focus has been on staff involvement and education in mindfulness. Nineteen faculty chose to make mindfulness their Professional Development track for the school year. Jenny Eberman, an expert in leadership,

communication and personal development, facilitated these workshops. Jenny is trained in mindfulness based approaches for adults by the University of Bangor in the UK. She is also certified with Eline Snel ("Mindfulness Matters", NL) and trained with mindfulschools.org in the US for her work with children and adolescents. Several faculty also completed their Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) certificate by participating in a mindfulness retreat in January. Through this program, staff have learned to identify their thoughts, perceptions, and the associated patterns in order to become more

focused on and attentive to their interactions. They are learning to identify stressors and use interpersonal communication and mindfulness skills as coping tools in their personal lives and with their students. Additionally, several teachers and dorm heads who were not involved in the PD track have taken the opportunity to learn more about mindfulness and implement practices. Kellie also worked with interested dorm heads to bring mindfulness education and practice into Sunday evening dorm meetings.

"Boarding school life is very exciting and busy. Alumni tend to say that their time at LAS was the most formative time in their lives. It is also a time of life when academic, extra-curricular, social, and emotional demands are very high. I see mindfulness training as a way to help students and faculty better manage and balance these demands, so they can take full advantage of everything the school offers."

- Marc Ott, Managing Director,  
Head of School

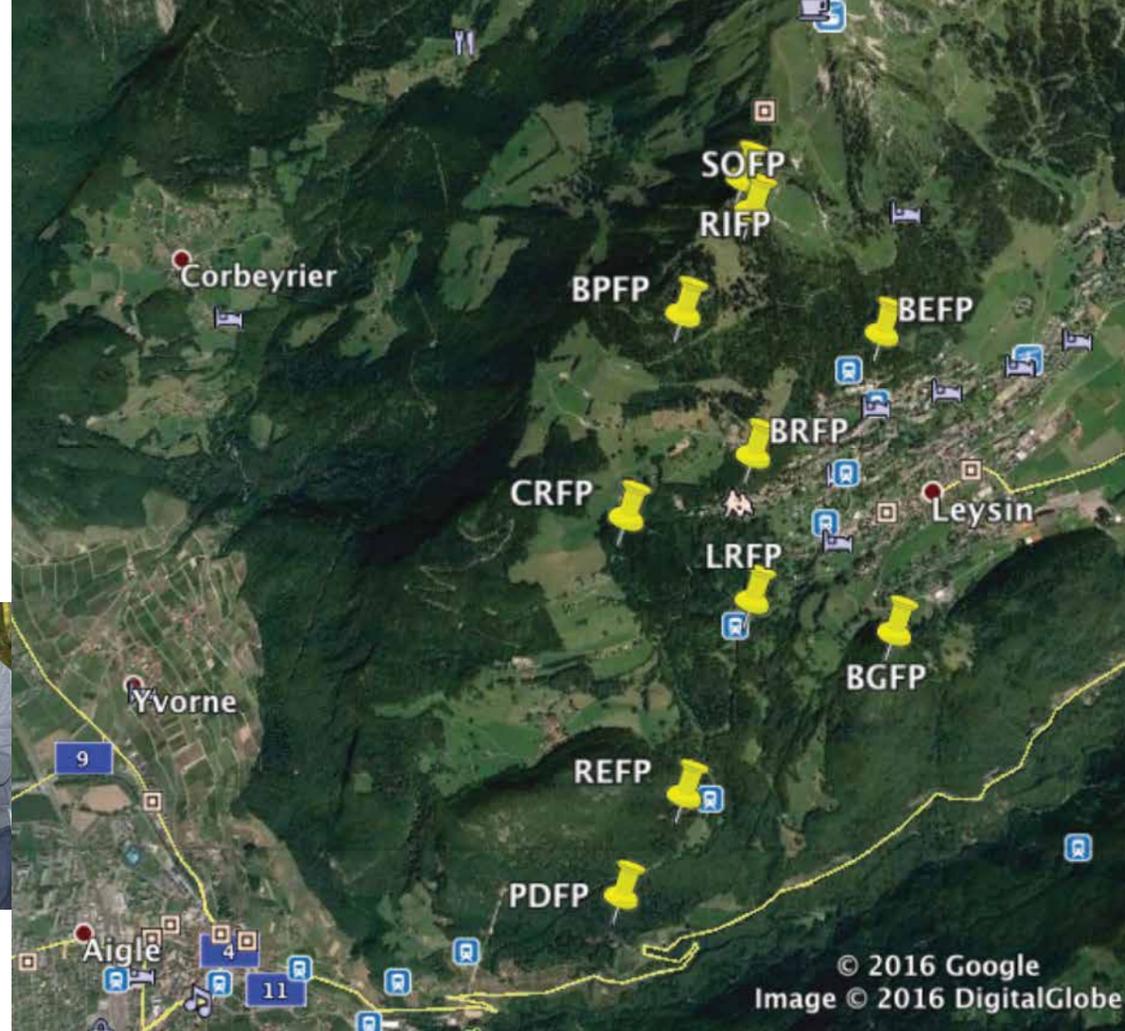
In a busy world it is a challenge to take time to be aware of your breath, your emotions, and yourself in any given moment, but the benefits are incredible. We anticipate further mindfulness integration in professional development for faculty and continuing education and practice opportunities for students.



# UPDATE LETS

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSECT SURVEY

Mr. Dan Patton | Science Teacher



*In May, 11th graders and 16 teachers travelled back to the school's forest ecology sample plots to survey*

2016 was another prolific year for citizen science at LAS. Roughly 220 students from 7-11<sup>th</sup> grades and some 80 teachers, administrators, and adult volunteers participated in the Local Environmental Transect Survey (LETS) citizen science study. Its aim is to track climate change induced changes in the local forests on our mountain along an elevation gradient from 400m (just above the vineyards near Aigle) up to 1,850m (the top of La Riondaz). LETS day is a chance for students to be citizen scientists and to contribute meaningful information to the scientific community. It is a chance to take the ecological pulse of our local environment each spring and fall, and to collect evidence that can be used by professional scientists as they make predictions about the impacts of climate change on our environment. Most of all, LETS is a chance for students and teachers alike to learn in the most amazing classroom of all, the beautiful Swiss outdoors.

