



LEYSIN AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

2016 EDITION

panorama

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

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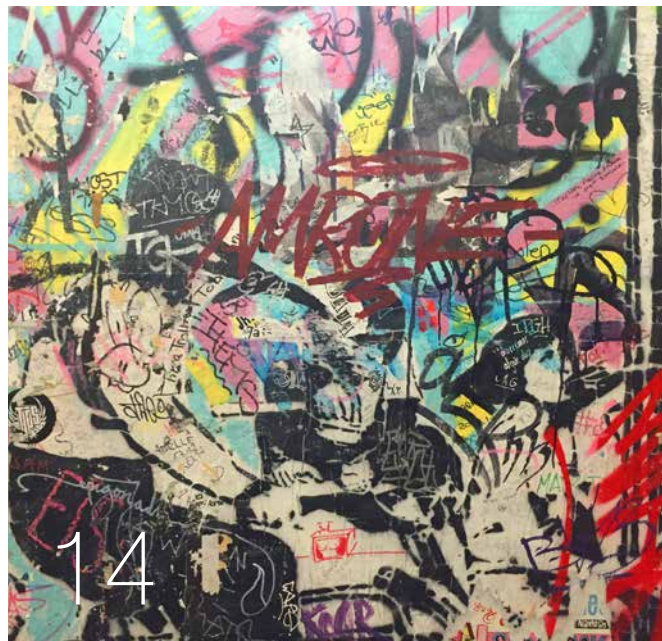
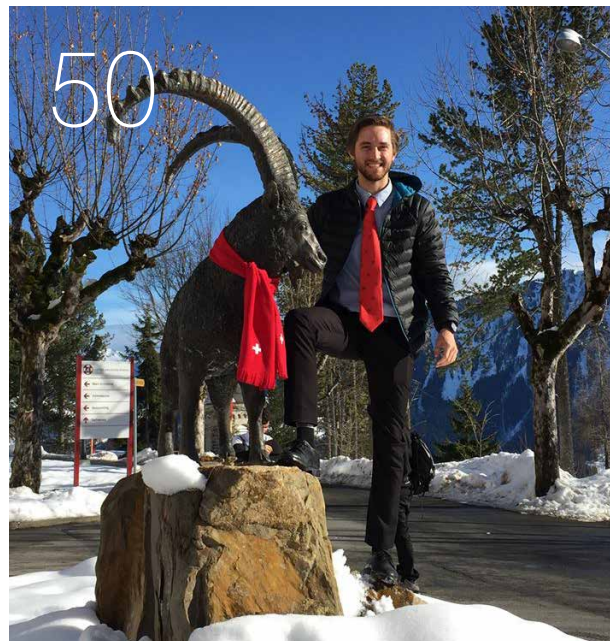
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panorama

Editors

Emma Dixon, John Harlin III '14P, Benjamin Smith,
Anthony Leutenegger

Graphic Design

Brittany Free

Contributors

Dr. L. Ira Bigelow '12P, '13P, '15P, Mike Brinkmeyer,
Alex Flynn-Padick, Paul Fomalont, John Harlin III '14P,
Will Johnson, Mark Kolman, LAS Arts Team
(R. Allen Babcock, Kelly Deklinski, Keegan Luttrell,
Brian Rusher), Anthony Leutenegger, Dr. Paul Magnuson,
Dr. Marc-Frederic Ott, Dr. K Steven Ott, Dan Patton, Ben-
jamin Smith, Phil VanDenBrink

Contributing Photographers

Brittany Free, Natalie Gabay, John Harlin III '14P,
Peter Howard, Anthony Leutenegger

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Submit Letters And Questions To:

Development Office
Leysin American School
Chemin de la Source 3, CP 108
1854 Leysin, Switzerland

Phone: +41.24.493.4888 | **Web:** www.las.ch |
Email: alumni@las.ch

2016 Edition

On the Cover: The LAS Alpine Institute cresting the final
ridge towards the summit of Les Diablerets, the highest peak in
our canton of Vaud at 3,210m above sea level.
Photo taken by: Anthony Leutenegger



Letter

FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Alumni, Parents & Friends,

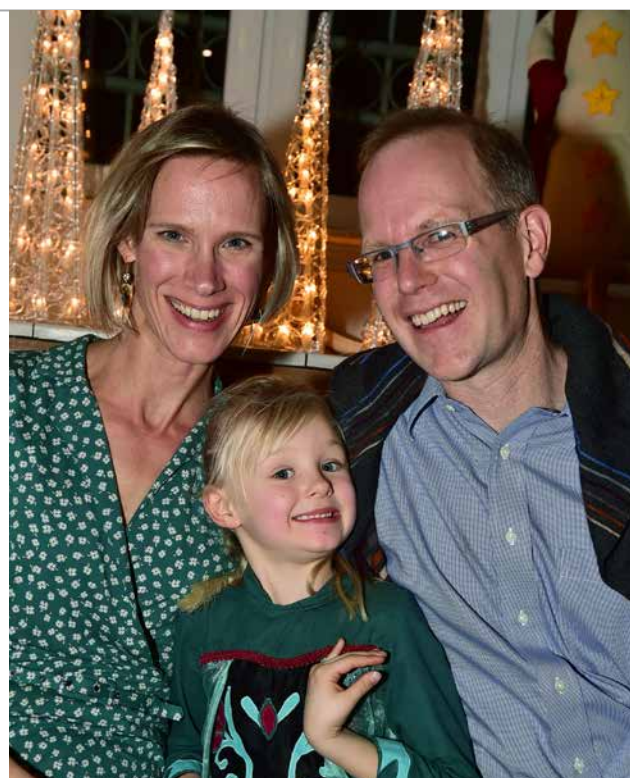
This past November, I traveled to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Saudi Arabia to meet with alumni, current parents, and prospective families. The bitterly cold temperatures in Kazakhstan were in stark contrast to the warm hospitality I received across Central Asia and the Middle East. At each destination, I had very interesting conversations with alumni and parents regarding the future of LAS: what is planned; how they see the school moving forward; and finally, how our families and alumni can help the school continue to strive towards excellence as embodied in our mission statement.

The future of LAS is built around the mission statement and the goals set forth in the Strategic Plan. Simply put, they combine to drive the ever-increasing sustainable quality of the school. This means we constantly work to (1) improve our academic and extra-curricular programs, (2) strengthen the application pool for admission so as to become more selective, (3) maintain enrollment balance by grade, gender, and nationality, and (4) further strengthen the school's finances through a well established development program.

This school year, we are completing our 10-year self-study as part of the Community of International Schools ("CIS") and New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC) accreditations. The accreditation report will be submitted this June and the CIS and NEASC visiting team will conduct the full assessment in October. As with past accreditations, we are identifying areas of improvement, which will ultimately benefit our students by improving our academic and extra-curricular programs.

In academics, the significant new program, which will start in August 2016, is the middle school. We will add a 7th grade to the existing 8th grade allowing us to run an academically autonomous middle school. This program will incorporate the most recent research-based concepts and ideas, such as featuring a dimension of experiential learning alongside a more traditional curriculum. We want students to become enthusiastic learners before they start high school in grade 9. We are all very excited by the new middle school and you will find more information about it in Mr. VanDenBrink's article (page 10).

In Admissions, we continue to make excellent progress. The students who joined us this academic year are some of the strongest we have ever admitted. The result is fewer discipline problems and a more studious student body. Almost 70% of our juniors and seniors are now enrolled in the IB Diploma Programme. In addition, student retention is the highest it has ever been and a growing number of students who initially planned to enroll for one year, have chosen to stay and graduate from LAS. Also, more students are attending for four and five



years. Admissions is using these positive changes to continue to admit students who are the best fit for our programs while maintaining the enrollment balance of the overall student body: grade; gender; and nationality.

Another positive development is the strengthening of the "culture of giving" among our alumni, families, and friends. More and more, our community is becoming engaged in supporting the future development of the school. We have seen annual growth in our fundraising participation from our current parents and faculty, while maintaining 100% participation from our senior leadership and LAS Board members. An example of the benefit of this is our ability to partially fund the full renovation of the gymnasium, originally built in 1972, through donations. We are very excited about the success of this project, as our students deserve a state of the art modern facility.

There is no doubt that LAS continues to move in the right direction. Like those alumni and parents that I met during my November travels through the steppes of Central Asia and the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula, you can be proud of LAS - your school. And, you too can show your belief in our mission and efforts by sharing your ideas, referring potential students, and supporting our fundraising efforts.

In the future, I hope to welcome you back to Leysin, your second home. I wish you and your family all the best wishes for 2016!

Cordially,

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

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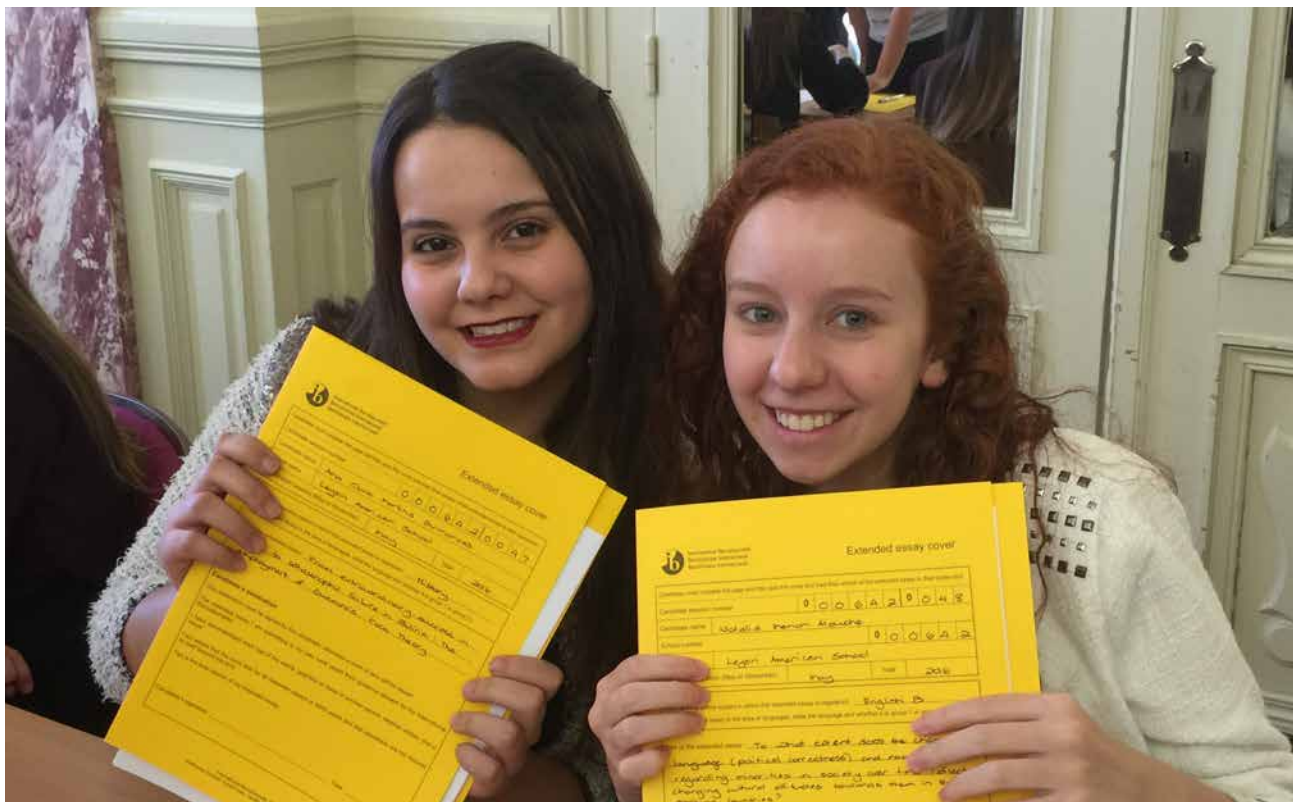
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The Dreaded Extended Essay

Mr. William Johnson
Dean of Belle Époque Campus



The 9th of November was a bright, sunny day. Balloons covered the floor of my office. Applause could be heard echoing throughout the cavernous halls of the Belle Époque campus (BEC). Our seniors wore an unmistakable look of relief on their faces. Why the relief? It was the Extended Essay due day!

The Extended Essay (EE), in boring terms, is an independent research paper of up to 4,000 words on a topic of the student's choosing. In ideal terms, it is the most authentic assignment we can offer our students, and one that gives them a taste of what university will demand. In real terms, it is a long, difficult process, that inspires dread in our students and stretches them to their academic limits.

Ask any senior or alumni from any school of the diploma programme (DP): what was the most demanding assignment of the IB? The answer will be the EE.

As an educator, I am shocked at how most schools handle the EE process. Given the size and demands of such a project foisted upon a 16-year-old, and that the student will likely have no previous experience with such a lengthy formal research paper; you would assume that schools

structure substantial classroom learning to support EE writing. However, students around the world are left to work on the EE outside of class time. In an already demanding IB programme, many struggle to balance their time effectively to give the EE the depth of attention it needs. Moreover, the student's sole support is an EE supervisor, a teacher at their school, whose time budget with the student is a measly five hours.

No wonder the EE is so dreaded!

Over the last four years here at LAS, we have been looking into this issue, and we have realized that we need more student support for key assignments. It is no secret that education - and in particular IB education - is moving strongly away from schooling as a means to fill students with arcane encyclopaedic knowledge and towards developing skills and dispositions, so that they may better contribute to our world. Just look at LAS's mission statement: *developing innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world.*

In an effort to harness this statement, this school year sees the addition of an eighth academic department at our

school: Integrated Core. This department, whose inaugural head is Ms. Jan Lowman, aims to develop cross-curricular skills in research and reflection, and to help all of our students extend their classroom learning beyond LAS. At BEC, all students now take a two-year core course sequence which focuses on the IB Diploma Programme core elements: Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS), and the EE.

TOK has been a mainstay of the LAS curriculum for

"Of course, the highlight of the TOK curriculum at LAS is our Fall Cultural program taking seniors to Rome, Venice, and Florence."

years. What TOK actually is can be difficult to define, but in essence it steps back from the ceaseless knowledge building process of students and asks them to consider the nature of knowledge acquisition itself. Students synthesize their learning in all other classes by asking the basic questions of what knowledge is, and how it functions. Of course, the highlight of the TOK curriculum at LAS is our Fall Cultural program taking seniors to Rome, Venice, and Florence. What the new Integrated Core department builds on, is ensuring that all 11th and 12th graders are exposed to the important ideas of TOK over two years, and that our students in younger grades will be prepared to consider TOK's complex questions.

CAS focuses on extending student learning out of the classroom through pursuits in the arts and innovation, sports and outdoors, and service to the local community. At LAS, we have always had a strong program for these activities; students can choose from any number of artistic endeavors, we work tutoring local students and supporting the town refugee center, and spend our winters skiing the Berneuse. But, the heart of CAS is a focus on reflection. After engaging in these activities, students come back to the classroom to reflect (in writing, photojournal, video, or any other means) on their efforts and give thought to how their classroom learning supports their extracurricular progress.

By building a strong reflective element, our students will be prepared to confront the real-life challenges that will face them beyond LAS. Our introduction of the Integrated Core department and Mrs. Lowman's work with our CAS Coordinator James McKenna ensures that all of our students, grades 8-12, engage in meaningful reflection for growth. Between our two year BEC sequence and our Savoy classes: Life Skills, Health & PE, and Academic Literacy, we are confident that we are educating our students to be

compassionate and responsible.

What about the dreaded EE? Our Integrated Core sequence at BEC even provides support for this. In the confines of a classroom - instead of through independent disjointed research - students learn essential skills in research and writing. We guide our students through choosing a research topic, consulting appropriate sources, and crafting their masterpieces.

The EE process has become a mainstay for all LAS students in their university preparation, and hopefully this will continue to grow alongside the programs we have put in place to help them.

The week after the EE due date, we gathered the seniors in the Grande Salle. For an hour they presented their own completed works to the junior class who are just beginning their EE process in their Integrated Core classes. Although "dread" will probably never be disassociated from the EE, we are happy to know moving forward that the Integrated Core department will provide excellent support for this and the other critical educational pieces, and that we are deliberately preparing our students to be innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world.



Innovation and the Middle School

LIVING OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Phil VanDenBrink
Dean of Savoy Campus

Utilizing our mission statement, my focus for this article will be on innovation, which is an easy topic to discuss with programs at LAS such as LASER leading the charge. On our Magic Mountain, there are many changes underway; new buildings, new projects, as well as the creation of an autonomous middle school program, beginning next year on the Savoy Campus.

