

Annual Giving Report Now Available Online!

## TESTIMONY SPOTLIGHT: Service/Stewardship

In the last five issues of *Dragon Tales*, we have shined a spotlight on a different Quaker testimony (also known as the SPICES), and with help from faculty, staff, and students we've explored how each testimony is put into practice at MPFS and how families can instill these values at home! Look back at the Winter/Spring '18-'19 issue for our spotlight on **Equality**.

The final "S" in the Quaker Testimonies, or SPICES, serves as an umbrella for several important words, including Service, Stewardship, and Sustainability; however, while this final testimony has several names, its message is clear. Quakers practice their faith through active engagement to effect positive change in the world. Effecting positive change, of course, can, and should, be achieved in as many varied and creative ways as possible. That can be done through service to others, service to self, and stewardship within our own communities and in the larger world.

At MPFS, our belief that our students are preparing for morally-based, global citizenship impels us to utilize the world around us. Thus they learn that there's a larger community of which they are a part, that they can participate in it helpfully, and that they can influence the lives of others in powerful, positive ways. At all ages and in every class, our students engage with local, regional and global organizations in service learning initiatives that share the following characteristics:

- they are meaningful to the participants
- they promote cooperation
- they provide opportunities to utilize context-specific problem-solving
- they promote profound learning
- they support social, emotional and cognitive development
- they enable us to live our mission and Friends ideals

In addition to preparing students for future success, it is our hope that they will leave MPFS with a commitment to improving the lives of others and the world at large. Service Learning at MPFS combines our commitment to school, local, and far-reaching service with our mission to provide students with the deep understanding and practical skills to address real-world problems around social justice and change. Teachers guide active projects and reflections, working to integrate them into curriculum. Students participate in recycling, food drives, clothing drives, and Fair Trade initiatives, among many other actions. Through Service Learning, students gain a sense of responsibility for one another, their community, and their world, along with



Middle School students tested water at Glen Providence Park in Media and then entered their data into the EarthEcho Database. The EarthEcho Water Challenge is an international program that runs annually and equips anyone to protect the water resources we depend on every day.



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## New Head of School Q & A

### Teacher Jon Hall

**T**he MPFS community welcomes Teacher Jon Hall as our 20th Head of School at MPFS! We are very excited to have T. Jon on-board at MPFS and, in lieu of our typical “Letter from the Head,” that accompanies every issue of *Dragon Tales*, we’d like to use this opportunity to get to know T. Jon, in his own words, through the Q&A interview below:

#### **Tell us about where you’re from and where you grew up.**

I grew up in Glover, Vermont. It’s a small town about 30 miles from the Canadian border in the northeast corner of Vermont. It’s a small community with about 800 people. There’s no real industry there. There’s one general store. At the time I was growing up, there were some farms. Now there are fewer of them but that’s really still the only industry in town. Most people know each other there.

#### **What was your favorite activity growing up?**

I spent a lot of time by myself as a kid. I have two sisters who kind of did their thing and I have an older brother who is four years older, and we had very dissimilar interests. I would go out exploring in the woods. I’d ride my bike down to this lake called Shadow Lake that was a couple miles away. We used to fish a lot. My dad always knew where there were these obscure ponds and beaver dams. I was really into baseball so, for hours I’d throw a rubber ball against the wall and field it.

#### **What was your first job?**

I started working in summers when I was pretty young... about 11. When I was about 13, I started working for the

only Quaker in town. He was a teacher and a carpenter in the summer. So, when I was a teenager I worked for him every summer until I graduated from college.

One of the things that always amazed me was how he always had a belief in me and a couple of my friends. We would show up to work at eight in the morning and he would have been there already and wrote down on a 2x4 what he wanted us to do. It would just be leaning up against the wall. And he’d be gone! And it always amazed me that he trusted us and believed that we could do the stuff that he wanted us to do. In some cases, stuff we’d never done. I don’t know if it was always the wisest thing on his part (laughs) but I always loved the fact that he believed in us to do those things. He was also one of the kindest, most upbeat, positive people I’ve ever known.

#### **What led you to working in education?**

When I was in high school, I had a couple teachers who I just really connected with and appreciated how they did their job, how they showed respect and almost a reverence for kids, and how they made me feel. One in particular was Mr. Keizer -- he was my high school English teacher in 9th and 10th grade. He had a really powerful influence on me. I thought, wouldn’t it be great to do something like that and make someone feel how they made me feel?

#### **What would you say was the most important lesson learned from your first job in education?**

That things are rarely what they seem to be on the surface. I don’t believe there’s a black and white when it comes to working with kids. There’s always some grey. You have to look beneath the surface.