A couple of major changes to LETS for 2016 was the addition of a "bioblitz" protocol, supported by the iNaturalist smartphone

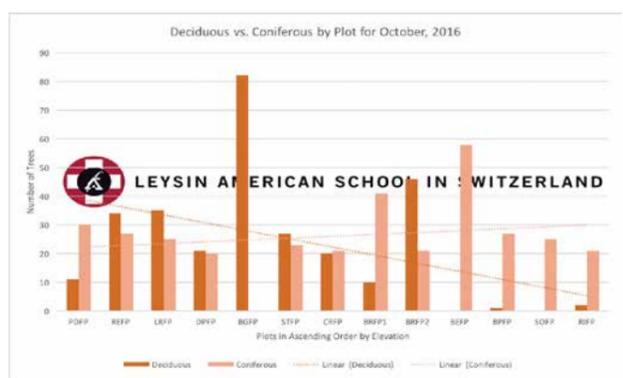
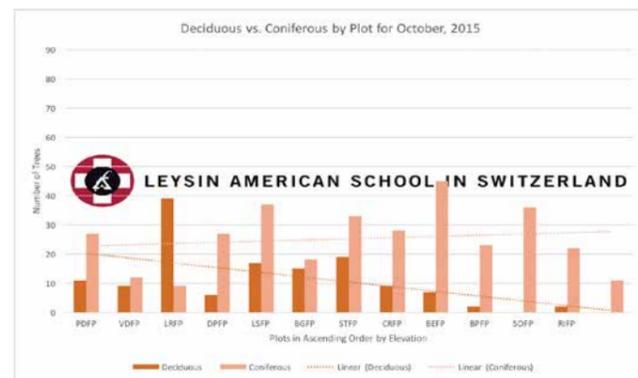
application, and the participation of college students from the University of Neuchatel. A "bioblitz" aims to document as many living species as possible in a given area during a given length of time. Since the iNaturalist app instantly renders photographic observations of plants and animals into a public network of GIS maps, data collected during the LETS day was visible on-line before the students even got back to school.

A group of University of Neuchatel botany students, both Masters students and PhD candidates, joined LAS students in the field to help with plant identification. Many students were enamored by these university students' knowledge and passion for the outdoors. Science is by its very nature a collaborative experience and the cooperation between high school and university students this year was nothing short of inspiring. There definitely changes in the data between 2015 (without expert help in species identification) and 2016 (with help from university botany students). LETS is truly an authentic science experience and one that will be continued at LAS far into the future!



## Who helped NEC find its perfect partner?

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# INTERNATIONAL AWARD



Mr. John Harlin III '14P | **Alpine Institute Director**

Rain pounded hard onto the nylon tent walls in a campground not far from Leysin. Inside those dry cocoons a half-dozen hungry LAS students huddled in their sleeping bags waiting for enough of a lull that they could step outside to fire up their gas stoves and cook dinner. This was their second night out, with another full day of hiking to come so that they could fulfill the “Adventurous Journey” segment of their International Award. For most young people, dry weather camping is adventurous enough. But Swiss mountains don’t care whether hikers are comfortable, so our campers learned to live with the rain, emerging from their tents when eventually their hunger grew strong enough. Because this was a “Qualifying Journey”, the students had to do everything on their own with no help from adults. We teachers simply watched as they lit fires with wet wood and cooked meals to replenish their bodies after a long day of hiking.

While the camping trips (officially “Adventurous Journeys”) attract the most attention, sleeping outside is only a fraction of the full International Award experience. The Award’s true purpose is to help young people develop life skills, in particular the perseverance required to set long-term objectives and reach them over time. The International Award requires participants to set goals and then work for six months to a year (depending on the Award level) toward achieving those goals. They must devote at least one hour per week toward developing a skill, another hour weekly toward physical recreation, and a third hour toward public service.

In the United Kingdom the program is known as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, named after the Queen’s husband, who founded it in 1956. Since then the Award has spread to over 100 countries and 8 million participants, most of whom have never heard of Edinburgh, let alone know how to pronounce it (“edinbra”), hence the rebranding as the “International Award”. The Award is widely recognized by universities and employers as proof that a young person has the dedication needed to stick with a task to completion. More than 50 LAS students are now showing that they’re up to the challenge.

Follow our journeys at [alpineinstitute-las.org/adventure](http://alpineinstitute-las.org/adventure).



## The Times They Are a Changin: University and College Counseling at LAS

Win Lowman  
**Director of College Counseling**

### 2015-2016 LAS University Acceptances to the “Top 50, 2016 World University Rankings”

#### UNITED STATES

Stanford University  
University of Chicago  
Cornell University  
University of California, Berkeley  
University of California, Los Angeles  
University of Michigan  
Brown University

#### CANADA

McGill University  
University of Toronto  
University of British Columbia

#### UNITED KINGDOM

University of Oxford  
University College London  
Imperial College London  
King’s College London  
University of Edinburgh  
University of Bristol  
University of Warwick

#### OTHER COUNTRIES

École Polytechnique Fédérale de  
Lausanne  
University of Hong Kong  
Hong Kong University of Science  
& Technology  
University of Amsterdam

*QS World Rankings*

As I look back on my four years as the Director of College Counseling at Leysin American School, I can’t help but contemplate the changes that we are seeing at LAS, and how these changes have influenced what we do in the College Counseling Office.