Under the leadership and guidance of Research & Curriculum Director, Dr. Paul Magnuson and former Social Studies Department Head, Dr. Patricia Cooper, the middle school is developing an excellent, holistic curriculum. The purpose of a holistic curriculum is to instill a love of knowledge and give students the correct tools to create wisdom from their education. Each unit across the curriculum will commence with a “lifeworthy” question that will require active participation, experiential learning, and individual student initiative.

Some familiar with education may remember the “sage on the stage” concept, where the teacher lectures from the front of the classroom to an audience, typically seen in secondary and post-secondary school. The educational philosophy of our middle school will focus on student facilitation, questioning and “talk”, collaborative work, and presenting the knowledge they have acquired. The students will be active learners, working on meaningful learning activities and reflecting on their learning process, all while being closely guided by their teachers. Research shows that student-centered learning leads to greater short-term mastery, long-term retention, and increased depth of understanding. It also supports the acquisition of creative problem-solving skills and confidence in their own knowledge and skills. This approach will ensure their development as innovative students.

Our unique location in Switzerland will become a large part of the educational program. The students will be conducting fieldwork on glaciers, mountains, and in rivers for their geography course. The Beau Reveil forest will be used for science classes to collect data on the local ecology. Our village, will be used for researching the local culture and past approaches to its self-sustainability and longevity. As we are located in the Swiss Romande, an

emphasis on speaking French in authentic settings will be a pivotal aspect of the language courses. Weekly excursions will create a powerful link between the classroom and our region, feature activities at castles, archaeological sites,



and living museums; linking what they are learning with the history of the local area. On one Friday afternoon, for example, students will explore prehistoric sites and the Neolithic Museum in the Valais. Our notion of a classroom has been expanded to include much more than a room in a building. Quite frankly, as I read over the curriculum design, it makes me want to be a middle school student once again.

According to Yogi Bajan, “If you want to learn something, read about it. If you want to understand something, write about it. If you want to master something, teach it.” A large part of student assessments will be on presentations showcasing the knowledge and skills obtained responding to the courses “lifeworthy” question identified earlier. The format of these assessments will include brochures, visual display, research projects, debates, or a dramatic performance. Presentation skills will help them in future endeavours, including the International Baccalaureate Programme at LAS. There are places for traditional assessments, but a requirement for teachers in the middle school is to include creative, inquiry-based projects that will be shared with their peers in every course.

One of our core values at LAS is, “teachers are the key.” Teachers are the best resource at our school and guide our students in their learning. There is a sense of excitement for this new program amongst the faculty. Some of our most experienced educators have expressed a desire to be part of the middle school team. A greater level of collaboration

amongst the teachers will help foster teamwork, nurturing the innovation our youngest students for future success. If I were to go back into the classroom full-time, this is where I would want to be.

The middle school program shows that LAS is once again a leader in educational innovation. Lines of inquiry will focus student activities on the key ideas and content of a unit or lesson. The experiential and inclusive curriculum will maximize the potential of the classroom setting and the outside world, generating authentic links for student learning. The middle school team is buzzing with innovative concepts and ideas while creating an exciting curriculum for our youngest and future community members.

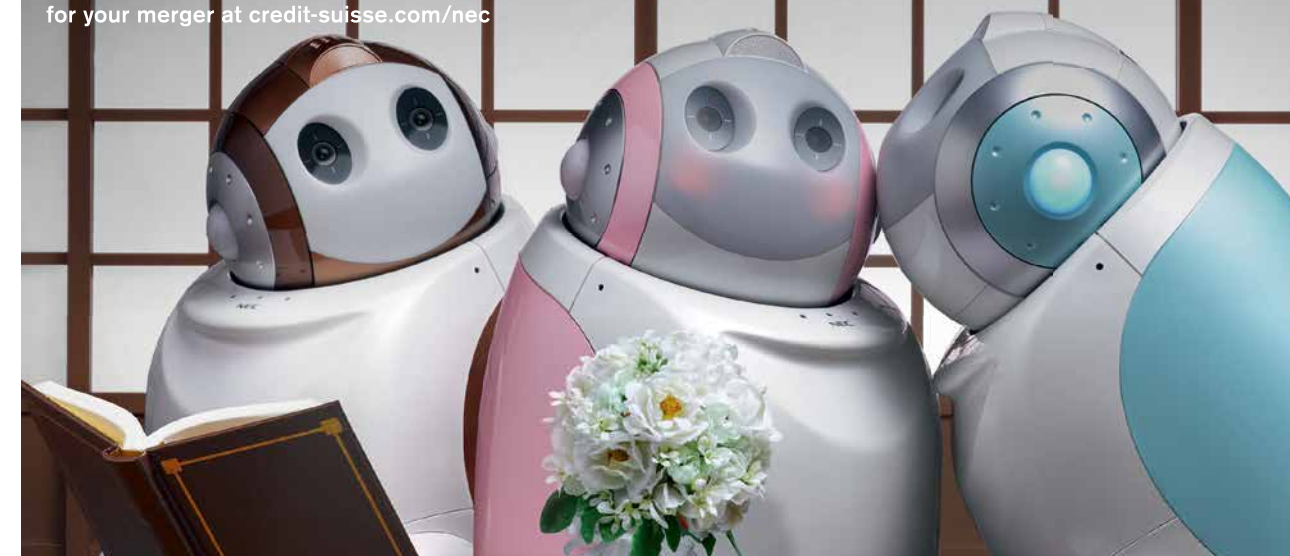
“Our unique location in Switzerland will become a large part of the educational program.”



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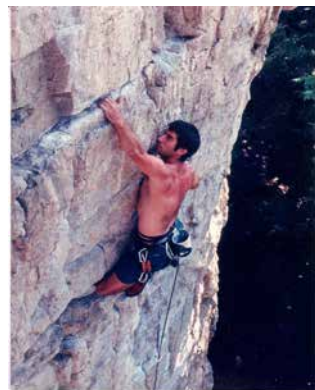


How Rock Climbing Saved my Life

Mr. Paul Fomalont
Dean of Students

When I was 18, this is what I thought: I was really smart, everything was easy, and that success was assured. When I was 19, I discovered that I was very wrong.

From primary school all the way to high school I had coasted, excelling in math, and getting top grades the entire way. I remember doing my multiplication tables far ahead of my classmates. I would either do the homework on the bus in the morning, or hastily before class. I got an A in Calculus my senior year and graduated 21 out of a class of 500. I was accepted into the University of Virginia (UVA), one of the top 25 colleges in the United States.



I entered university expecting more of the same. However, the first thing that struck me was that everyone was better than me. It seemed that every second student who went to UVA was their high school valedictorian, or top 10 in their year, including my high school's own valedictorian. I probably should have realized at this point that I was below average, but my

self-confidence held strong. UVA was a serious institution, while students would go party on the weekends like other typical college students, they would also have just spent the previous 4 nights studying until 2 am. I was blown away by the amount of work that was done in the dorm, but unfortunately, I couldn't force myself to sit down and work for any extended period of time. My lack of proper work ethic was starting to catch up with me.

My father Dr. Edward B. Fomalont was a well-known American scientist; his general field evolved around physics, that and my historical success in the subject helped my decision in majoring in it. I was on my heels right from the beginning, it was hard and the weekly problem sets were many, varied, and complex. No longer could I do the work on my way to class as before. My grades across all subjects began to sink. I remember going home for winter break and as I walked in the door I was met by both my parents. They

had been divorced for 7 years and they hadn't been in the same room since. But there they were, holding my grade report. Understandably they were upset, in high school I had rarely gotten below an A and here I was, in university, practically failing. I promised that I would do better and work harder, but another term and year passed and I was completely lost. The myth of my superior intellect had been shattered. Fortunately, my life was about to change for the better.

There was an outdoor program at UVA that offered rock-climbing trips. I thought it would be a good distraction from my troubles at school, so I signed up. The Potomac River cuts through the Mather Gorge on the Maryland and Virginia border, sculpting incredible 10 meter high cliffs and tree-lined bluffs, perfect for sport climbing. The beauty of spending an entire day hiking the trail along the river and setting up at the crag for the day with friends, while watching whitewater kayakers paddle by in search of their own adventures, will always be something that I remember. On that first trip, after the instructor had set up a top rope, I remember being completely stumped by the crux of the first climb, about 2 meters off the ground, and after a dozen attempts I was still unable to master it. Failure had never felt so good.

I made a vow to complete that climb and upon returning home promptly went to the library to check out all the books on rock climbing. I bought a small section of rope and carried it with me everywhere, practicing knots. Pull-ups became a daily activity, as important as brushing my teeth or taking a shower. The following week I went back to the same

"I bought a small section of rope and carried it with me everywhere, practicing knots. Pull-ups became a daily activity, as important as brushing my teeth or taking a shower."

crag and set up my rope on that very climb. I was confident with my new knowledge and strength, and sent it on my first attempt. I became hooked, and the rest of my college career was now focused around climbing. I changed majors from Physics to English, and went on autopilot once again; it gave me ample time for training and climbing. For the first time in my life, I had a true passion and it was going to teach me the most important lesson, a work ethic.

Every weekend, I drove to rock climbing crags. Seneca Rocks and the New River Gorge were my new home. I would wake up at sunrise and climb until my fingers ached and my forearms were so sore it was a challenge steering my car home. There were some small rocks about 15 minutes from my school and I would work on my technique in between classes. If I didn't have enough time I would traverse the stone walls around the music building. I would be hanging on by my fingertips, traversing, while classical music carried through the open windows and doors.

I graduated UVA in 1993, with a dual major in Math and English. The work ethic I had garnered from rock climbing helped me to pull my socks up, double down, and get the required schoolwork done. However, whenever people asked me what my major was, I would always joke: "rock climbing". After graduation, I immediately moved to Seneca Rocks and became a full-time climbing guide.

This propelled me into doing nothing but climbing for the next 4 years. I travelled around the United States sleeping in the back of my truck, at one point even living in an abandoned feed store, living on \$5,000.00 a year. The

freedom was bliss and the climbing community was caring and passionate. It was an amazing time in my life. Although I was having fun, I began to change. Looking back today, I now realize how important it was for my personal development. I went from an unmotivated, lazy young man, to one who was ready to make it in the "real world". No longer did I rely on luck, raw talent, or perceived ability. Instead, I put my best effort into every situation. I was ready to move on and figured becoming a teacher would be a good use of my talents.

As I reflect back, I feel very fortunate. I discovered my passion, which in turn taught me the process of working hard. It doesn't matter how smart or talented you are, hard work is the necessary ingredient to success. More importantly, hard work is a skill that will allow you to supersede your limitations. As I watch our students roaming the halls, I am always hopeful that they are as fortunate as I was and they find their own "rock climbing". I think that boarding schools are great places for students. There are a lot of opportunities for

them to discover their passion. In the end, it doesn't matter whether it is in academics, leadership opportunities, sports, or the arts. They will learn one of life's most important lessons: success is all about the hard work.

I wonder what would have happened to me if I hadn't discovered rock climbing. I might never have developed a work ethic. I might be wasting my life working some meaningless job, not one I'm excited to come to every morning. I feel so lucky. Rock climbing really did save my life.

"As I reflect back, I feel very fortunate. I discovered my passion, which in turn taught me the process of working hard."



The Arts at LAS

LAS Arts Team



"You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself." - Jim Rohn

Taking personal responsibility: What does this have to do with the arts? We are accountable for our personal growth, and to take advantage of life lessons that serve to make us complete. Personal growth has an impact on the relationships we nurture, helping to advance our chances of succeeding in day-to-day events. Personal growth, then, becomes an art in itself – the act of participating and communicating in unique and creative ways to learn life lessons, to make the most out of life, and to improve the human condition.

Personal growth is about understanding who we are and how we fit in the world around us. To this end, the Arts at LAS provides the catalyst for personal growth so that we can realize our full potential.

ARTS UPDATE

Enrollment for the Visual Arts has increased by more than 50% this school year! Students at the Savoy campus have access to two and three-dimensional art classes, Digital Art, and Yearbook. Students at the Belle Époque campus may take International Baccalaureate (IB) or Studio Art classes, serving the needs of those seeking an IB Diploma, or a general visual art education.

New display panels have been installed to showcase student work at both campuses. "The Gallery" was inaugurated last spring in the Arts wing at the Savoy campus, and new display panels have been installed in the Savoy cafeteria as well as along the main hallways at the Belle Époque campus. In addition, the Belle Époque art room has been remodeled by our visual arts teacher Brian Rusher for observational figure, and still-life drawing and painting projects.

Savoy 2d/3d art students have been creating beautiful drawings and are now beginning a sculpture project transforming old books into pieces of art. Digital Art students have been learning darkroom techniques, building

pinhole cameras, and learning the anatomy of the digital camera. In addition, our Savoy visual art teacher Keegan Luttrell is developing a curriculum centered around the history of Leysin and piloting the program with her digital art students.

Music is offered at the Savoy and Belle Époque campuses, where students have the option to take Guitar, Piano Keyboarding, Composition and Recording classes, and participate in after-school Choir and Jazz Ensemble activities. Music students engage in dynamic learning environments, blending cutting edge technologies with more traditional teaching methods. Courses explore music from all eras and genres, while incorporating various teaching and learning styles.

In Music Composition and Recording, students access lesson materials housed on a digital textbook and apply new techniques to both standard western notation and software music writing. Recently, students completed compositions using sounds recorded in Leysin, they then incorporated them into their work by using two different music writing programs.

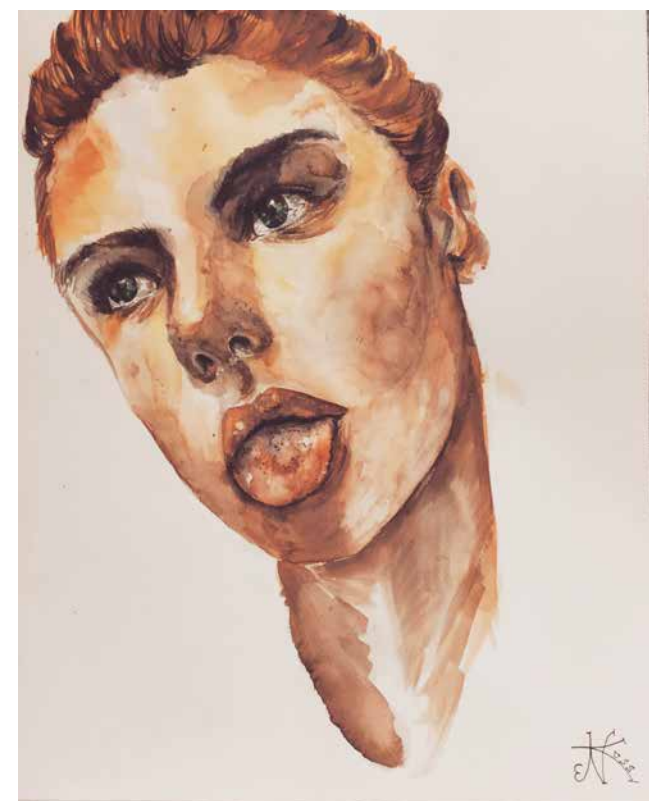
Guitar and piano students are taught basics of music theory alongside contemporary ways of learning, such as music tutorials and aural training. With a background in many learning methods, students have the freedom to choose a path that works for them.

Theater is truly the art of the "re" (Rehearsing, revisiting, reimagining, and renewing among others). Starting with an inventive arena staging of A.R. Gurney's *The Dining Room* in Fall 2014; LAS Theater has, under the leadership of Theater Director R. Allen Babcock, sought by reflecting on complex questions of existence, sustainability, responsibility, and respect of difference, to reintroduce the art of theater as provocateur to the school community.

In *The Dining Room*, an impressive cohort of 18 students from across all grade levels conspired to develop compelling characters who when faced with difficult circumstance find ways and means to achieve complex objectives. Together the 18 actors breathed life into 56 distinct characters throughout the production.

The spring 2015 musical saw involvement from more than ten percent of the student body (more than 45 students!). The resulting production of *Urinetown, the Musical*, despite its inauspicious title, successfully created a dystopian reality that called into question our societal behaviors vis-a-vis sustainability. In concert with other like-mindedly restless groups on campus, in particular, the ARC Project, LAS theater added some song and dance levity to the big questions surrounding limits to growth, the efficacy of our current systems of governance as well as the way societies over-sexualize and subjugate the voice of women. All are reminders that reduce, reuse, and recycle is important, but so is recognition and respect.

Fall 2015 saw a reinvented system for rehearsals with two one-act plays simultaneously rehearsing. English teacher and Director Ms. Donna Everett directed *This Is A Test*, by Stephen Gregg, while Mr. Babcock took the helm of *The Static*, by Davey Anderson. A total of 21 actors and three stage managers worked hard to bring the complex and interesting pieces to life. Both center on school settings, but take vastly different stylistic approaches. *This is a Test*



TOP: "Winnie the Pooh"
By Igne J. '16
BOTTOM: Ekaterina N. '16,
Watercolor
OPPOSITE: *The Static*,
Fall theater performance



leverages over-blown farcical comedy to tell a story, while *The Static* uses elements of devised theater and company work to comment on the story while it is unfolding. Anderson creates a fast paced montage of scenes and images to create the world of a young student overwhelmed and overstimulated after his ADHD diagnosis, while Gregg plays on the idea of what happens in our mind as we confront test anxiety. The plays are running in repertory fashion, one after the other, to create an interesting evening of juxtapositions. Spring 2016 has much in store for LAS theater. An exciting reintroduction of the Improvisation Club will bring more students into the program for training and workshops that lead to a performance at the end of the school year. Simultaneously, *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown* (musical) will be staged. We look forward to lots of laughs and renewing the sentiment through song and dance shared by the revered Charlie Brown: "happiness is anyone and anything at all that's loved by you."

Several guest artists will be engaged with our students

at LAS this year, including ACS alumnae Pam Hardenburg who will lead a workshop to facilitate inspiration inherent in the landscape of Leysin through photography. This project will continue throughout the year, culminating in an exhibition in Leysin this spring. Also, ceramicist Sue Mundy, an accomplished potter from the UK, will lead several workshops to take full advantage of our existing ceramics facility at Belle Époque. For the third year running, LAS will host Francois le Roux (The Ha! Man) for his master classes that encourage students to create spontaneous art through music, visual art, and movement.

Several educational excursions have been organized to support arts programming at LAS, including a trip to the Paul Klee Centre in Bern,

the Fondation de l'Hermitage in Lausanne, and the Pierre Gianadda Fondation in Martigny. LAS students were also afforded two cultural trips focused on the arts in October. Visual Arts teacher Ms. Keegan Luttrell along with Mr. Babcock led a very successful music/art excursion to Berlin. Studio visits were arranged with working artists, many

"This was the best trip I've ever had in my life and that's because of the experience and emotions that I had. I really don't want to come back, because you created a magical space in time, where I want to stay forever. This whole experience changed me in some way and opened up a new little world. I haven't felt such a huge spectrum of emotions for a long time. I've never felt in love with the time, places, and people so deeply."

- Daria R. '17

current contemporary works of art were viewed, students created their own stencil street art, and an art collection was viewed in a former World War II bunker. Berlin served as a perfect background for students to meet artists, witness unique performances, and experience the transformative power of art.

One student's remarks highlighted the success of the Berlin trip:

"This was the best trip I've ever had in my life and that's because of the experience and emotions that I had. I really don't want to come back, because you created a magical space in time, where I want to stay forever. This whole experience changed me in some way and opened up a new little world. I haven't felt such a huge spectrum of emotions for a long time. I've never felt in love with the time, places, and people so deeply." - Daria R. '17

Additionally, students interested in Music traveled to Basel for a cultural excursion led by music teacher Kelly Deklinski. Highlights of the excursion included a tour of Basel City Recording Studios, a look at musician instruments at the Historical Museum of Music in Basel, and a live performance of Brazilian Jazz by the Eliane Elias Quartet at the Volkshaus Concert Hall. The trip concluded with a visit to The HeK House of Electronic Arts where students were introduced to the Biophilia education project. The HeK workshop was based on famed Icelandic musician Björk's Biophilia application in which students are introduced to a synthesized world of science and music, and are allowed to create digital compositions grounded on scientific phenomena.

For more information about the Arts at LAS, please contact Department Chair Dr. L. Ira Bigelow '12P, '13P, '15P: ibigelow@las.ch

LAS ARTS PERFORMANCE AND EXHIBITION SCHEDULE FOR 2015-16:

Fall Productions – December 3 & 4

Winter Concert & Art Exhibition – December 8

Winter Family Concert & Art Exhibition – February 9

IB Art Exhibition – April 8

Spring Musical – April 13-15

Evening With The Stars – April 21 and 22

Film Festival – April 28

LAS ARTS TEAM:

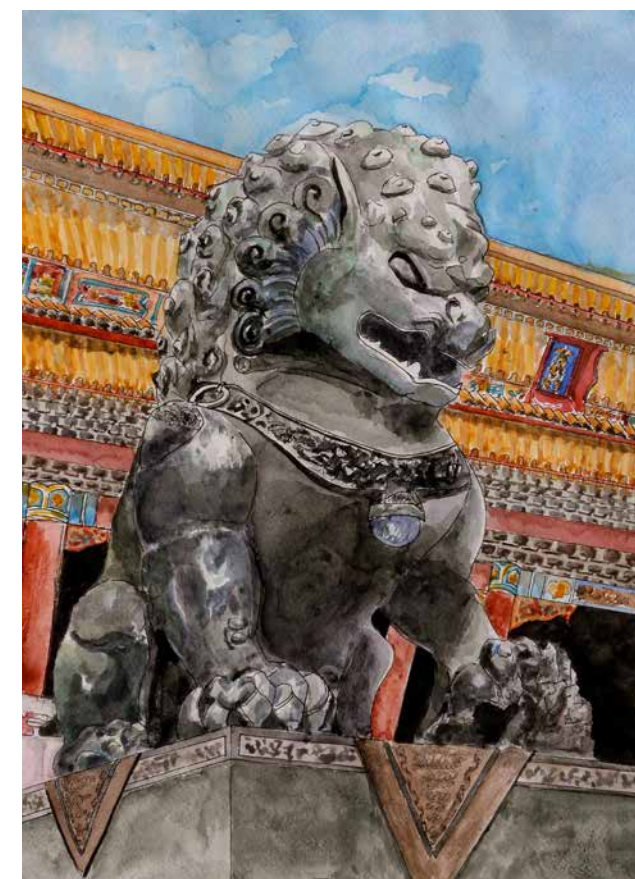
Dr. L. Ira Bigelow '12P, '13P, '15P, Department Chair

Mr. R. Allen Babcock, Theater

Ms. Kelly Deklinski, Music

Ms. Keegan Luttrell, Visual Art

Mr. Brian Rusher, Visual Art



OPPOSITE: Liza G. '16

TOP: Liza M. '16

BOTTOM: Yici W. '16

Sports Roundup

Mr. Mike Brinkmeyer
Athletics Director

The LAS Athletics program is built around the idea of growth. Our coaches strive to strengthen their teams and seek success on the field of play, while also working to help our students grow as athletes and as individuals.



A successful season lies less in numbers of wins and losses, but more in how far each athlete has come in their development as a competitor and as a good representative of our school.

With this philosophy guiding our teams, I am pleased to report that we had a very successful fall season of sports here at LAS. Of course, we had teams finish with great records, but I can honestly say that every student athlete has improved over the course of the year and learned something not only about the game that they play, but also lessons on motivation, perseverance, and winning or losing gracefully.

Volleyball is a sport near and dear to our hearts here at LAS as both the SGIS and ADISR tournaments are held here in Leysin. This year our Girls volleyball team, under the leadership of coach Gadiel Rachelson, was one of our strongest sides. Although the girls struggled and lost some very close matches in the SGIS tournament, they came back strong to win the silver medal for their second place finish in the ADISR tournament. Seniors Daniela G. '16, Robyn B. '16, and Ana Clara M. '16 showed great leadership and set excellent examples for our talented group of younger girls. A special thanks goes to the team manager, Yuma Y. '17, for his motivational talents and his meticulous stats keeping.

The Boys Volleyball team also featured a group of young, talented players. In a similar fashion to the girls team, the boys struggled a bit at the SGIS tournament but really came together as a team to finish with a bronze medal at the ADISR tournament. Rather than mentioning one or two players, one must really commend all the boys on a great team effort throughout the season and expertise of coaches James McKenna and Gadiel Rachelson.



The Girls Football team was very young this year, with many players relatively new to the sport. Coaches Ben Hall and Rachel Galvin did an excellent job of cultivating not only football skill but also the right attitude on the field. This was evident by the girls team winning the sportsmanship award at the SGIS football tournament. Although their overall record showed more losses than wins, the girls learned a lot, and many talented players will return to the squad next year. This year's team was led by goalkeeper Liza C. '19 and seniors Robyn B. '16 and Masha B. '16.



The Boys Football team was under new leadership this year with coaches Brian Rusher and Bob Hodgman-Burns '17P, '20P taking on coaching responsibilities. The team started the year well with wins versus Bern and against our Leysin rival Kumon. They went on to the SGIS tournament in Lugano and finished a respectable 5th place. Back at home, the boys had some tough matches against the sides from the larger schools in Geneva, but at the end of the day all the players learned more about the game and improved their skills on the field. The boys were led by seniors Dennis L. '16 and Manuel M. '16.



The Girls Basketball team was full of energy and enthusiasm both on and off the court. Our girls learned a lot from coach Laura Sommariva, a previous LAS girls basketball coach who returned to the mountain this year. She brought her own high level of enthusiasm and experience as both a coach and athlete to our girls team and helped each player improve. Despite some tough losses in ADISR league games, our girls played well to finish a very respectable 4th place at the SGIS tournament, held at Aiglon College in Villars. The girls team was led by co-captains Tia M. '16 and Meagan M-B. '16.



The Boys Basketball team, showcased some very talented players including top scorers Kene N. '16 and Vlad C. '16. Coach James McKenna brought his high level of expertise and knowledge of the game to a talented group of players and they were very successful with an overall record of 8 wins and 3 losses. The boys fought hard at the ultra-competitive SGIS Championship, narrowly missing the final four. In the end, they won a nail-biter vs Kumon and finished in 5th place. This team was absolutely one of the most exciting LAS sides to watch this year.

The Boys Rugby team continues to develop under the leadership of coach Ben Hall. Rugby has come and gone over the years at LAS, but with coach Hall's dedication to teaching the game, and a core group of boys who are eager to learn and work hard, we are surprising some more established teams in Switzerland. The boys played in the annual tournament at the Lyceum Alpinum in Zuoz where they received many compliments on their play and sportsmanship. At the Zurich International School 7s tournament they fared well among many squads with more experience. The team was led by McHale W. '17 and Michael P. '17.

Our Cross Country team, led by runner extraordinaire coach Alena Kovarova, trained hard on the undulous roads and trails of high-altitude Leysin. We entered competitions locally and also participated in the SGIS meet in Zurich, where Sai C. '19 finished second in his age group. 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. The team is led by coach Daryl Hitchcock and number one players Jenna S. '16 and Nat T. '17. The swim team, coached by Mike Brinkmeyer and Mark Kolman, has competed in one meet thus far, the Neuchatel Invitational, finishing an impressive 3rd place overall. The team was led by a strong group of boys who came together to win both relays and take several individual gold and silver medals. The group includes seniors Maxime B. '16 and Kevin M. '16 along with Louis B. '18 and Mateusz H. '18.

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.

Using iPads to Support Learning

Ms. Brittany Holsapple
Learning Support Specialist

Brittany Holsapple is a Learning Support Specialist at Leysin American School. She joined us in August 2015. She already had previous experience using an iPad as a teacher, but she was not part of the roll out to students in her previous employment. Fortunately, she was able to explore a small roll out with us at LAS. Brittany works in a very specialized program supporting six students in the classroom and in the evening in our Extended Learning Support Program (ELSP). As Brittany defines her role and the ELSP's role, she is exploring different strategies to support and engage students. Using technology is a large part of this. Brittany's students have been identified as requiring special educational needs and she shares some surprising results.

There are thousands of articles about how technology can support student learning, what is your take on technology in this sense?

There are obviously great examples of technology supporting students in learning, from simple but engaging apps that develop discrete Mathematics or English language skills, to higher order skills like collaborating on Google Docs. One of the students I support is currently writing a paper in History, and even though I can't physically be with him, he really enjoys that he can send an email to me asking for help, and I offer him feedback right inside the document. It maintains that supportive feel, and we stay connected - I do it right on the go with my iPad and that's one of those examples of technology allowing me to do something otherwise

impossible. Also, I really like how engaged my students are when they are playing an apparently 'childish' game, but yet they are still learning.

I have to say though it's a real double-edged sword, often the students that need the most support are the ones most incapable of focusing on the task at hand - technology is now providing students with easy access to distracting content. The trick is to unbalance the learning so good technology use outweighs the bad.

Having just spent six months using iPads in your program, can you summarize how it went?

It's funny, I started with my own iPad in our small group evening sessions and the students were curious about it, "Can we have a go, miss?" they would say. I quickly realized that I could use this as a behavior management strategy



with the students and I'd offer an extension or reward task on the iPad. It worked really well. So much so that within a couple of weeks I requested a class set from our IT support, and when it was up and running I was reaping the rewards - the students all bought into the idea that using an iPad was cool, so I just ran with it. I spent a lot of time researching apps and I set up the iPads in an individual way, so students have their own set of apps to use. It took a lot of time, but it has been worth it.

What challenges did you face with this project?

The biggest challenge I faced was an unexpected one: the students are too motivated. Students will now rush through their work just so they can start to use the iPads. At times this meant poor quality work in favor of speedy completion. I started to check their understanding a lot more and this led me to another problem. I really want to build an element of trust, allowing students the flexibility to build their own learning tools and paths, but the moment I 'check-up' on work completed and refuse access to the iPad until the work is at an acceptable level, I receive a little push back as I become an authoritative figure. It's really hard to balance.

Another big challenge is the tendency of some students to jump around from app to app, especially the students with ADHD. A colleague showed me how you can use parental

controls and triple click to lock apps, and while I can see that being effective in some cases, it breaks down the trust that I try to build in our small group, not least the fact that it limits

access to multiple apps at once - like when researching on the internet and creating a paper in the Google Docs app. I have no concrete answers on how to solve

"The trick is to unbalance the learning so the good technology use outweighs the bad."

this yet.

What about infrastructure and acquiring iPads, were they easy to set up?

From the moment I wanted to move from one iPad to a small set six for the class, I placed a request with my IT support and I had a response within two hours. Credit to the team, we do have a lot of support with IT at LAS, when they came back to me with a response within two hours I was very pleasantly surprised. The downside to that was that I felt the need to implement immediately and without really thinking it through I used my own personal login on each iPad. Nothing malicious was ever done, but it meant I had to request an extra layer of support to go through and remove any sensitive data or access credentials. Never underestimate the strength of your IT department, the least you can do is ask.

What advice would you give to a new faculty member who enters into a similar research project?

Research the devices and decide what you need them for, regardless of what technology you use. I read so many articles about iPads and titles with 'Best apps for...' are a good place to start, but really look in depth at how the apps can be used. I found so many great uses for an app when at first glance it looked really simple. A good example of this is Explain Everything, it's much more than a whiteboard, read about it!

Play with the apps before you give them to students, and understand that age appropriate estimates are not always accurate. I have one student who declared an app childish while another loves it and won't put it down (Zombie Math). I have an ESL student with a reading age of 4.8 but she is in ninth grade, so it really does depend on the student. The key is to play with the app and you can decide whether it is age appropriate for your students.

Planning is key, I jumped in a little fast and I could have set up my iPads in a better way for each student without using my own credentials. I'm aware that Apple is trying to make it easier by setting up iPads without an Apple ID, the ETA of 2016 is a little too far off for me. It's important to scout for a little information in your school: Was there previously a project? What did users learn? It could be anything from policies on allowing students to own the iPads to learning that volume purchase programs are not fully set up in your country. I could have learned all this from a few conversations at the start.

My final piece of advice is to understand that there is no such thing as a silver bullet. Cut yourself and students some slack. There will be good days, where the students will work great, the tech is functional, and everything's going your way. Then there will be bad days, the exact opposite will happen and you'll wonder why you bother. Just think back to those lessons where the students were really enjoying what they were doing, and remember the trick is to unbalance the learning so the good technology use outweighs the bad.

What's next for you?