When I arrived at LAS in August of 2013, the senior class was divided between two campuses – Savoy and the Belle Époque (BEC). Those seniors on the Savoy campus were all in the American High School Diploma program and those at the Belle Époque were IB diploma students. Then came the merger of the two campuses over the course of the next two school years. This meant that by the school year 2015-16, all juniors and seniors were studying exclusively at the Belle Époque and the seniors living there. With this change in venue also came a greater emphasis in the classroom weighted towards the IB for all juniors and seniors. This school year, for example, over 70% of our current 98 seniors are full IB diploma candidates, the highest percentage in the history of the school. Something we hope to continue to grow.

The student population at LAS has always been highly diverse, but now specifically, our students from Europe and Asia are coming to the mountain with a desire to remain in Europe to further their studies after LAS. This has meant a significant shift in where our students go to college/university. In the 2012 Panorama, Ms. Mary Galbraith, a previous college counselor reported that 85% of our graduates matriculated at a college in the United States, with 6% moving on to the United Kingdom. For the Class of 2016, student interest had shifted, as 45% of the class went to US institutions and 25% to the UK with universities in fourteen other different nations receiving our students. Today, an LAS student won’t hesitate to apply to universities in the US, Canada, the UK, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and maybe Hong Kong or Japan. The reality is that the majority of our seniors now apply to universities in more than one country. The IB diploma certainly opens many doors around the world.

Another important change focuses on when students apply. Increasingly, our seniors are prompted to apply earlier to colleges and universities. In the UK, October 15th is a key date for our Oxford and Cambridge applicants (LAS currently has an undergraduate at both universities). In the US, November 1st looms large for the majority of our applicants as they seek either an “Early Action” or “Early Decision” admit. Even for our EHL and Bocconi applicants, we strive to get these students to apply in November to maximize their chances. This translates into earlier deadlines and earlier applications for the majority of our applicants, therefore leading to earlier acceptances.

As in the past, LAS still receives a steady stream of university visitors throughout the year. While US colleges still make up the majority of visitors, the school is now seeing more and more university representatives from Europe, the UK, Canada, and Asia. This spring, for example, we will host a college fair with only European university representatives, and we are working on arranging such a fair for Dutch universities. Our goal is to help each student find the “best fit” no matter where in the world that may be.

Another change we would like to see at LAS, rests with you, our alumni. If you would be interested in sharing your actual experience with a specific college or university, please contact the Development Office ([alumni@las.ch](mailto:alumni@las.ch)) as they are building a University & College Advising Network for our current and future students. With more and better information, we hope to better serve our current and future students in attaining the dreams they strive for.

# The Magic Mountain Athletic Center: A Transformative Space

Mr. Benjamin M. Smith  
Director of Development

On September 23, 2016, Leysin American School entered a new era of athletics and fitness. On this day, the Magic Mountain Athletic Center (MMAC, pronounced "Mack") was inaugurated and opened to all students, faculty & staff, and visiting alumni. The honor of cutting the ceremonial ribbon was given to our co-founder Mrs. Sigrid Ott and keynote speaker Mr. Gilbert Felli, former head and advisor to the International Olympic Committee. The ceremony was specifically planned to coincide with the celebration of Sigrid's 100th birthday.

The facility itself sits on the footprint of the previous LAS gymnasium, affectionately known as the Goat House. This is as far as the comparisons go. The Goat House was a gymnasium with a stage. The MMAC, as its name suggests, truly is an athletic center.

As you enter the building there is a large lobby with stairs ascending and descending. If you go up the stairs you enter Cafe 7. A full service cafe where guests can get a snack, hot and cold drinks, and even smoothies. Cafe 7 takes its name from the longitude of Leysin, - 7 degrees.

The sitting area includes two green walls covered with living plants and flowers, which provide insulation, improve air quality, reduce noise, and provide a nice aesthetic.

You can exit Cafe 7 onto the indoor running track that overlooks the gymnasium. Going around the track counter

clockwise you encounter a rowing area, nautilus machines, free weights, and the top of the multi-pitch climbing wall at the halfway point. The second half of the track goes by a wall of windows overlooking the Rhone Valley and the Dents du Midi. You all know the view.

If you descend from the lobby, you are first met by a physical education classroom on your right with a full "box style" view of the court. Just beyond the classroom you come to the gymnasium level where you are met by a crossfit training area and lockers before entering the gymnasium.

The gymnasium is a very large space, equipped with retractable bleachers; the majority of benches from assemblies past are long gone. The parquet floor has been replaced with a modern low impact multi-sport surface. The floor is lined for basketball, volleyball, badminton, and tennis. It can also be used for indoor soccer and floor hockey and frequently is. At the far end of the gymnasium, the aforementioned climbing wall and bouldering wall loom over the court in a magnificent display of color. The climbing wall was custom designed by Walltopia, the world leader in climbing wall design, and even includes a glowing neon LAS logo.

The stairs continue down one more level. Here the bathrooms and studio have been replaced by locker rooms, showers, team meeting space, and a naturally lit yoga studio which includes an exit onto a small balcony with a beautiful view.

The final level, for which you have to access from the exterior, is the rooftop. With flat space at a premium in any mountain town, we took full advantage of the space we were provided. On the roof, there is another multi-sport surface that can be used for basketball, soccer, and tennis. There are permanent bleachers where students can sit and watch their friends. The entire space is covered in netting so soccer balls and basketballs are unable to careen down the mountain and end up in Aigle. In the netting, specially protected lighting has been incorporated for night time use. Just outside the pitch there is separate space that can be used for open air yoga, dance, or stretching.

Everyone at LAS is extremely grateful to the people who made this dream come true. A huge amount of gratitude goes out to our alumni, parents, and friends who supported our fundraising efforts. Thanks to their support, we were able to build and equip the best athletic center of all the Swiss Boarding Schools. Since it has open, there has not been a single day that the MMAC has not been frequented by students and/or faculty & staff. The MMAC has truly had a transformative effect on LAS.





# BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

## EXPANDING THE NOTION OF SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

Dr. Paul Magnuson | Director of Curriculum & Research

This is a bit of a success story, something to chew on, and a string of code that we can usefully cut and paste into our thinking.

In December 2013, our IB Spanish teacher sent one of our sophomores a link to an article he thought the student might find interesting. The student, a non-native speaker of English, wrote back to the teacher:

*"I am reading the newspaper, and a great thing I noticed was one of the first pages contents: "Schools sign up for "Hour of Coding".*

The student, Besart Copa '16, followed up with an email to administrators the next week. In the message he laid out the need for coding and some potential objections the administration might have. He also wrote reasoned responses for each objection. For example:

Is there a qualified teacher?

*There is no need for a teacher who has a degree in computer science, as long as there is a teacher who supervises them, checks their progress, and motivates them, everything is fine.*

Is there room in the curriculum?

*There is enough space in the curriculum to set Computer Programming as a subject, at least for sophomores, juniors, & seniors in Digital Literacy.*

Besart ended his mail like this:

*I have sent a requesting email to code.org team for a preview of the total curriculum plans ...*

A couple of us met with Besart later that week. We weren't in a position to insert coding in a class in the middle of the school year but we decided we could be faculty sponsors of a student run, or more precisely, a Besart run, club. We agreed to start in January after the winter holidays.

ASP was born, as Besart named it: After School Programming. He recruited students, found space in a packed boarding school schedule, and when students arrived, circulated from one student to the next to teach coding. About a dozen students consistently attended all the way through the end of the academic year. They first worked on Hour of Code, and then moved on to Treehouse, Codecademy, Khan Academy, Code School, and others. Since 2013 we have continued offering an annual Hour of Code event for all students.

The following academic year we created an afternoon activity called makerspace. This was a small step forward, since coding - one of the activities of makerspace - now had an official home in the schedule. We purchased quadcopters, robots, a 3D printer, and lots of online accounts to learn coding. The activity met twice a week for 90 minutes each. Following Besart's lead, we created a self-directed space in the Beau Reveil in which to work, alone or together, on whatever one wanted. It's still going strong and is now in it's third year.

Makerspace hasn't only been for students. Biology teacher Dan Patton was interested from the start, asking students to consider working on projects related to his science

classes. He worked side by side with students to learn about electronics and eventually Arduino, which he incorporated in a unit in his ninth grade biology class and has now introduced as a course in the middle school. He also presented the concept of the class, called Robot Gardeners, at an international conference in Copenhagen in November 2016. He continues his work this year as a resident scholar, looking across the curriculum for areas in which to usefully insert coding to enhance teaching and learning.

John Harlin, a vocal and hardworking proponent for citizen science, used makerspace time to work with students to develop temperature poles for a climate change study on our mountain. While the original version of the temperature poles was eventually abandoned, the effort contributed to our annual science field day and annual GLOBE conference day. This is exciting work!

Finally, in Fall 2016 we expanded the original student run ASP-club-turned-makerspace into a course called Coding. As Besart had told us in December 2013: (1) we didn't need teachers trained in computer science and (2) we could find room in the curriculum. These sentiments turned out to be true.

### A success story

It took nearly three years to start the first coding class. I don't suppose it will make Besart's resume exactly, but it is something of which he - and we - can be quite proud.

He also contributed indirectly to other projects and thinking, as we've seen above. Makerspace is attributable to Besart's original request for a coding class. In turn, the makerspace contributed to the survival of a teaching approach we'd already been experimenting with. Essentially, that teaching philosophy is to create a learning space and let students and adults find their way together. We've experienced some internal criticism of the approach, as is to be expected with something new and different, but our experiment in teaching and learning has so far weathered the naysayers. Through it we believe we are building self-regulated learners.

Makerspace also provided a "thinking and doing" space for some projects that may have been less successful without it. Our efforts in citizen science and curriculum development were directly impacted by the ability to play together with new ideas in the afternoon.

A quick recap so far: Besart planted a seed (and did some vigorous gardening early on) that has not only contributed to the introduction of coding, but also to how we think about instruction and develop curriculum. Our developing thinking about how curriculum should be constructed has also been impacted, a subject to which I turn, and close with, next.

### Something to chew on

We often worry that our curriculum is not tight enough. Educators talk about vertical and horizontal alignment, writing precise curriculum units, aligning standards within the curriculum so that standards, instruction, and assessment all fit neatly together. There is wisdom in thinking in this way. To a point.

There is also wisdom to leaving significant space in the curriculum. Wiggle room, areas to play with. When Besart proposed the coding class, it was not possible in our structure to introduce a new class quickly. Students and teachers are a bit locked in. Perhaps it is a bit too tight. If we loosen up we can take advantage of moments of self-regulated learning more easily. When we have a student like Besart, who analyzes the current state of things and offers a workable alternative, we can act. We don't want to advocate self-regulation and innovation on the one hand, while on the other find new ideas inconvenient or too much work because of our own *self-imposed structure*.

### A string of code we might cut and paste

And that's the string of code I'd like to cut and paste from what I've learned from Besart. As we continue our work on the mission statement, providing a space in which students can learn as much about innovation, compassion, and responsibility as possible here at the high school level, we need to plan for the unplanned. We need to be ready for the new idea. Our internal systems that guide us day to day shouldn't block the big future in front of us.

With that balance in mind we continue to create the makerspace, and a schoolwide learning space, for all our students and teachers.

Besart spent three years at LAS on a full merit scholarship. After graduation, he decided to take a gap year - a year before starting at the university - beginning with his selection to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Youth Forum in Nairobi in summer 2016.