I'm going to start incorporating the use of an Apple TV, I'll see how that goes - I want to see if it all 'just works' because I have heard of a number of problems with crashes when mirroring an iPad. For this reason, it's good for schools to start with just one or two in various places. I'd also like to step back a little and replicate prior studies at LAS. I now know we have generic student Apple accounts so I'd like to see how I can use these and just generally investigate best practices for iPad implementation at LAS. Perhaps one day every student will have one, or even every teacher will have access to a set so that they too can come up with new exciting and innovative lessons.

Summary

Brittany has really developed a good sense of how an iPad roll-out can be achieved on a small scale. She has shared her experiences and we have realized the power of the iPad, but we have also realized what we need to be able to do to support an iPad initiative. One issue surrounds the culture of technology use and developing responsible learners. This means looking into the expectations of students when using technology and also finding ways to allow faculty to use an iPad that supports and enhances learning and embraces the power of the iPad as a motivational tool. Most surprising for me was the idea of students becoming "too motivated" by the iPad, leaving other work by the wayside. It's not a problem that one would immediately consider, but it's definitely worth thinking about.

Small scale studies like this one really set the path for schools like ours. We can build on this and in time we might just have the tools we need to use technology to support learning at the highest level. The next stage for us is to solicit feedback from a few students, engage them in discussion about what it would mean for them to buy and own their own iPad, and ultimately plan for next year. Our IT team will be crucial in all this and they have built up a wealth of knowledge on how to support teachers with iPads. It's exciting to think what could come of this.



Pick-A-Path



WordsWorth



Bluster



Math Vs Zombies

BRITTANY'S FAVORITE APPS

BRITTANY'S FAVORITE ARTICLES & WEBSITES

"Teaching and Learning: Using iPads in the Classroom"
www.edutopia.org/blog/ipad-teaching-learning-apps-ben-johnson

Applearning - Search thousands of expert-vetted apps, videos, websites & more
www.applearning.com/

Free Technology for Teachers
www.freetech4teachers.com/

Q&A

VALEDICTORIAN

Veronika Radinovska '15

New York University Abu Dhabi
Abu Dhabi, UAE

CO-VALEDICTORIAN

Ania Gruszczynska '14

Cambridge University
Cambridge, UK

Veronika Radinovska, the valedictorian from the Class of 2015 interviewed Ania Gruszczynska, the co-valedictorian from the Class of 2014. This is an excerpt from that interview.

>>>VERONICA: How do you think LAS prepared you for the future?

>>>ANIA: One of the things I appreciate most about my LAS education is the school's focus on global awareness. Meeting wonderful friends and teachers from all corners of the globe and exploring a variety of destinations on organized cultural trips were fundamental to my learning process. These aspects of LAS life were just as rewarding as the traditional classroom experience. LAS provided me with all the tools I need to succeed in university, and I'm quite certain that I'll be reaping the benefits of my education here as I move towards my future career.

>>>VERONICA: I know that you were the valedictorian of your class, were accepted into Cambridge, and participated in numerous extracurricular activities and clubs. Tell me about what motivates you.

>>>ANIA: I'm unsure what the future holds for me, so I'm always motivated to take the opportunities given to me and utilize them to the best of my ability. A lot of people would say that they have clear goals in mind, and they're always working toward them. But, I'm quite the

opposite. I just try to enjoy the process of getting to the unknown without putting too much pressure on myself.

>>>VERONICA: I know that you did an IB programme at LAS. Did the subjects you chose in high school closely match your choice of major?

>>>ANIA: I definitely see how the subjects I was studying as an IB student help me tackle the challenges I face at university. Unlike the British high school program, IB educates students in all major areas of study as opposed to a select few. In addition, IB students are required to take a TOK class, which I did not fully appreciate as a high school student. When I began my university studies, I began to realize how well this class prepared me for independent thinking, questioning of knowledge, and presenting my ideas in a smart, effective way.



Development Update

Mr. Benjamin M. Smith
Director of Development



The Development program continues to see positive growth. Over the past five years, we have experienced annual increases in donations, participation percentage, and visitors to Leysin. Our events draw greater numbers of attendees and the number of independently organized gathering and reunions continues to grow. This past year, we had over 150 alumni visitors to campus, including a multi-year and 10-year reunion. For many of those visitors it was their first time back on campus in 10, 25, and even 50 years. For others, it was another trip up the mountain for their monthly or annual visits.

The Excellence through Action: Campaign for the Sports & Fitness Center, has been the main focus of our fundraising efforts for over a year. The construction project, casually referred to as the “gym renovation”, is in its final months. The exterior renovation of the Sports & Fitness

Center is 90% completed. The final 10%, the installation of the multi-sport rooftop surface, cannot be completed until the winter snows have melted. In the meantime, the construction team will put all its efforts toward completing the interior of the building so our students can access the gymnasium before graduation.

The fundraising for the Campaign will continue until the end of June. Anyone who supports the project with a donation will be permanently recognized on the donor wall



located at the entrance to the facility. Many current parents have made their donations in honor of their children. For alumni, it is a great way to mark your time at LAS. Individuals or families wishing to make a more significant contribution, there are naming opportunities available within the facility, for which a list can be provided upon request. Details for supporting the Campaign are provided below.

Participation has been another focus of our recent fundraising efforts. Last year, we had growth in our parent and faculty participation percentages while maintaining 100% participation by our senior leadership and board members. Current parent participation reached 12%, while faculty participation reached 57%. Remarkably, these percentages do not include participation in the many student-organized fundraisers that take place throughout the year and are purely based on fundraising appeal participation.

This past semester, we have seen the participation trend continue and we expect to see increased participation



percentages again. The LAS community is truly supportive of the School and our students and we are very grateful.

Thank you for your support!



LEYSIN AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

I am pleased to support the **Excellence through Action: Campaign for the Sports & Fitness Center** with a gift of:

US\$_____ or CHF_____

My payment will be made as follows:

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(b) ___ I will **send** a gift by bank/wire transfer.
Acct Name: **Leysin American School** | Bank name: **UBS** | Address: Case Postale, CH 1860 Aigle, Switzerland.
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Swift/ABA for both accounts: UBSWCHZH80A

(c) ___ My **US\$ check**, payable to the **LAS Educational Fund for the Future, Inc.*** is enclosed.
___ Please mark my gift in honor of: _____
___ Please mark my gift as one from an anonymous donor.

* US Taxpayers: the LAS Educational Fund for the Future, Inc. is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 nonprofit.

Please return this form by email to bsmith@las.ch or by post
(c/o Mr. Benjamin Smith, Leysin American School, CP 108, 1854 Leysin, Switzerland).

Above: The new sports & fitness center under construction
Right: Multi-year reunion

Honor Roll of Donors

Fall 2011 through Fall 2016

Leysin American School greatly appreciates the generous support we have received in recent years 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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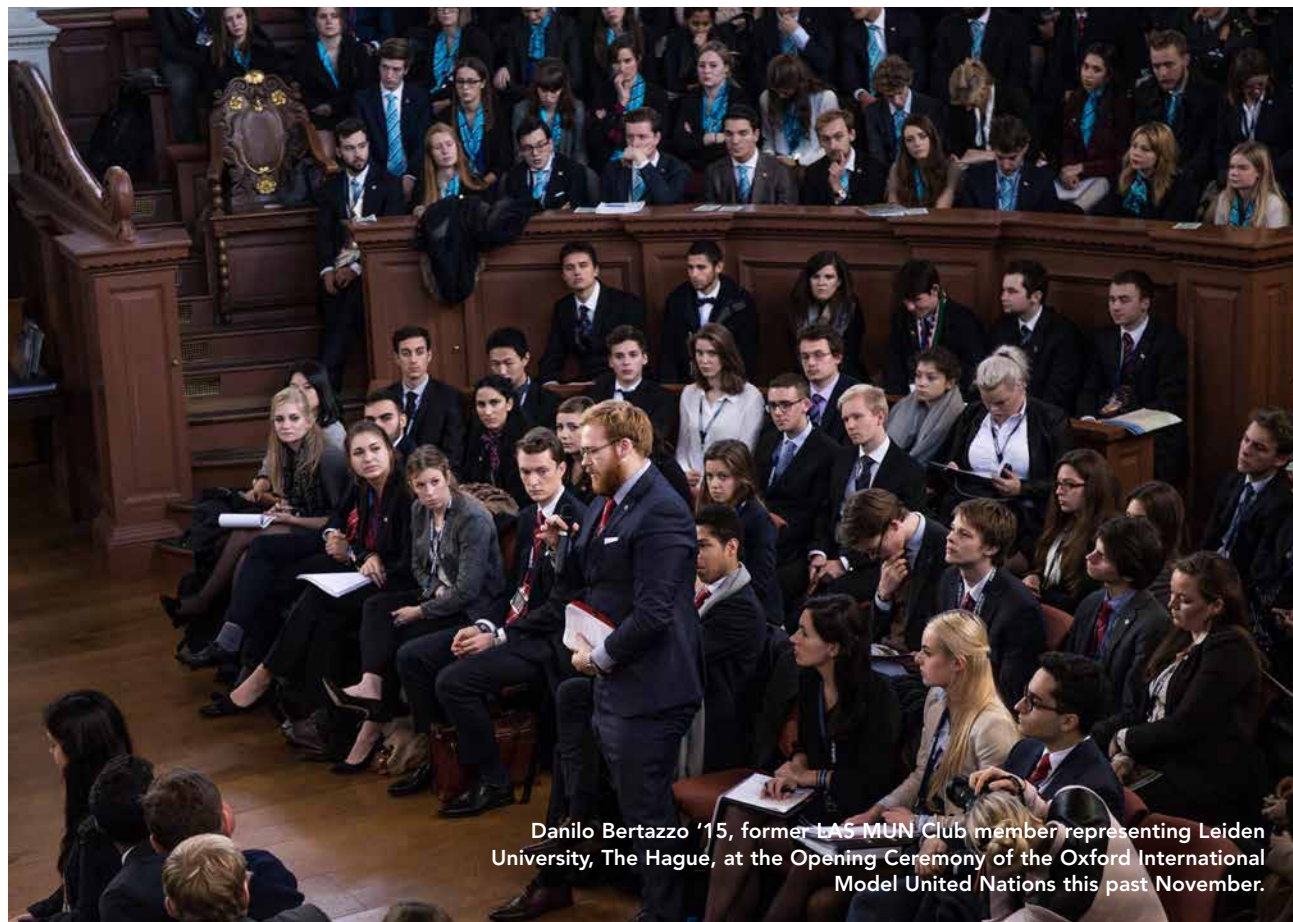
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Danilo Bertazzo '15, former LAS MUN Club member representing Leiden University, The Hague, at the Opening Ceremony of the Oxford International Model United Nations this past November.

Model United Nations: A Lifetime of Memories

Mr. Alex Flynn-Padick
ESL & Social Studies teacher

THIMUN is an acronym that most Leysin American School students and faculty know but few understand. Those that are in the know talk about it as a life changing experience.

Model United Nations (MUN) became a popular program in the 1950's, starting at the university level before matriculating down to high schools. MUN has been a part of LAS for many years, both as a class, and currently as an after school club. MUN teaches and reinforces skills that help students prepare for university and the professional world; in the mock setting of the United Nations General Assembly.

The skills learned include:

- Public speaking;
- Analytical research;
- Consensus building; and
- Advocating and debate (sometimes in contradiction with personal beliefs).

"MUN teaches and reinforces skills that help students prepare for university and the professional world; in the mock setting of the United Nations General Assembly."

LAS participates in two MUN conferences each year: the Leysin Youth Model United Nations Conference (LYMUN) and The Hague International Model United Nations Conference (THIMUN). LYMUN is an LAS hosted introduction to the MUN format, to which all LAS students are invited to participate, while THIMUN is considered the crown jewel of the MUN year, to which twelve LAS students have the honor to participate.

THIMUN is the largest high school MUN conference in Europe and is held annually at The Hague, Netherlands. Each year, over 3,500 students from 200 schools participate in the weeklong conference. In past years, LAS has represented countries as varied as Liberia, Libya, and Serbia. This year, we are representing the Republic of Macedonia. Our students will debate a wide range of topics, including the disputed islands in the East China Sea, the rights of people with disabilities, how to effectively end female genital mutilation, and the right to privacy in the digital age.

Once at THIMUN, the students' time is broken up into three categories: collaboration, debate, and exploring The Hague. The first goal for our students is to find allies from like-minded countries. Once identified, they form working groups where they must quickly come to a consensus and create a resolution that can be submitted for debate. These resolutions take on a technical format and must be carefully edited and properly worded. They describe the current situation as well as a proposed solution to one of the conference's topics.

There is urgency to the writing process. The students are required to work with a minimum of five different co-authors/sponsors (countries) in order to get their resolution approved. At the same time, they are racing against other collaboration groups to submit their resolutions first, to make sure that they will be debated.

Once the resolutions are submitted and selected, the debate process begins. Students work with their co-authors/sponsors to both formally and informally influence and convince their peers to support their resolution, while simultaneously convincing others to vote against competing resolutions. In order for a resolution to be passed it must receive a majority vote.

In addition to the conference itself, all the

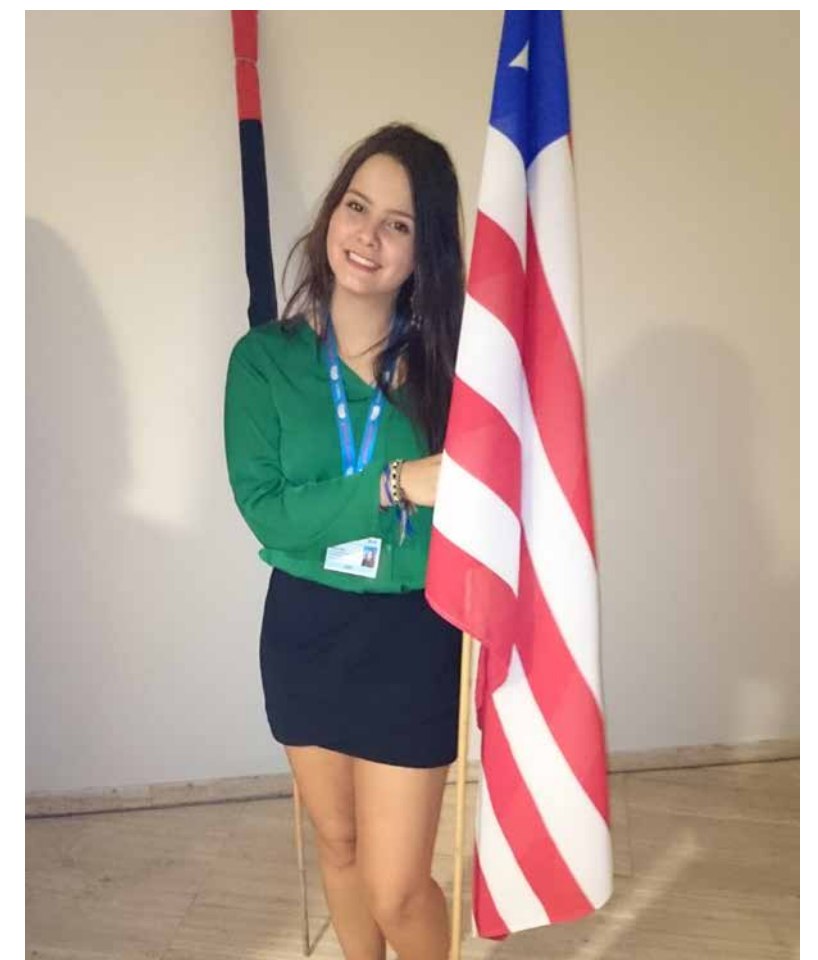
student participants are encouraged to get out and explore the city. The Hague is one of the main hubs of international diplomacy and law. In past years, LAS students have observed criminal trials at both the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and the International

Criminal Court. They have also heard talks sponsored by the International Court of Justice; experiences that only THIMUN can offer.

When many LAS students first hear about MUN their reaction is to dismiss it as something that couldn't

possibly be interesting or worth the extra time and effort. However, once they participate in LYMUN many of those same students are hooked. If they are lucky enough to be selected to attend THIMUN, they learn firsthand that it is a life changing activity that they can continue to participate in at university, and use the skills learned in their future professional roles. The joy and learning experience that LAS students take out of THIMUN is clearly evident when they return to Leysin and the MUN Club, providing story-after-story for those that didn't attend about the lifetime of memories they made.

"In past years, LAS students have observed criminal trials at both the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and the International Criminal Court."



Ana Clara M. '16S representing LAS at THYMUN this past November.



Christmas in July

Mr. Mark Kolman
Director of Summer in Switzerland

Although you may only be reading this in February or March, I feel compelled to write during the first snowfall about my thoughts as the Leysin American School: Summer in Switzerland Director.

We are a third of the way through the school year with the calendar turning from November to December. Up here on the Magic Mountain, we have been blessed with an early snowfall. Enough snow to allow the resort to groom a couple of runs and kick-off the 2016 season. All of us at Leysin American School are excited to be skiing this early in the season. But, even as I'm riding the chairlift and carving my way down the mountain, my thoughts are preoccupied with summer. Christmas is getting closer. It's the time of year when we celebrate family and friends; it's the time of year we give presents and say, "thank you." Like most people, I look forward to this time of year, but for me this is the other time of year when I participate in such traditions. For me, summer is also the time of year to spend with family, my work family. Summer is also the time of year for giving. For me, summertime is when I get to play Santa Claus, again, giving

people presents and making people happy.

Admittedly, the notion that running a summer program is like giving people a Christmas present is a bit of a stretch. But, it's an approach that works for me. Summer vacation is the time for students to live a carefree life. Sleeping in, spending all day playing outside, and hanging out with friends are the first things kids will list if you ask them what they like about summer. If you press them to reduce their "likes" to its most simple concept, most will offer

"Summer vacation is the time for students to live a carefree life."

that summer is about having fun. It's a chance to do something exciting, different, or something they don't have time to do during the school year. Of the four components of the Summer in Switzerland (SIS) program (morning

academic enrichment classes, afternoon activities, evening social programs, weekend travel opportunities) three of them lend themselves to what kids long for during the summer: playing outside, hanging out with friends, and having fun. The prospect of waking up early and going to class just isn't as appealing. From my perspective, that's the component of SIS that deserves specific attention.

Depending on whom you ask, the SIS program is either a summer camp or a summer school. Students and parents

are attracted to SIS almost equally for both reasons. Knowing that it becomes important that SIS retains elements of both in order to meet those expectations. Students looking for a summer camp experience want classes that are fun, they want opportunities to exercise creativity, and they want subjects that are interesting, not the same things they study during the school year. Parents who are looking for a summer school want subjects that will help their child gain knowledge, improve skills, and become better students. Both of these demands are reasonable and within a quality summer program need not be mutually exclusive. What is challenging, however, is creating classes that can hit these targets while also competing with kids' desire to sleep in late, spend all day playing outside, and hanging out with friends. Therein lies the magic

of the Summer in Switzerland program. SIS resides somewhere between being the casual, feel-good, fun-and-games "summer camp," and the structured, goal oriented, curricular driven summer school.

From this vantage point, we are free to develop courses where fun and knowledge intersect, where creativity and skills are united, and where a teacher's passion can influence the students' interest. The time and place where all of these ideas come together then becomes a kind of gift.

The past two summers SIS has introduced a number of new classes that are gaining traction with student interest. Our Mountaineering class, which is a reincarnation of the former Mountain Leadership program, is a good example. Both classes focus on teaching students the necessary skills to participate in and enjoy alpine activities. However, the goal of the new Mountaineering class is both broader and deeper. It is broader in the sense that students are exposed to more components of outdoor activities like gear selection, weather forecasting, map reading, orienteering, and basic first aid. It is deeper in the sense that students participate in classroom instruction during the morning academic enrichment time. This allows for more formalized instruction time for students to learn about the various topics before heading out on the mountain to test their skills.

"Seeing students and teachers interact in such an environment is nothing short of magical."

During SIS 2015, in the Alpine Exploration program, we introduced a class titled, "Superheroes in Debate." The goal of the class was to teach students, ages 12 -14, the skill of formal debate. This is not a class where students simply argue with each other. It is a class where students learn how to think, reason, and present an opinion in a manner free of emotion and bias. The topic of superheroes provides instant recognition and universal appeal, yet protects the students from personal attacks since superheroes are mostly free from political, social, and religious affiliation. Captain America, of course being a notable exception.

In order to fulfill my duties as summertime Santa Clause, I enlist the help of the SIS Staff, my work family. I'll spend months screening, interviewing, and hiring teachers from all over the world, including alumni. Together, we delve into core academic subjects and identify themes, topics, and lessons that we consider to be essential for students to do well in a subject. Then, we

look for creative and interesting ways to teach these subjects so students are more excited about participating than they are about sleeping in. The reality is, this is not as difficult a task as one might think. When the subject is interesting and the lessons are interactive students are much more willing to participate in the experience. Stripping away stress inducing tests, homework, and projects, enables teachers to focus on teaching for the sake of understanding, and students are able to focus on learning for the sake of knowing. Seeing students and teachers interact in such an environment is nothing short of magical. Knowing that I helped to create the opportunity, makes me feel like Santa Clause.

Most students who participate in the Summer in Switzerland program will cite the end of activities, no more excursions, or missing their new best-friends, as reasons they are sad when it comes time to leave. As adults, we can empathize with the crying students, we too, have experienced the emotional let down in realizing there are no more presents to open. Through our experience however, we have learned to shift our focus away from the idea that there are no more presents to open, and instead focus our attention on what we received. Some presents, no doubt, are things we need, but didn't ask for. Some presents are exactly what we asked for. Then, there are the presents we received that we didn't ask for because we didn't know we wanted them. To me, that's the secret of a great gift; giving someone a present they didn't know they wanted. They might not appreciate it when they open it. In fact, they might not realize it is a present as all. But after some time has passed, and they've had a chance to use the present, they realize just how special a gift it was. This is Summer in Switzerland.





scholars of LAS

Dr. Paul Magnuson | Director of Curriculum & Research

The children at Leysin American School are not the only students on campus. So too, is a growing group of adults. These are our scholars working and learning with LAS Educational Research (LASER). Some of these scholars visit for a certain duration during the school year, while others, our resident scholars, currently work and live at LAS throughout the year.

Visiting Scholars

During the 2014-2015 academic year, LAS welcomed its first visiting scholar, Professor Hisashi Yoshida from Japan. During his stay he wrote and later published two articles about the International Baccalaureate programme, in which a majority of students at LAS are currently enrolled.

Based on the positive experience working with Dr. Yoshida, the visiting scholar program was expanded in 2015-2016 to welcome select graduate students and professors.

Q: What is LASER?
A: Leysin American School Educational Research

These visiting scholars spend time on the Magic Mountain, working with, presenting to, and teaching faculty and students. The collegial working relationship allows everyone to learn from each other, while making progress in their own respective fields.

This year, LASER is working with the University of Lausanne, the Centre de Recherches sur les Ecosystèmes d'Altitude, and the European Citizen Science Association. John Harlin III '14P, Director of the LAS Alpine Institute, (see page 36) and members of the Science and IT departments liaise

with the visiting scholars as our students learn more about participatory citizen science; in particular, contributing to data that monitors ecological change over different elevations in our local alpine environment.

There will also be a post-doctoral student coming to stay with us during the winter and spring terms. Dr. Jón Ingvar Kjarran, from the University of Iceland, is working on a book

Above: Dr. Anne Delestrade, of the Centre de Recherches sur les Ecosystèmes d'Altitude, planning with LAS faculty members.



Head of Mathematics & Education Technology Integration Specialist, Jason Murphy, leads a discussion with fellow LAS teachers.

Leonhard and Dan Patton, working with John Harlin III '14P, are focusing student attention on our local environment in order to gain an international perspective on sustainability. Faculty members like 8th/9th grade coordinator Andie Flett, technology integrationist Jason Murphy, and Math teacher Vanisha Gorasia are improving our homework assistance in the residence halls, our use of technology in classes, and the way we assess students. Art teacher Keegan Luttrell is bringing the history of Leysin to life through art classes and working with local

artists, while librarian Amanda Bjorling is bringing the world to Leysin through online course options for students. Science teacher Adam Bradford is product testing an electronics curriculum resource called Circuit Scribe.

about gender roles based on his dissertation. He will be talking to our students as a guest speaker about his research and what he learned while writing it.

In 2016-2017, LAS will welcome Steven and Thy Carber, a husband and wife team, who will stay for three months, pursuing their research interests in self-regulated student learning and teacher professional development. Both have spent time in Leysin before as professors in the Endicott summer Master's program.

Through continued support, learning opportunities, and the chance to work with highly capable staff and students, LAS hopes to maintain and build its relationship with these visiting scholars for many more years to come.

Q: What is the goal of LASER?
A: LASER opens up academic discussion and scholarly inquiry for students and faculty members alike.

The goals of our visiting and resident scholar programs are to provide support for creative individuals to explore educational issues in depth, pushing our academic program to a new

level, living up to our mission statement through innovation, and attracting the best teachers and students to future years of study here at LAS. ♦

Resident Scholars

Our own faculty also contribute to the LAS atmosphere of research and scholarship. Each year, up to eight teachers are selected to join LASER to pursue curriculum or research projects. Teachers choose from projects suggested by the LASER steering committee in order to maximize the impact on and use of their projects at LAS.

In 2015-2016, the emphasis is on sustainability, which dovetails nicely with several of our visiting scholars. Science teachers Chris



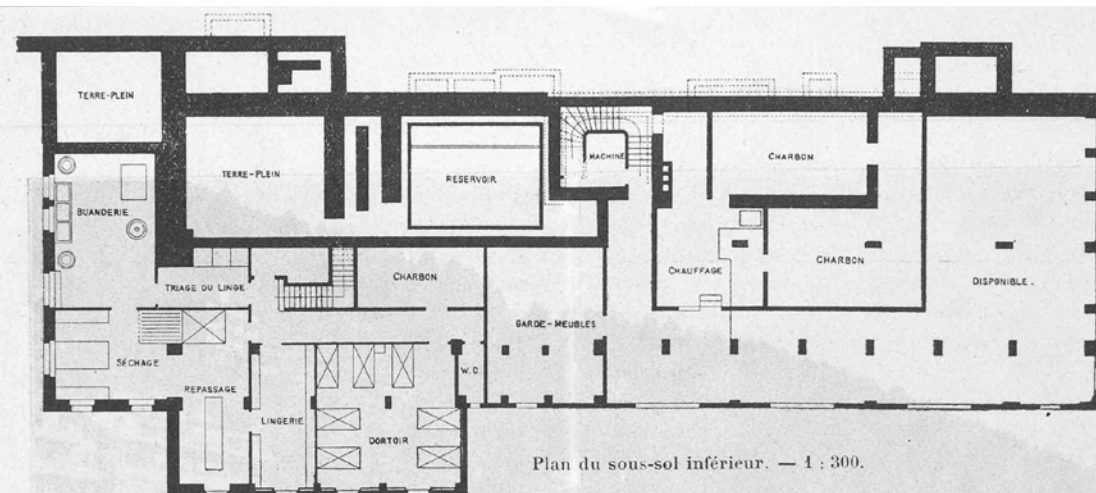
Dr. Chris Randin and IB Science teacher Chris Leonhard examining emergent plants in the Beau Reveil Meadow Plot for the LETS study.

Beau-Site: 100 Years young

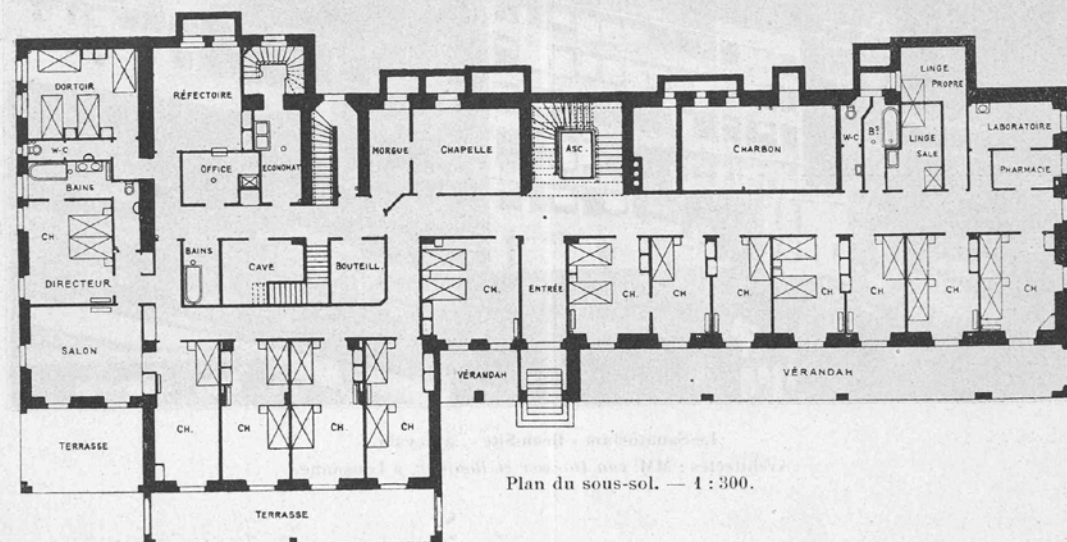
This past Fall, Peter Manson '17P, was browsing an online archive for historical information on the buildings of Leysin when he stumbled upon an article about the newly constructed Beau-Site Sanatorium. The article originally published in 1917 in the 43rd Edition of Bulletin Technique de la Suisse Romande describes the building in detail, including the completion in 1915, the total cost of construction CHF 384,825 (approx. \$76,000 not including furniture), and the location of the much rumored mortuary. It appears there might be some basis for all those ghost stories. The article also confirms that Beau-Site was the last construction of its type due to WWI breaking out just after construction started.

Happy 100th Birthday to Beau-Site; we hope you have 100 more.

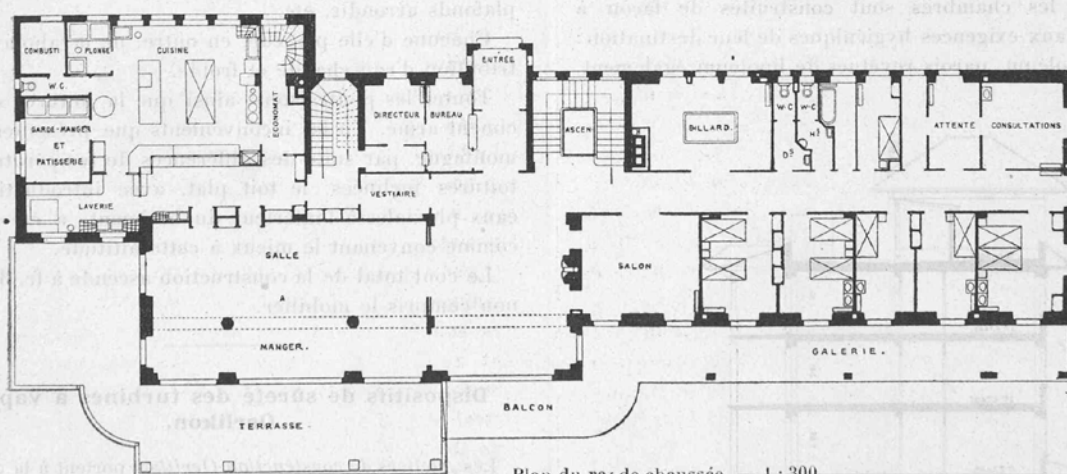
Following the completion of a two-year interior renovation, the Beau-Site façade will receive a full face-lift, in the style of the Savoy, during the summer of 2015.



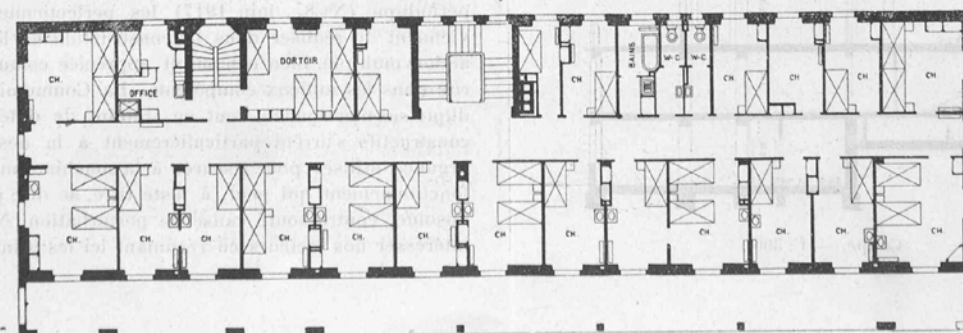
Plan du sous-sol inférieur. — 1 : 300.