Since then, Besart has continued to seek out new learning experiences, including work with three different ministries in his home country, where he is establishing the first Albanian United Nations Youth Delegate Program, serving as youth delegate to Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, and serving as the youngest member of the Working Group on Migration for the Cooperation and Development Network (CDN). He attributes his success to his ability to "hack" school - to make school happen around him, to craft his own educational experiences. This is an advanced state of innovation which will not only leave its mark on LAS, but also in the world our students create for us after they leave LAS.





## Great Explorations: TEDx Youth @ LAS

Ms. Marta Krause | **Director of Residential Life**

The stars seemed to align, when in April of 2015, three different students, Ania Juszczak '16, Ola O. '17, and Mariela Dyer '16 each independent of the other approached me with the idea of organizing a TEDxYouth conference here at LAS. With summer fast approaching this gave us two months to assemble a small team of students to write a proposal, prepare the application to TED, and convince the directors of the school this was a worthwhile endeavor. We were successful on all accounts and TED accepted our application just one month later.

The TEDx Club initially began with thirty students organized around three committees: speakers, logistics, and public relations. One of the difficulties of living on top of a mountain is that there is no large local pool of potential speakers to draw from. Our speakers committee was unphased and immediately began identifying potential speakers, drafting invitation letters, and sending them out.

Then came the hard part, waiting for the responses. With our first responses came rejections, but yes, some acceptances as well. Things were starting to come together, and our TEDxYouth event seemed like it might

actually happen. This, of course, meant the hard work was just beginning. Our logistics committee started putting together an agenda for the day and designed a plan for the staging and setup of the Black Box theatre. They also met with the kitchen staff to plan a menu for the big day. The PR committee was not idle and had their hands full working on internal public relations, while also trying to recruit LAS student speakers.

As autumn rolled on and semester exams loomed on the horizon, we successfully closed the list of speakers, and tiredly, but also quite happily departed for winter break. With only 6 weeks to go upon our return from break, things seemed to speed up to a frenetic pace. Finally, after completing all the tasks we planned in the autumn, such as finalizing the curation of the talks with the speakers, and ironing out travel details, we went into the final stages. We wrote scripts for the six MCs and finalized which TED talks we would screen during our event.

Finally, the day was upon us. The Black Box was transformed into a Swiss scene that focused on our decided theme of "Great Explorations." The guests arrived,

were registered, and while I think everyone was still nervous, the excitement prevailed; the room was full to the last seat and a very attentive and enthusiastic audience heard one amazing story after another. Our speakers talked about "staying hungry" and getting "dirty" in life, as keys to success. Our audience heard about "choosing your own path" and "standing up for your values, despite the power of conformism".

They also heard about life not being a linear sequence of paved roads, about ground breaking inventions, of a test for pancreatic cancer, about the endless summits in our lives, and about the issues with using extremely advanced technologies in modern warfare. Our students shared some incredible stories of self-exploration, of how humour has the power

to change a school culture, and a story about adoption from an Indian orphanage. To relax our minds during the intermissions, we enjoyed a song performed by Sultan Al Dabal '16, a dance by Mariela Dyer '16, and piano solo by Antonio C '16S, all of whom are fantastic artists.

TEDxYouth@LAS proved to be a great success. Our audience gave endless appreciation at the event and in the after-event survey. All of our speakers, some from close and some from afar, fell in love with the Magic Mountain and promised to come back one day.

All talks can be found on LAS YouTube Channel or by typing TEDxYouth@LAS into the search window.

First time TEDxYouth conferences are limited to 100 audience members and 25% of the conference needs to be screening/streaming previously presented TED talks.



## "CREATING BONDS"

# Lugano Fall Cultural Trip

Teresa Voss | Interim Librarian

Thom Padick | Eden Dorm Head, 7th-9th Boys Coordinator

Monday October 17, 2016. Excited greetings, mingled with the clanking of wheels as students dragged suitcases from their dormitories in the predawn darkness along the pavement to the Savoy cafeteria. Anxious grade 9 students rushed to make their early morning check-in for Fall Culturals. Their destination: Lugano, Switzerland. For many of these students, it is their first exposure to Fall Cultural Week, a week they have been looking forward to since the start of the school year.

Every October students join together to explore the wonders of Switzerland and neighboring countries through their participation on cultural trips, an age old tradition at LAS. For the students in 9th grade this week encourages individuals to understand the diversity of the Swiss culture through the examination and exploration of local cuisine, history, and recreation. Students engage in activities that aid them in their learning and by making meaning of different ways of life.

Located in the south-western part of Switzerland known as the Ticino, Lugano is a beautiful city situated on a lake that separates Switzerland from Italy. Its natural beauty, varied geography, and richness of culture provides a wealth of opportunities for students to begin their learning, and to forge long lasting relationships with one another. Students

quickly learned of their peers' talents, abilities, and skills through whole class, small group, and individual activities.

Following a long but beautiful bus ride across the alps, the group arrived in Lugano mid afternoon. Their first activity consisted of working in small, self-selected groups by traversing the city on a photo scavenger hunt. Students quickly learned the city's layout, saw hidden sights, and worked on developing their map-reading skills. They earned points in this friendly competition by photographing themselves at various historical, artistic, and geographical points of interest. The group that secured the most points won a prize, swiss chocolate of course.

The long day ended with a trip to a local bowling alley and arcade where students had a chance to laugh, relax, and try their skill at a variety of games.

Maria R. '20: "On day one, we quickly learned that there is a lot of Italian influence around town, the majority of

people surprisingly spoke Italian. We explored Lugano's main plazas and got to get familiar with the town. We took many silly pictures!

The following morning, students learned about communication and teamwork, as they took risks and

"It was fun to be in a group of close friends and help each other as we went through the course."

pushed outside their comfort zones on a high ropes course located high on Monte Tamaro, located a 30 minute drive north of the city. They relied on each other to help navigate the intricacies of the structures, and they worked together to get through the demands of the course.