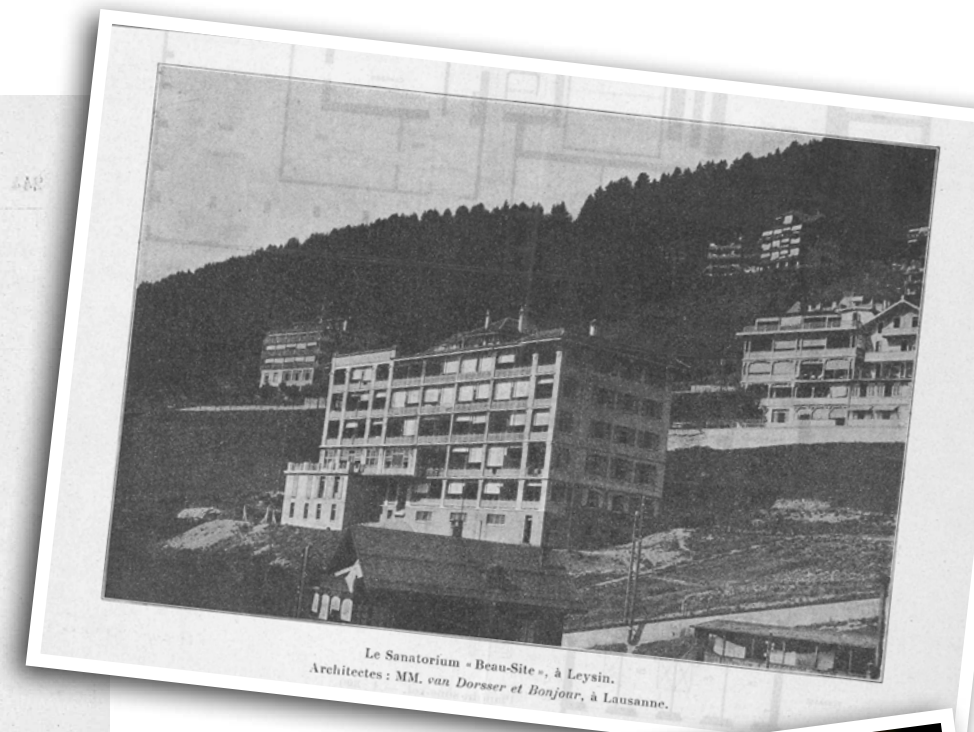
Plan du sous-sol. — 1 : 300.



Plan du rez-de-chaussée. — 1 : 300.



Plan des 2ème et 3ème étages. — 1 : 300.



Introducing THE LAS ALPINE INSTITUTE

*Welcome to Leysin American School's new
educational center for mountain science, sport,
environment, and culture.*

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

You know the expression, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." That's sometimes what it feels like here at LAS.

Each year, we bring hundreds of students from around the world to one of the most beautiful places on this fair planet. A lot of them drag their feet between classrooms until they can return to the dorm to watch videos in their rooms with the curtains drawn to keep out Leysin's famous sunlight.

Okay, that's not entirely fair, as you'll see if you read on. But sometimes the challenge seems as large as the peaks on our horizon. Take this feedback, for example, written by a student during LETS Science Day last October 2015 (see page 46):

"Today was a really bad day. We had to dig and take pictures of things, and you have to hike. I'm not interested at all in what we did, but some people like it because it's a new experience or it's an adventure for everyone." Or this: "I hate it with all of my heart! It was a good experience in things I never want to do again."

Is this feedback discouraging? Not in the least. In fact, overcoming reactions like that lies at the core of our mission. We've launched the Alpine Institute to

inspire our students to love and learn from Leysin's landscape and to grow personally in the process. As you'll discover in several of the following interviews, building a connection to one's local environment while developing the physical and teamwork skills this requires are vital for developing a child into a healthy adult.

Not everyone will end up drinking from our mountain streams, but when we look for inspiration from our students, there's plenty to draw from: "The highlight was definitely digging the soil pit. It was just a lot of fun and a good laugh. I met and worked with people I didn't know before, which was cool. I enjoyed the leadership opportunity. I think it inspired me to try more leadership activities at LAS." -Aoki S. '19. There were many similar comments from last October's LETS Day, heavily laced with words like "exciting," "important," "science," "tiring," "worthwhile," "beautiful," and "I hope we'll do this again next year."

So what exactly is the LAS Alpine Institute? The Institute is mostly a

spirit, an inspiration. Teachers tap into this spirit, and it grows. Teachers open their classroom doors and their after-school activities to the changing forests, the crevassed glaciers, the bloody and beautiful history of our home, the place where for a few precious years our students will learn to breathe and to think.

What the Alpine Institute accomplishes with students is up to the teachers, some of whom have been doing similar work since long before I arrived last year as the coordinator for the GLOBE science program and the International Award.

As you may have read in Panorama 2015, GLOBE is NASA's 20-year-old program, "Global Learning and Observation to Benefit the Environment," where students follow certain protocols that turn them into citizen scientists. They learn science while gathering real data that's useful to practicing scientists. The International Award springs from the U.K.'s 60-year-old Duke of Edinburgh Award, which challenges young people to pursue diverse long-term

*The
Institute
is mostly a spirit, an
inspiration. Teachers tap
into this spirit, and it
grows.*



Dina D '17 making ice climbing look easy in an open crevasse on the Diablerets glacier



sensible denial, and above all, compassion.” It’s hard not to see the link here to LAS’s mission of “developing innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world.”

objectives that are physical, mental, and partly outdoors. We’ve consolidated these programs into the “Alpine Institute” so we could add even more layers, all of them focused on developing in our students a deep understanding and passion for the mountain landscape and culture of our Swiss home. In this process, we’re helping uprooted children grow into grounded adults.

Educationally, we’re inspired by Kurt Hahn, the German founder of Outward Bound and the International Award, who said, “It is the foremost task of education to ensure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for

In the following pages several teachers will talk about their own classes and how they’re embracing principles we’re developing together, under the Alpine Institute’s banner. If the connections feel loose, that’s because they are and always will be. For example, one of our strongest common themes is citizen science, of which you’ll learn more shortly. The key to integrating citizen science into education is building connections to the curriculum. It will be the same with all of the Alpine Institute’s work: finding connections to classroom requirements and assisting teachers to use local and outdoor examples whenever they can.

Now that you know our mission, let me list a few of the Alpine Institute accomplishments from the last year, and a few dreams for the next:

LETS STUDY LEYSIN:

We’ve had two school-wide field days in our Local Environmental Transect Survey, or LETS Study Leysin. This is our flagship citizen science program that’s researching changes over time at many different altitudes from the Rhône Valley (500m) to the Tour d’Ai (2,331m). As Science teacher Dan Patton describes on page 46, students are laying out 30m x 30m plots at over a dozen locations and mapping every tree inside them. On 5 May 2015, all the grade 11 students in the International Baccalaureate programme established the first set of plots. On 2 October, all the grade 8, 9, and 10 students remeasured these plots and established several new ones. These giant field days (nearly 100 students swarming through the forests at once) were led by Science Department Head Chris Leonhard and Dan Patton, respectively. We’ll do these every year, each

Continued on page 41.



Ben Hall has been teaching Physical Education and Life Skills (“PE”) at LAS since 2014, following work at several schools in the U.K. and Chile where he observed the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award in action. He is developing the PE curriculum for the Middle School.

WHY DO YOU USE OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN YOUR PE CLASSES?

I think it’s one of the key concepts that you must address to have a quality PE program. Outdoor education teaches teamwork, sportsmanship, understanding others, and being a fully rounded person. Especially with the cohort of students that we have, we need to take them outside of their comfort zones. They need to learn that it’s okay to push boundaries, it’s okay to not get everything right the first time, it’s okay to help others. Outdoor education lends itself to developing the whole child as an individual and holistically.

IS LEYSIN THE RIGHT PLACE FOR THIS?

Here in Leysin, we’re so lucky to have one of the greatest environments that outdoor education can lend itself to. I think that’s where the Alpine Club is very successful. Most of our students come from cities and now they live here in the mountains. It’s so alien to them, such a foreign idea. When they come here they don’t know how to enjoy themselves in the great outdoors. It’s hard because they don’t have outdoor experience. So the links between the physical education program and the Alpine Club will build a stronger community as a whole.

WILL SUCH BENEFITS APPLY TO THEIR FUTURE, EVEN AFTER THEY MOVE BACK TO A CITY?

Absolutely. There is a general idea that PE programs emphasize press ups and running the 100 meters. That’s far from what a good PE program should be. In my experience, good PE develops the whole person. Children are put under pressure that requires them to make decisions, to choose the right tool at the right time. It’s about a process of evaluating what works and what doesn’t. Surely this is what leads to success in industry, in teaching, and in life.

HOW DOES THE INTERNATIONAL AWARD FIT IN?

I’m very keen for all of our grade 8 and 9 students to take part in the International Award. As someone who teaches life skills and is trying to take a holistic approach to the child, I think outdoor education empowers our students to take a more gentle approach to their surroundings, a more considerate approach, a more humanistic approach. It will also allow them to access more and more opportunities right here on our doorstep.



LAS ALPINE INSTITUTE
STUDENTS WORKING ON
TAGGING THE PEAKS AND
SUMMITS IN THE

SKYLINE CHALLENGE

WITHIN LEYSIN’S
PANORAMIC VIEW.



Top Left:
Summit of Pic Chaussy, 2,351m
Bottom Left:
Summit of the Oldenhorn, 3,123m
Top Right:
Summit of Tour d’Ai, 2,331m
Bottom Right:
Summit of Les Diablerets, 3,210m



Dan Patton teaches science and is developing the science curriculum for the Middle school.

COULD YOU DESCRIBE SOME OF YOUR FIELD WORK IN SCIENCE PRIOR TO BECOMING A TEACHER?

The majority of my work was with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. I did eight field seasons over the course of about 10 years. We spent upwards of three months in the wilderness on some of these projects. By wilderness I mean way out there, like an hour-long flight in a float plane from Ketchikan. We lived in tents and were resupplied with food by float plane once a week. Most of the time we were taking data on adult and juvenile fish, but we also researched large mammals, mostly black bears. I also did remote field research in Chile.

WERE YOU ABLE TO INCORPORATE SOME OF THAT FIELD SCIENCE INTO YOUR TEACHING?

Definitely. Whenever the opportunity arises, I talk about my research. This shows students what attracted me into science in the first place. And it's neat to contrast these wild Alaskan landscapes with the vast majority of the world, where the big migrations I studied aren't happening any more. That's definitely interesting to kids.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT USING CITIZEN SCIENCE AS AN APPROACH TO STUDYING THE OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT?

Students want to believe that what they're doing is going to lead to something. Or that what they're studying is going to have some kind of impact on their lives. The idea that the information they're collecting can actually add to scientific knowledge is enough to get some kids interested. Doing the LETS study year after year, even if scientists aren't immediately picking up the information, will allow students to see that their data have actually gone somewhere. What they're doing this year will be passed down to next year's students, and so on. I think that pulls in some kids who otherwise would be less interested.

Most of the time we were taking data on adult and juvenile fish, but we also researched large mammals, mostly black bears.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE CROSS-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES WITH LETS? DO YOU THINK THIS STUDY CAN BE EXPANDED FROM PURE SCIENCE INTO SOMETHING THAT BRINGS IN MORE TEACHERS FROM DIVERSE FIELDS?

There's a lot of potential for that. We made a huge leap forward when we included the geography department this year. We have to understand the geography of the land before we can understand its biogeography. We don't want too much change at once, but I think the next step will be math. Writing plays a big part in this, too. We want kids to become reflective, writing down what they've done and how this might prove useful to science. And then there's journalism. Kids can tell their peers what they're doing. Art has great potential. Since our goal is to get kids interested in their local environment and being outside, art might be the bridge that reaches some students. Photography is obvious, but also painting, and filmmaking. There's a lot of potential for more cross-curricular cooperation.

WHAT ABOUT GLOBE DAY? WHERE DID IT COME FROM AND HOW IS IT USEFUL FOR CITIZEN SCIENCE?

Students need a venue to present what they've done. Anytime a student sees that what they're working on has a larger audience, that's going to give them more intrinsic motivation to do a good job. When kids work in groups and can learn from other students, that's a very good life experience. When this is based on an authentic project that has a clear goal and a destination, that's going to motivate them even more strongly.

DOES THE PROCESS OF A DOING A PROJECT FOLLOWED BY GIVING A PRESENTATION APPLY OUTSIDE OF THE SCIENCES?

Definitely. It applies throughout the curriculum and all the way through college, grad school, work, and life. These are the skills successful people need. When the audience is just the class or the teacher, students are often less motivated to do a good job, aside from earning a grade. The GLOBE Day presentations are a good way to supply more intrinsic motivation.



LAS Alpine Club student, Antonio C. '19, exiting one of the many caves in the mountains above Leysin. The club explores several caves, each carved out by thousands of years of draining rainwater.

VISITING SCHOLARS:

We've received generous intellectual support from prominent scientists, including several LASER visiting scholars. First among equals has been Dr. Chris Randin from the University of Lausanne and the Lausanne Botanical Garden. Dr. Randin is one of the leading experts in the botany of the pre-Alps of the Leysin region. He's helped us with locating our LETS plots, identifying species, and setting up meaningful research topics. He's also lectured twice to our students about why mountains matter scientifically. He invited us to a congress of Alpine Botanical Gardens and is advising us in setting up our own botanical garden of native species. He'll be helping us establish "vertical ecology" (a.k.a. "extreme ecology"), where we combine adventure and science, such as

searching for the highest trees on our local mountains. I could go on, but there are other people to mention: Anne Delestrade and Irene Alvarez from CREA, the Center for Alpine Ecosystem Research in nearby Chamonix, have helped us with ideas for student-citizen science programs and with following the protocols of Phenoclim, CREA's phenology program. They've also lectured to our students on mountain science and what makes a scientist. Martin Brocklehurst, a co-founder of the European Citizen Science Association, is helping to integrate us into Europe's exploding citizen science scene in exciting ways that we look forward to reporting on in coming editions of Panorama. He's given two popular Library Lectures at LAS. Mauro Fischer, a PhD candidate in glaciology who works on the glaciers of our nearby Les Diablerets peak, is helping us to devise a glacier

"We need to help them believe in themselves. I saw kids come back from that snowy camping trip with that look of, 'I can't believe I did that.' That's the payback for me in education."

- Andie Flett, Girls Grade 8/9 Coordinator & Vermont Dorm Head





LAS Alpine Club students descending from Pic Chaussy, 2351m, a peak with one of the best panoramic views of the local chain of the mountains surrounding Leysin.

research program that will involve all of LAS, including Summer In Switzerland. Glaciers are extremely popular with LAS Alpine Club students, and we can reach the glaciers on Les Diablerets by ski lift within an hour of school.

GLOBE DAY:

On 16 March 2015, we launched the first annual GLOBE Science Day. Inspired by NASA's GLOBE Program, students presented their science "posters" to each other following a keynote speech by Dr. Randin. These posters were developed from research in several science classes at LAS, from 8th to 11th grade. This year, on 12 March, we're holding the second GLOBE Science Day, this time inviting

several regional international schools to also participate. Our goal is to host schools from across Switzerland in 2017 for what we expect will become a prestigious annual science fair for students.

INTERNATIONAL AWARD:

Ben Hall has built several weeks of International Award-inspired outdoor education into his Physical Education classes. This integration facilitated eight students in earning their Bronze Awards during our first year of offering the DoFe International Award. Several more students will receive their Bronze Awards after completing their Qualifying Journey this winter. Many more are in the pipeline as this year's PE classes once

again bring students outdoors. Because the International Award begins at age 14, we're adapting their guiding principles to establish our own awards program suited to younger LAS Middle School students. Under the Alpine Club's flag, Alpine Awards will carry up through the grades to become our own LAS-specific award program (see Alpine Club article on page 44).

ARTS:

We see lots of potential for the arts and the Alpine Institute to collaborate. Already, Music teacher Kelly Deklinski's students have used sounds that they gathered during the October LETS Day to create music for a student-built slideshow. Art teacher Keegan Lutrell's students are exploring Leysin's history. Several of English teacher Joan Flynn's students have volunteered to write for the *LAS Alpine Journal*, which we intend to launch this year. Eden Dorm Head Thomas Padick has been producing videos documenting Alpine Institute activities. We already live in one of the most beautiful places on earth. As kids learn to appreciate this fact more deeply, their artistic creativity will flourish.

To read the full interviews, additional interviews and more on the Alpine Institute visit: AlpineInstitute-LAS.org

INTERVIEW

Dr. Patricia Cooper '05P, '06P was the Social Studies Department Head from 2012 to 2015. She is now co-leading the development of curriculum for the LAS Middle School.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO CONNECT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS TO OUR LOCAL AREA?

Our students are moving to a new place that's very unknown to them. The middle school will be the first time they'll experience our local environment, when they'll realize, "This is my new home". They need grounding. Part of a family's decision in sending their children here is how special our local environment is. But it's so abstract for young people when they arrive. They want to build a narrative of their surroundings. Let's help them build it based on real knowledge.

DOES THIS AREA HAVE A RICH HISTORY?

This is a huge neolithic region. We have these menhirs, or "standing stones", up and down the Rhône Valley. There's a big standing stone very near Leysin in the Forclaz, where during the summer solstice the sun shines between the two prominent peaks above Leysin and strikes the stone. So during the Neolithic age someone was moving big stones around here. In burial tombs down in the valley we have hunters with weapons. They've even found an ancient hunter's canoe. It's so awesome.

In Neuchatel, one of the top ten European museums on ancient times talks about a guy who's buried at one of the principle spots at Stonehenge. DNA says he came from Neuchatel, which is also where he got his advanced metalwork. He might have been a priest who came from here to lead Stonehenge construction. There's just so much here. Our home is a world archeological treasure.

WHAT ABOUT MORE RECENT HISTORY?

The written history starts with Caesar, who was sent from Rome to invade our local peoples, the Helvetians. Then he snuck off to Gaul, where he made his name. His book, *The Gaelic Wars*, offers the first written history of the Helvetian people.

After Caesar you come to the Nubian decimation in nearby St. Maurice, still during Roman

times. Also all the other Roman sites that were built down there, including the amphitheater in Martigny, and the thermal baths of Lavay Bains, all of which our students visit.

It seems clear that people moved up to Leysin for defensive security. An initial wave came from Helvetians fleeing the Roman invasion. But the huge waves of mountain settlements were to escape the Germanics, and Visigoths, as they headed south. We have clear evidence of that period.

A thousand years later, we have chalets with dates from the 1400s, which we'll be studying. And then there are the salt mines in Bex. They're why the Bernese counts occupied this area for so long. Salt was like gold in the Middle Ages. Right next to Leysin was La Guerre des Ormonts. Napoleon's troops were trying to free this section from the Bernese oppressors. The Ormonts people resisted Napoleon, while Leysin accepted his new order. There's now a movement to preserve the battlefield.

There's a big standing stone very near Leysin in La Forclaz, where during the summer solstice the sun shines between the two prominent peaks above Leysin and strikes the stone.

There are so many local stories. When the Bernese dukes conquered the region, locals were supposed to pay their taxes by sending logs down the river. But the dukes had never seen the Grande Eau in the tight canyon below Leysin. The logs splintered into matchsticks by the time they got through. I'm so excited that we have a curriculum where we have the time and the space to build what our students really need to learn.

HOW WILL THIS HELP YOUNG PEOPLE?

Local knowledge is going to be healthy for our students. My own kids went to Swiss schools before starting at LAS. In their school in nearby Diablerets they learned to "Respect the mountain". The mountain above us was the metaphor for respecting the environment, safety, everything. When my kids transferred to LAS, one of their first comments was "Mom, these kids don't respect the mountain". We need to build this spirit of respect into our students when they first arrive.

swissôtel
Hotels & Resorts

We're delighted to report that the LAS Alpine Institute has received generous financial support from Swissôtel Hotels & Resorts, a chain of 30 luxury hotels and resorts in 21 countries. This partnership will support all of the Alpine Institute's educational programs, allowing us to buy the sports equipment and scientific instruments we need, to host conferences, to invite prominent guest speakers, to provide scholarships for promising students, and much more. With Swissôtel's international team, we're developing games and entertaining ways to convey the message of sustainability to children worldwide.

ALPINE CLUB

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

"This is the best day of my life!"
We were sitting on a rocky ridge putting on our crampons
when Simon M. '17 uttered those words,
and the day had only just begun.

There is much to be said about the pedagogical value of outdoor education. But for some of us (me, for example!) the best part of being in the mountains is that it's just plain fun. It's not all joy all the time, imagine pitching a tent with cold hands in a snowstorm, but sometimes the toughest parts are the ones we most remember and tell all the stories about. There's nothing quite like coming back from an adrenaline inducing adventure to appreciate the simple things in life. This year, we founded the LAS Alpine Club to simply get kids outside having adventures they'll remember for the rest of their lives. No pedagogy required.

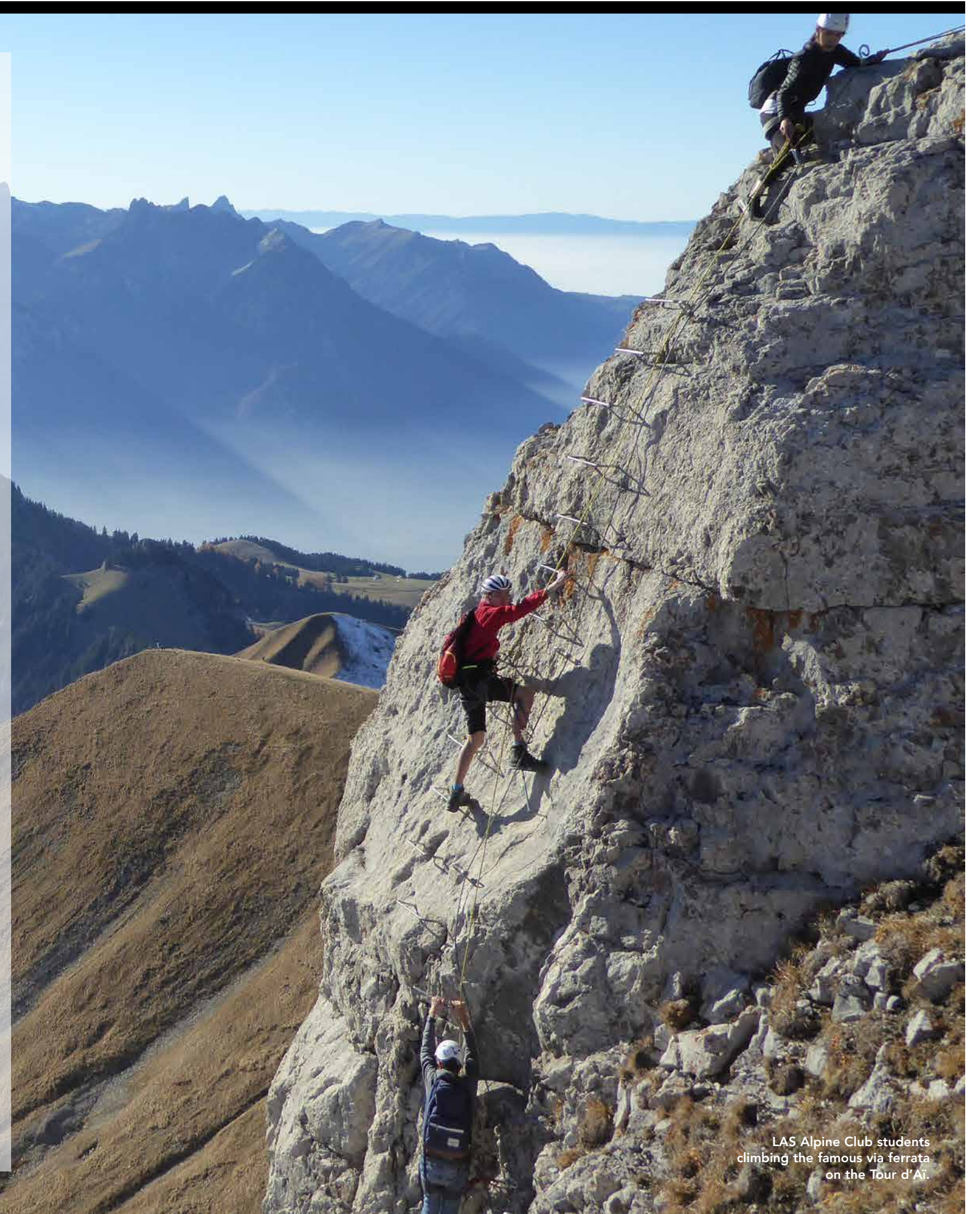
One big thread to the Alpine Club is what we've dubbed "The Leysin Skyline Challenge". As you might guess, we're challenging students to climb, hike, or ski as many peaks on our horizon as they have time and skills for. The Leysin view comes alive when you look out at a silhouetted peak and remember what it was like to be there. This year, students ascended eight of our skyline peaks, while staff scouted several more to find the best future routes for the kids. Included were Mont d'Or, Pic Chaussy, Les Diablerets, The Oldenhorn, Tour d'Ai, Tour de Mayen, Tour de Famelon, and of course the ever present Dents du Midi.

The most popular Alpine Club outings have been to glaciers on Les Diablerets, where we've

lowered students via ropes into crevasses, and they used ice climbing gear to climb back out (all under the supervision of professional mountain guides). The next most popular have been caving trips into the little-known limestone caves above Leysin. Finally, there was the "via ferrata" climb, using steel ladders bolted to Tour d'Ai's vertical face (also with a mountain guide).

We're particularly excited to blend adventure with science, taking kids into the mountains to research glaciers, to count chamois, to find the highest trees, to measure and take pictures of places most scientists have a hard time getting to. Alpine Clubs around the world have a rich tradition of supporting adventurous scientists who've brought back knowledge from the world's high and remote places. We're excited to develop this spirit in high school students as they explore the peaks and valleys surrounding Leysin.

If talking about science appears to bring us back to pedagogy, that's because there's so much learning that takes place on a mountain. It can't be helped. I've written books about the techniques involved in hiking and climbing, the teamwork, the friendships, the leadership. But these are skills that come with the territory when you're out having fun. Mountains bring out the best in you, no matter your age.



LAS Alpine Club students
climbing the famous via ferrata
on the Tour d'Ai.

LETS

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSECT SURVEY

Mr. Dan Patton | Science Teacher

An afternoon in late September finds the forest above the Savoy on the Leysin American School campus abuzz with activity. There are students, lots of students, with measuring tapes and compasses, picks and shovels, scrambling over slippery logs, avoiding armies of ants, all on a quest of scientific discovery.

They are working in small groups, fanned out over the approximately ten hectare span of spruce, fir, and larch trees, honing their investigative ecology skills in anticipation of an upcoming environmental data collection blitz known as the LETS study. LETS stands for Local Environmental Transect Survey and is another example of LAS teachers bringing experiential learning to the curriculum. Teachers hope that getting kids outside and into the local forest will excite them about learning. LETS has the added benefit of generating scientific data that will be useful to experts modeling the impact of global climate change on the forests of the Alps. By following a strict set of data collection protocols, the LETS study turns LAS students into citizen scientists.

LETS Day

Flashing forward a few days to the morning of October 2, 2015 finds the halls of the Savoy building packed with students decked-out in jeans, t-shirts, and hiking boots instead of the customary black slacks, white polos, and the occasional sequin-studded sneakers. They are toting meter sticks and sack lunches instead of laptops and side-satchels. This is not a day for sitting in traditional classrooms and learning in a traditional way, but for going outside, for getting up close and personal with nature, and what a glorious fall day it is. The leaves have just a touch of yellow, the mercury is predicted to hit the low 20's, while a vivid blue sky reins overhead.

The first stop on this busy day is a brief group meeting. Thirteen groups, each consisting of about ten students and two teachers, will travel by foot,

van, cog train, and even telecabine, to thirteen different locations stratified by elevation. At the group meeting, students perform an equipment check and a journal entry, they jot down their thoughts in response to the question: Describe the Forests of Leysin. In education lingo this is called 'activating prior knowledge' and the idea is to get the proverbial juices flowing. By asking students what they think they are going to see, teachers are creating the mental spaces for students to file away what they actually do see. A follow up question asking about the forests back in their home countries produces some interesting contemplation, especially from Middle Eastern students.

Before leaving the walls behind and venturing out into nature, students head to the library and black box theater to be inspired and encouraged by the words of local forest ecology

experts, and citizen science enthusiasts Christophe Randin, Anne Delestrade, and Irene Alvarez (see the LAS Alpine Institute Article for biographical details). Students watch, listen, and ask questions as these well respected professional scientists passionately present their case for getting regular citizens involved in scientific data collection. In a field traditionally dominated by men,

seeing two successful women

Laden with picks, shovels, and other specialized tools and equipment, the groups raise a few eyebrows from the local Leysin folk as they start out on their treks.

scientists on the stage together impresses the young girls in the audience. Christophe Randin's presentation provides evocative geographical images, these showcase how the forests around Leysin are changing, and are predicted to change in the near future; something the students and staff are easily able to identify.

In the Field

Finally, it is time to head to the field. With the bright autumn sun reflecting their facial expressions, broad smiles on some, and looks of apprehension on others, group after group file out of Savoy and into the great outdoors. Since a key feature of the LETS study is to examine the differences in the forest

at different elevations, about half the groups head uphill toward such familiar sounding places as Prafandaz, Solacyre, and Riandaz, while the other groups head downward to other sites such as Boule de Gomme, La Roulaz, and Pont Drappel. Laden with picks, shovels, and other specialized tools and equipment, the groups raise a few eyebrows from the local Leysin folk as they start out on their treks.

Once on location, students immediately get to work setting up the boundaries of the study site. The goals for the day are to identify and measure the trees, take extensive photographic evidence, and collect a series of soil samples from a 30 x 30 meter plot of forest. The sites had been previously chosen with the criteria that they be at significantly different elevations



Students, Antonio C. '19 & Christian S. '18, measuring the highest tree in the mountains above Leysin. This one was found at 2,105m.

As the groups head back to school, the little orange tag is once again the only reminder that this is a special piece of forest.

but similar in all other facets. That means they all have similar steepness, are facing in the same direction, and are composed of similar forest structure. Using a small, permanently fixed orange tag as the starting point, students use their geography and problem solving skills to roll out and fasten a series of eight 30 meter strings. This is not an easy task considering the steep and rugged nature of the local mountain forests. When this job is complete, the forest floor has been divided into nine squares, each 10 x 10 meters. From there smaller teams get to work measuring, photographing, and digging in order to collect their requisite data. Soil samples are taken and fauna are counted and identified. After a quick lunch around mid-day and a bit more effort, all the scientific field work is done and students return the site to its original condition. As the groups head back to school, the little orange tag is once again the only reminder that this is a special piece of forest. This is, at least, until the arrival of next year's group, who will continue the job of monitoring the forest for change.

Back home again

Dirty and tired, but with spirits high, students finish the day back in the Savoy building where one more task, this one requiring more brains than brawn, awaits. They are asked to write down their responses to the question: How can the data you collected today be used to help Leysin adapt to climate change? Science is and always has been a collective endeavor. It works best when thoughts and information are shared, ideas are critiqued and criticized, and from this interchange new understandings emerge. In this day and age, with powerful communication and information crunching machinery, the work of citizen scientists, like our very own students, can and will lead to scientific breakthroughs, the likes of which the world has never known. Through initiatives such as the LETS study, LAS is on the cutting edge of this growing scientific movement.

From the organizers

A special thanks goes out to the math, geography, english, art and other content area teachers and administrators who were flexible and supportive throughout this science initiative. Without the help of the entire LAS community, and visiting scholars, this special day would not have been the success that it was. We are excited to continue this program in the years to come.



OCTOBER 2, 2015 LETS DAY FACTS



ELEVATION OF HIGHEST TREE
DISCOVERED BY LETS: 2,105M



NUMBER OF STUDENTS
IN THE FIELD AT ONCE: 138



NUMBER OF SUPPORTING TEACHERS
IN THE FIELD: 26

life in the FAST lane

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT:
Ines Taittinger '06S



Mr. Anthony Leutenegger | Development

The ski slopes of Leysin have catalyzed generations of LAS alumni speed demons entering the working world. There's no better example than alumnae and endurance racecar driver Ines Taittinger.

Ines' car can reach top speeds of 260 km/h. If she isn't in it racing, she is moving at a similar speed in her everyday life; from strict fitness programs to working with Mecenat Chirurgie Cardiaque (MCC), an association that helps children with heart defects from disadvantaged countries, something dear to her own heart.