Supported by motivational words and encouragement from their classmates, each student completed at least one part of the course, and many completed the entire course which required strength, stamina, and determination.

Migle R. '20: "I have done a ropes course many times in Lithuania but never on a mountain. It was a very nice experience which helped me trust my body and I proved to myself that I am stronger than I think. It was fun to be in a group of close friends and to help each other as we went through the course."

The afternoon was completed with a thrilling ride down a mountain roller coaster and an exploration of a contemporary stone chapel by the famous architect Mario Botta. A few brave students even elected to ride on Switzerland's longest and highest zip line.

Our group finished a long and tiring day with a relaxing dinner cruise on Lake Lugano.

We continued our ambitious itinerary on Wednesday as students walked across town to the Lugano Museum of Art and Culture where they toured an exhibit featuring world renowned pointillist painter Paul Signac. As they viewed the works, each small group found a piece that inspired them artistically. They then explored an exhibition of contemporary art which had many students pondering the question, "Is this really art?." Upon returning to LAS, and with the highest regards to the artist, each group created

"The next morning it was time to pack our stuff and say goodbye to Lugano, we were all really sad it was over, but all good things come to an end."

an artwork incorporating the style and techniques employed by Signac in the creation of a unique piece of art in homage to this important Neo-Impressionist painter.

Migle R. '20: "Our small group painted a painting of the Monte Tamaro Church using an oil pastel technique inspired by Paul Signac's

works. I am interested in art myself and was very happy to have so many people to discuss different art works with."

In the afternoon, our group visited the castles of Bellinzona. Perched high upon a rocky outcropping and located in the middle of a valley that for centuries provided a primary gateway from Italy into northern Europe; students learned about the history of this region and the events that led to the creation of the Confederation Helvetica, now known as Switzerland. One student, mouth agape, said it was "one of the most beautiful places I've ever been to."

The day ended with some fun and relaxation at one of the region's largest indoor/outdoor waterparks, replete with numerous slides, pools, and thermal baths.

The following day was a not so surprisingly a quiet bus ride home. With students asleep, we knew it had been a successful trip.

By connecting the art to the week's experiences, students brought closure to their learning and experiences. Fall Cultural Week allows students to grow as individuals, create bonds with each other, and with their classmates that will last through the school year and beyond. By trying new activities, exploring new locales, and moving outside their comfort zones, students begin to see how interconnected the world is and truly appreciate it for what it is.





## UNSUNG HEROES

Dr. Christoph M. Ott | **Managing Director, Head of Operations**

“The world is moved not only by the mighty shoves of the heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.” -- Helen Keller

In the last week of November 2016, LAS staged its annual fall semester theatre production. The students performed their version of the 1958 Oscar winner, best picture, and early 2000s Broadway hit *Twelve Angry Men*. The audience was wowed by a thought provoking storyline, a compelling set design, and wonderful student actors. The show represented the climax of months of work by a dedicated group of students and staff. As is always the case, the majority of the work of this performance was invisible to the audience as it was done “behind the scenes”.

Similarly, in the day to day life of our students, there are unsung heroes tirelessly working behind the scenes to allow for a seamless performance in the classroom and dormitories where the students and teachers hold the center stage. These heroes are the members of staff working in departments providing cleaning, maintenance, meals, transportation, and our technological infrastructure. This year, we asked a few of them to come forward for a long overdue curtain call.



**Mr. Salvatore Andoloro,**  
Campus Store Manager  
Working at LAS since September 1996  
LAS in one sentence: “A second family.”



**Mr. Slavisa Arsic,**  
Head of Maintenance & Construction  
Working at LAS since February 1985  
LAS in one sentence: “A good working team atmosphere with good multicultural cohabitation.”



**Ms. Melati Cattanach '01,**  
Admissions Associate  
Working at LAS since July 2011  
LAS in one sentence: “A melting pot of diverse nationalities and cultures, mixed with great family values.”

**Mr. Vincenzo Andoloro,**  
Driver and Fitness Center Supervisor  
Working at LAS since January 2001  
LAS in one sentence: “My second home.”

**Ms. Maria Ottila Ferreira Fonseca,**  
Housekeeping  
Working at LAS since September 1994  
LAS in one sentence: “Family spirit, in progression with a growing school.”



**Ms. Michelle Lauder milk,**  
Director of Information Technology  
Working at LAS since May 2015

### Q&A from IT

What memory do you have of your first day at LAS?  
*Snow. It was May and it was snowing! I couldn't believe it.*

Where were you working before?  
*At an IB school in Wisconsin. Before that, I worked in China for 5 years.*

When your friends and family found out that you work at LAS, what did they say/ask?  
*My family would prefer me to be closer to home. My friends are excited, especially my ex-colleagues from China.*

Any ‘magic moments’ you are particularly fond of?  
*I survived my first hike! Watching the weather change and taking in the view all while enjoying a cup of coffee. It was bliss.*

What's one thing you're working to change at LAS?  
*To slowly create more coordination and a system that can help do that. Help create better collaboration/communication across campus.*

What do you wish other people at LAS knew about your department?  
*Where we are located... and that they can stop to see us anytime. We are here to help and support all the users. We're not all geeks! ;)*



**Mr. Fabrice Lemesle,**  
Executive Chef  
Working at LAS since January 2016

**Mr. Sutha Ponnuthurai,**  
Assistant to the Executive Chef  
Working at LAS since September 1989

### Q&A from the Kitchen

What's the memory of your first day at LAS?  
Sutha: *On my first day, a little panicked. I tipped over the set up for the Bolognese that I had to prepare.*

What is your favorite thing working for LAS?  
Fabrice: *Planning for the special events.*  
Sutha: *I like being able to do my job properly everyday.*

Any ‘magic moments’ you are particularly fond of?  
Fabrice: *Graduation. Preparation of a nice, joyful event for everyone.*  
Sutha: *The year we organized the graduation in the old gym with the former chef.*

What do you wish other people knew about your department at LAS?  
Fabrice and Sutha: *We would like people to spend one day with us. See how hard we're working.*



**Mr. Maurice Felli,**  
Business Director  
Working at LAS since May 1997

### Q&A from Accounting

Where were you working before LAS?  
*Running my own company in Leysin. It was hard work!*

Any ‘magic moments’ you are particularly fond of?  
*Many, but I'm always in awe of the Award Ceremony and graduation.*

What are the current and upcoming challenges in Accounting?  
*How to best control expenses and operating in the new budget control system (PO system).*

If you had 1million CHF to donate to LAS, what would you want LAS to do with it?  
*Open a research center like EPFL (École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) in science or IT.*

So, what does the “money man” do for fun?  
*Road biking, hiking, and playing with the remote control.*

# LAS Recognized for its Impact on the Region

Dr. Christoph M. Ott | Managing Director, Head of Operations



Every five years, the *Association du Chablais*, a regional business network, recognizes an organization or person who has made exceptional contributions to the Chablais region in Culture, Economy, and Sport, respectively, with its Griffin Award.

LAS has been an integral part in making Leysin, on a per capita basis, the youngest and most international town in Switzerland - confirmed by the latest Swiss census. It is thanks to the foresight of our founders, Fred and Sigrid Ott, that today this small alpine village is so dynamic, worldly, and attractive.

For 2016, LAS has won the Griffin award for its economic contributions to the region of Chablais.

#### Facts about the Chablais region:

- 28 townships located between St. Maurice and Villeneuve
- 86'000 inhabitants
- 32'000 work places

#### This past Fall, Leysin American School was recognized for its impact in the region through initiatives such as:

- The restoration of the historically listed Belle Époque building;
- The construction of the Magic Mountain Athletic Center; and for being at the heart of the educational cluster of Leysin.

# A Letter to Alumni Letter

Mrs. Sigrid B. Ott, **co-Founder of LAS**

Dear Alumni,

I often ask myself: "What have I done to reach the age of 100, to be able to discuss world happenings, to participate in LAS events, and even to share my thoughts with the young people being educated on the Magic Mountain ... and especially in having the privilege to be surrounded by family and friends?"

Your graduation places you into the distinct status as a member of the LAS alumni community. It represents the special tie to your friends of the days on the Magic Mountain, to the episodes of your LAS life, and to the knowledge and values learned at the school.

In reminiscing the past, I feel that I am an alumna, not only of my Upham high school on the prairies, or of the University of North Dakota, but also of the many episodes of life, marriage, and parenthood. As well, the dramatic move to Switzerland during the post-war years, starting and building the International Ranger Camps, co-founding the Leysin American School, and celebrating the move to the more introspective age of retirement. Sometime in the not-too-distant future, I will become an alumna of life. What then? Nobody knows, but I feel that there will be a unification with creation amongst the stars of the universe.

In looking back, I am much less touched by the successes of my life - I had some - or the failures - I also had some - but rather by my contacts with people expressed through conviviality, understanding, and love. I benefited from the lift of a teacher's smile, the encouragement of a kind word, and the inspiration of those wiser than I am. Perhaps, I have been able to pass this on to those around me. I do not wish to ask for thanks, but rather



ask for forgiveness, for the times when I missed the opportunity to be kind, sharing, and encouraging.

My role in the remaining time that I have will certainly be more that of an observer. So, for those of you still actively contributing to the future of the world, I ask you to be generous in your kindness and love, taking full advantage of opportunities of helping others, encouraging those who are going through difficult times, and providing hope to people in despair. In short, try to live a life of giving to others.

My personal wishes to all of you,

Sigrid B. Ott



# Epilogue

Mr. David Beaudoin, **Author**

The following is the epilogue of the 'Saga' book, published by the Ott family and written by David Beaudoin. It is the story of four generations of the Ott's and the early years of LAS. The book is available at the LAS campus store for those who wish to purchase a copy.

Standing on the upstairs balcony of Steven and Doris Ott's handsome villa, located next door to the landmark Belle Époque, you can look out across the Rhone Valley far below, until the craggy peaks of the facing Alps fill your eyes and the sky, snow-capped even in summer and glowing in the light of the setting sun. For a long moment, time seems to stand still, punctuated only by distant tinkling of cowbells.

Sitting in a nearby chair and obviously enjoying this daily show of nature's splendor is Sigrid Ott, who reached her 100th year on September 13, 2016. Though her eyesight and hearing are diminished, her acuity remains as sharp as ever, as she reveals without fail during dinner conversations. And as the matriarch representing four generations of the Ott family, she serves as an ever-present touchstone between the past and present, between seemingly impossible expectations and extraordinary accomplishments.

Time, of course, has not stood still. But as Shakespeare once opined, "ripeness is all." Sigrid has lived to see her dreams, mirrored by those of her late husband Fred, fulfilled beyond measure. Perhaps more importantly, she has found herself surrounded by a flourishing family. It is an improbable history at best, one that took a dreamy farm girl from the frontier plains of North Dakota on a century-long journey across the world against incredible odds, to now sit on this balcony and chuckle over stories of her adventures.

Steven, ever the doting son, joins us on the balcony as the sinking sun's richest rays set the far peaks on momentary fire. Listening to his mother's words brings a distance to his eyes, as he thinks back to the trials he and Doris weathered over the years—and the deep bond between them that ensured their survival as a couple, even during the most impossible days.