Ines attended LAS for 9th and 10th grades, from 2004-2006, and found adjusting to a small mountain village difficult after the grandeur of living in Paris. She came looking for a high quality school set in a natural environment as she recovered from lung surgery. Ines recounts her fondest memories of LAS being the connection with the teachers. "The teaching style in France is very different and not as supportive. At LAS, I loved the way of learning and how personal we were with the teachers. The connection between students and staff at a boarding school is incomparable to regular day school."

Ines debuted on the racing circuit in 2009 and has been driving for CD Sport in the French VdV Championship ever since. Her breakthrough season came in 2013 when she won

the Albi race, came in third in the Magny-Cours, and third in the 12 hours of Motorland Aragon Race (with teammate Kevin Bole-Besançon). The last two seasons, however, have been marred by mechanical difficulties, resulting in poor results. Her lack of control over these kinds of technical problems weighs heavily on her as she ponders her future in the sport.

Outside of racing, Ines has used her fame and medical history to work with Mecenat Chirurgie Cardiaque. Her own difficulties came as a baby, when she underwent emergency heart surgery at three days old to fix a serious heart defect. As an ambassador for MCC, Ines wants to promote the organization's efforts, and also raise 12,000 euros to save a life. This is roughly the cost to bring one child in need of surgery from a developing country to France to be fully cared for throughout their medical operations and recovery.

Where next? Ines would like to race in the 24-hour Le Mans, the queen event of endurance racing, but this is currently still up in the air. What Ines does know is that she wants change, either with a new step in racing, or launching into a different career, probably in broadcasting. Either way, a champagne toast may be in order to celebrate her life in the fast lane.

What's in a name?

Mr. Benjamin M. Smith | Director of Development



Have you ever looked closely at our school's logo and wondered what it represents? If you haven't, you should. Our logo holds the history and origins of the school, like a clue from Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code*. Deciphering it is a little difficult as the edges have been smoothed and it has been digitized several times over the years, but if you look hard you can still see Fred & Sigrid's purposeful design.

At the heart of the logo are two triangles. These triangles represent the international symbol for camping and the roots of

LAS in Sigrid's post-war International Ranger Camps. The triangles also make up the "A" of the "American" in Leysin American School. To the right of the triangles is a Zoroastrian "S" representing "School" in LAS. There was once a space at the top of the logo that made this easier to see. Finally, on the left side of the logo is a slightly angled "L" for our beloved "Leysin". Together, these four pieces make up the majority of the logo.

But what's all the stuff coming out of the top, bottom, and sides? Those extra bits are the beard, brow, ear, and horn of our mascot. Herein resides the real mystery.



1962 logo design



2015 logo design

“What kind of animal is this? Is it a ram? Is it a goat? Is it a chamois? The answer seems to depend on when you attended LAS and what nickname we attributed to our sports teams at that time.”

What kind of animal is this? Is it a ram? Is it a goat? Is it a chamois?

The answer seems to depend on when you attended LAS and what nickname we attributed to our sports teams at that time. In this case, all are correct. However, this was not Fred Ott's, our late co-founder's, intent. Fred shared on several occasions that the animal in the logo was meant to be the hearty indigenous alpine mountain goat. Using the logo as a reference, specifically the large curved horns and beard, it can be concluded that this would be an Ibex.

Where did all the confusion come from? The confusion started with the simple misidentification and misapplication of a North American term to a European animal. It was then further complicated by an attempt to build a stronger school culture around sports, and surprisingly, a mascot costume. Finally, social media and the need for a profile name took it the last confusing step.

So, let's start at the beginning.

Rams: Sports vs. Science

It is well documented that LAS was founded to educate American ex-patriots. For decades, American culture permeated student life at LAS including the development of athletics. As the school grew, so did the interest and ability to compete athletically against other schools.

With increased competition came the need for a

mascot and a nickname, and our logo provided a straightforward guide; or so we thought. You

can imagine the thought process of our American students and teachers at the time, "horns, beard, it's a Ram!" This leap was likely made simpler by the fact that at the time the professional American football team, the Los Angeles Rams ("the Rams"), was one of the most popular professional sports franchises in the world.

The Rams were the first National Football League team to draw over one million spectators in a season (1967). Everyone in America knew the team and their curved horned mascot. At the time, LAS was experiencing rapid growth with many students coming from California. Not surprisingly, the "LAS Rams" were born.

Alternatively, a little scientific investigation would have lead those students and teachers to a different conclusion. In North America, there are two visibly similar animals to an Ibex, but neither has exactly the same characteristics. The first is the Big Horned Sheep (*Ovis canadensis*). It is brown, has big curved horns, and males of the species are called "rams". This seems to fit well with the conclusion above, but it does not have a beard, it is a member of the *Bovidae* family, the same as antelopes, gazelles, cattle, and sheep, and it is indigenous to North America.

The second is the Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) or Rocky Mountain Goat. It too has curved horns and it has the beard the Ram lacks. Unfortunately, the Mountain Goat is white, males are called "Billies", it is another member of the *Bovidae* family, and it is also indigenous to North America.

The Alpine Ibex (*Capra ibex*), the animal actually depicted in our logo, has curved horns, a beard, is brown, it is a member of the goat or wild goat family (*Capra*), and it is indigenous to the European Alps. Interestingly, male members of the species are not called Rams or Billies, they are simply called Ibex.

Goats: Right family, wrong animal

The next evolution of the mascot and its nickname came in the early 2000s. The Rams nickname had gone the way of our red, white, and blue color scheme. The school was several years into a student demographic shift. No longer was the majority of the student body American. Fred's and Sigrid's goal of a truly international student body had been realized. However, because so many cultures were represented a specific "LAS culture" became hard to identify. This led to



Los Angeles Rams Primary Logo 1951-1969

What kind of animal IS THIS?



BIG HORNED SHEEP
(*Ovis canadensis*)
It is brown, has big curved horns, and males of the species are called "Rams".



MOUNTAIN GOAT OR THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN GOAT
(*Oreamnos americanus*)
It too has curved horns and it has the beard the Ram lacks. It is white and males are called "Billies".



ALPINE IBEX
(*Capra ibex*)
It has curved horns, a beard, is brown, and it is indigenous to the European Alps. Males are simply called "Ibex".



The GOAT COSTUME
represented the Big Horned Sheep.



The ATHLETICS LOGO DESIGN created in the early 2000s represented the Rocky Mountain Goat



New ATHLETICS LOGO DESIGN coming in 2016!

efforts being made to identify and nurture a LAS specific school culture.

Again, athletics became a focus area of where LAS could quickly build a culture. By this time, the mascot had been recognized as a goat, not a ram, and the nickname had changed. Next, a mascot costume was bought, a logo depicting a goat head was painted on the wall of the gymnasium, and "Welcome to THE GOATHOUSE" was painted above the entrance to the gymnasium. Unfortunately, the goat costume and logo design chosen, represented the aforementioned Big Horned Sheep and Rocky Mountain Goat, not the Ibex.

For new students and faculty all of these visuals made it



feel like LAS had a long tradition of being called "the Goats", despite this not being the case.

Chamois: social is here to stay

The next change came much more quickly. About five-years after the adoption of the Goats, an additional mascot and nickname were adopted. LAS was now represented by and known as the Goats and "the Chamois" simultaneously.

Where did the Chamois come from? It was a creation that came solely from social media. In the early years of Facebook, only individuals could create a profile. There were no group or cause pages as there are today. Each account was required to have a first and last name (and a school issued email). So, when the Athletic Director at the time decided to connect with his current and former athletes, a profile name was needed. Creatively, he called upon his American childhood and borrowed from the *Wile E. Coyote and Road*

Runner cartoon, adapting the coyote's name to William Chamois – or "Billie Goat" - and thus the Chamois as the LAS mascot and nickname were born.

The same tool that has allowed us to reconnect with hundreds, if not thousands of alumni, was now creating a rift among those alumni. The first change from Rams to Goats was not really felt because communication was difficult, infrequent, and the mascot depicted still looked very ram-like. However, in the digital age with social media becoming a primary means of communication, alumni began having daily interaction with the happenings at LAS. The adoption of a new mascot and nickname was quickly noticed and debated among alumni.

Ibex: It's official

In the early 2010s, based on the school's Strategic Plan, the time had come to move forward with the renovation of the

old gymnasium, "the GOATHOUSE", into a state of the art sports & fitness center. This renovation presented the perfect opportunity to review the history and formally adopted a mascot and nickname, while also modernizing the athletics logo.

A history was compiled and presented to the LAS Board. They reviewed the information and agreed that the mascot was an Ibex and the nickname "goats" was most appropriate. We are very excited to announce that the new athletics logo will be unveiled during the opening of the new sports & fitness center this spring.

Thank you to everyone has represented each LAS mascot and nickname with pride and honor. They are forever a part of the rich history of LAS.

Worthy Jerky

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT: **Alex Krakoski '12**

Mr. Anthony Leutenegger | **Development**



Few high school students exemplify LAS's core principle of "innovation" more brilliantly than Alex Krakoski, who founded his first business in 11th grade. By the time Alex graduated in 2012, his dorm-room business had funded new ski equipment, travel with friends, summer language courses, and two years worth of living expenses at his future school, Cornell University. Alex was also one of the largest contributors to LAS's Student Scholarship Fund from the proceeds of his sales during his time here.



Alex arrived at LAS in 2010 on a full scholarship. His parents were recently unemployed and he needed to self-finance his extracurriculars, including travelling on long weekends. During his first months at LAS, Alex's mother sent him care packages from Miami, that included her homemade beef jerky. Alex offered some to his friends. They were hooked immediately; everyone wanted more. Alex quickly realized that, "there was an unmet need for a filling, tasty, portable snack." Although fruit and granola bars were available in town, these snacks are not nearly as satisfying on the ski slopes as jerky. It doesn't squish in your pocket, supplies longer-lasting energy, and has the salty flavor we crave in the mountains. Every time Alex returned home he went into the kitchen with his mother to make jerky for his growing customer base at LAS.

Fast forward to Cornell University 2015, where Alex is now a senior.

As Alex came to know his fellow students, it was clear that he could quickly adapt his high school business. The commercial jerky brands available at Cornell were loaded with artificial ingredients and preservatives. This conflicted with today's movement toward healthier snacks with more natural ingredients. As Alex recalls it, "I realized that if my jerky was made from high quality cuts of meat; was flavored with fruits, vegetables, and natural spices; and finally, if it's packaging showcased this inherent simplicity, then jerky

might appeal to much of the market that buys healthy snacks like hummus, greek yogurt, and granola. My jerky would be more portable and more savory than those traditional health foods."

Alex assembled a team of like-minded students, which promptly named the company "Worthy Jerky" to honor its natural ingredients. In 2013, the team was accepted into Cornell's startup accelerator program, eLab, which connected them with experienced faculty and alumni. In 2014, Worthy Jerky won Cornell's first "Student Business of the Year" award as they launched their products into Cornell's on-campus dining program. They beat all performance expectations.

But life doesn't always go in a straight line. Though business was booming, the team's founding members were now seniors. On the one hand, they had a fledgling business. On the other, they had an intense academic year to finish. They also had to plan career directions. Faculty advisors convinced them that growing the business beyond the Cornell campus while also graduating from college was unrealistic. All in the same speedboat, the team voted to turn off the engine. "We decided that our time working on this project had been an incredible learning experience. But we have so many options now and we're getting great offers for fantastic jobs in all kinds of companies. At this stage of life, we decided to follow our own individual dreams."

In his senior year, Alex is working with the startup Macrofuel, a meal replacement product. He helped them develop an extremely successful Kickstarter campaign. He's currently leaning toward the healthcare startup VillageMD, which had just provided him with a job offer. As Alex sees it, "Worthy Jerky exposed me to the entrepreneurial

community at Cornell, which grew considerably since I arrived on campus. I learned that my interests are not specific to a certain industry like health and food. What I enjoy most is working in a team to solve problems. I also enjoy building businesses. Eventually, I think I'll find myself in venture capital. This seems the perfect place to stay at the forefront of world developments while also growing diverse companies that might ultimately create positive change in society."



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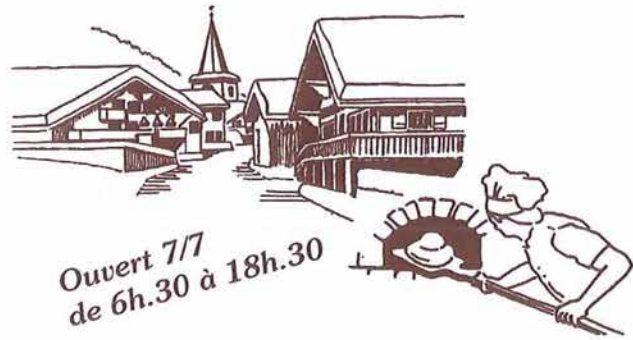
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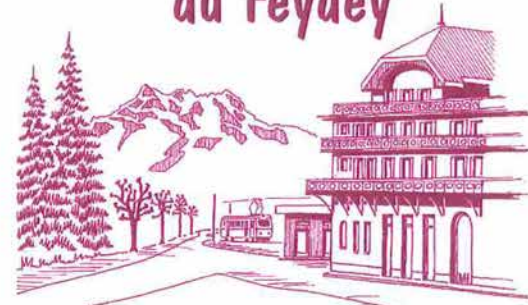


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A letter to my mother, Sigrid Ott,

FOUNDER OF LAS

Dr. K. Steven Ott | Chairman

Dear Mother,

On September 13th, we celebrated your 99th birthday, so now you are in your 100th year of life. I would like to thank you for sharing part of this time with me. You know, except of some short periods, when I was at Stanford and then again, when Doris, the family and I were in Saudi Arabia, we have always lived in the same town and often in the same house. We are most thankful that you have shared your personal vision and dreams with us, namely contributing to a better world through education.

Some of my first memories were those days of arriving in Europe, after travelling from North Dakota by train to New York, then Liberty Ship across the Atlantic to meet Fred, your husband and my father. Europe in 1947 was destroyed, full of hungry people and suffering from the years of war, only Switzerland remained whole. Early on, you hoped to provide the children of those first US families who arrived in Europe, with a healthy and happy summer experience in the beautiful environs of Interlaken; thus, in 1949 founded the International Ranger Camp. To provide an international flavor to the camp you had hired young people from all over Europe to be the counselors. Just a few years earlier they had been fighting each other, suffering grievous losses and carrying deep psychological scars. You told them, "Leave politics outside the door and focus on providing the kids with a wonderful summer experience." By the end of the summer the magic had happened and former enemies had become today's friends.

During the past months, we have often talked about how this experience was the impetus in the founding of LAS. If the short six-week period of the Ranger Camp summer could have such a profound effect, how much more would a long-term sharing of life and learning have on the younger set of high school students? This became the cornerstone of the LAS philosophy and remains so today. Do you remember our Israeli girl, Valerie, who was so saddened by attitudes of distrust and even hatred in her home country, when her best friends at LAS

were Arabs? Or the friendship between the Russian and Ukrainian students after the troubles in the Crimea began, expressed by their flags flying side-by-side?

The LAS community of students, staff,



and our family has much to be thankful to you for through your courage and farsightedness in founding and developing the School in the first twenty years. Your legacy is shared amongst the students from more than fifty countries at LAS today.

All of us hope that during these twilight years – may they last a long time! – you can look back at your life, colored by two world wars and ongoing conflict, with the certitude that you have contributed towards international understanding. The seeds sown in the souls of the many young people who spent time on our magic mountain are certainly going to provide an impetus towards peace.

Thank you and in great love.

Your son,

Steven

P.S. As your daughter-in-law, I wish to join Steven in the thoughts he has expressed in his letter. You have been an exemplary person for me. During the trying times that all of us experience in life, I was able to come to you for wise counsel. In recent years, you have been a wonderful part of LAS by meeting new families, seeing students, and addressing the community at special events. I join Steven in hoping that we can continue to be part of each other's lives for a long time.

In appreciation,

Doris

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DIMANCHE 31 JANVIER À 19H00 @ Grand Hôtel
Alexis Vassiliev, Contre-ténor

DIMANCHE 28 FÉVRIER À 19H00 @ Grand Hôtel
Duo Von Burg - Baghdassarian, Violon et Piano

DIMANCHE 6 MARS À 17hH00 @ Temple de Leysin
Trio Béatrice Jaermann, flûte,
Julie Sicre, harpe - Hans Egidi, alto

DIMANCHE 10 AVRIL À 17H00 @ Temple de Leysin
Récital Christophe Pantillon, violoncelle

DIMANCHE 22 MAI À 19H00 @ Grand Hôtel
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