"Our relationship has never been based on I'm in charge or she is in charge," Steven muses. "It's always been the case that we've intuitively agreed on all of the major decisions that we made. And there were many—whether it was coming back to Switzerland in 1970, going to Saudi Arabia in 1977, and returning to a failing LAS in 1982. All of those decisions were between her and me, but we didn't need to talk about it. We knew how the partner felt."

He pauses for a moment, looking out at the mountains as they slip into shadows. "The one thing that made our lives possible with all these ups and downs, with all the adventures, with all the incredible challenges, is our love. We are very different people but we fit like a glove on a hand."

While speaking of his 47-year marriage to his beloved wife, Steven could be addressing the essential character of the Ott family itself, resolute, determined idealists who have not and will not accept any impediment to their shared aspirations— to create a more peaceful and prosperous world through education enriched by a true appreciation of all cultures.

This is the continuing saga of the Ott family. Their story has only begun.

# CELEBRATING THE 100<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY OF Sigrid B. Ott



## 100 Years of Contributions to Others, Dedication to International Understanding amongst the Youth of the World, and a Life of Adventure!

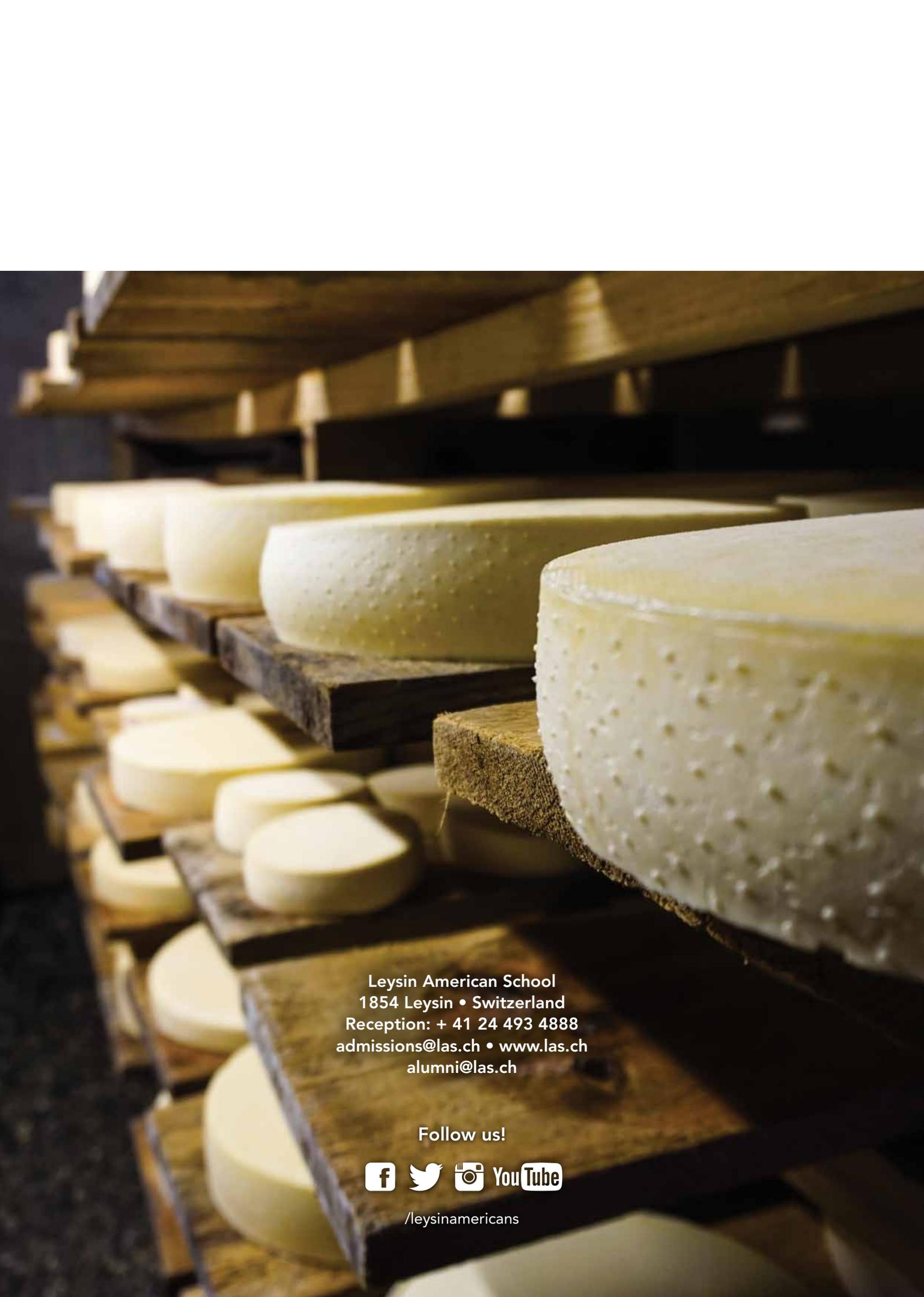
In September 1916, World War I was raging across Western Europe, culminating in the ten-month Battle of Verdun, which ultimately took the lives of more than 714,000 French and German soldiers. In the skies, a young pilot, Manfred von Richthofen, later to be known infamously as "The Red Baron," had just participated in his first victorious aerial dogfight.

Half a world away, in a frontier farmhouse on the rolling prairies of

North Dakota, the small cry of a newborn filled the bedroom of Barney and Gudbjorg Benson. Assisting in the birth on September 13 was Upham's town physician, Dr. Frank, who delivered into Gudbjorg's waiting arms a beautiful, healthy baby girl. The child was the fourth for the Bensons, preceded by three older daughters—Bjorg, Mary, and Adelaide.

In keeping with Icelandic traditions, the new child was given a middle name that reflected her patrimonial relation - Sveinbjornsdottir, Sveinbjorn's daughter. Her first name also reflected her Icelandic heritage - Sigridur - one of the most popular names for women of that island nation.





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