#### **What about Quaker education made you want to transition to working in a Friends school?**

I would say two things that really resonate with me: one is -- I learned this from working at Girard College -- that there is always some grey. At Girard, those kids all had to be below a certain income level -- but some of them also went home to some very horrific circumstances. It was a boarding school but they could go home on weekends. So, one of the things I learned that I really appreciated that you see in Friends schools is that there is always some good and you can’t just dismiss a student without really trying to consider the whole picture and look for that good. The second is stewardship is important to me -- I don’t know if it’s because of where I grew up but Vermont tends to be a place where people care about the earth, the land, and the environment -- and to me, it’s all about doing what’s right for people and for the world.

#### **Tell me a bit about what initially drew you to the MPFS community?**

It was really the people that I met with when I first interviewed and the feel of the school. There was artwork

JON HALL... | *Continued on page 3*

everywhere. Even when there were no kids around, I just felt there was a really positive vibe from the school itself, which is important. One of the things that was really hard for me in making the decision to leave Westfield was the relationships that I formed with people there. But based on the people I've met at MPFS so far, everyone is so kind, and generous with their time, and friendly, and wanting to help me understand how things work here.

My interaction with the kids was (laughs) -- they were just a great group of kids. Every single one that I got the chance to speak with just seemed so happy to be at MPFS, so polite, inquisitive about who I was, asking me questions. I didn't get a sense from any one of them that they didn't feel more than at home there. I think that's a really, really important thing for a kid to be able to feel.

From a programmatic standpoint so far, I've been really impressed with STEAM Week and the work done there. Plus, I was able to see T. Holly teaching a lesson to the 5th graders about poetry and I was just really blown away by the kids and their poems.

**What do you hope to bring to the MPFS community as Head of School?**

The first year is really about learning about the community itself, figuring out how things are done. Learning how MPFS has come to be the school that it is. I don't think you can understand a person's or place's present until you understand the past and where they've come from. To me, it's about learning; getting to know the people, the culture, seeing strengths, possibilities of the school, and going from there. It's important to me to come into MPFS with an open mind, to learn, and not set any of my own agenda until I really understand the school.

**Tell us about your family and any hobbies you enjoy:**

Well, my son's name is Tref. He just turned seven years old this May and he is on the spectrum. It's a big part of who he is and it's become who I am, although he is pretty high functioning. He attends Merion Elementary and that's primarily because they have the services that are best for him right now. My hope is that he'll eventually attend a school where I am working but we're not able to make that decision right now. His Mom and I are divorced but we are very good friends. We live about 200 yards apart and so we are very much co-parenting him. One of the reasons that I wanted to transition to MPFS was the time that the drive to Westfield took out of our lives. My free time is really spent with Tref. And we have a dog! His name is Carlos. He's a shih tzu papillon mix. I can't even express how much I love that little dog.

## Annual Giving Report

Our community of donors makes possible Inspired Learning, enhancing the lives of our students through experiences that foster agile, open, and resilient minds that will support their communities and shape our world. The result is students who see the world as a place of Infinite Possibilities, ready to make an impact today and in the future. We thank you again for your commitment, thoughtfulness, and generosity towards our students' meaningful learning for a purposeful life.

We thank the following donors for their contributions – unrestricted, restricted, and gifts in-kind – received during the last academic year, between July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019. In a school-wide effort to save paper and help our environment, the Annual Giving Report is now available online: visit [mpfs.org/annual-report](http://mpfs.org/annual-report) for a full listing of all our generous donors!

While every effort was made to include all donors, if we have omitted your name, please contact us so that we can make corrections in the next issue.

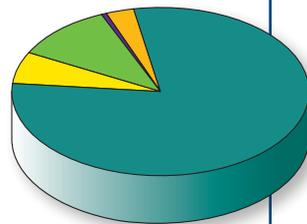
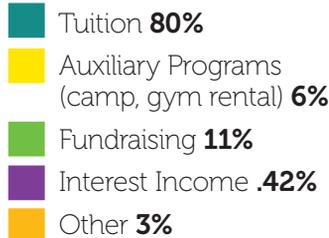
### 2018-19 MPFS Fund by the Numbers

**Total:** \$105,211.97

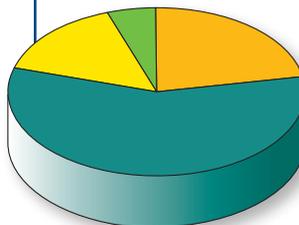
**Donors:** 314 • **Gifts:** 606

*We thank our Trustees for giving with 100% participation. Help us achieve 100% participation all around in 2019.*

#### INCOME



#### EXPENSES





*Charles Ombam, MPFS parent of two daughters joined the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2018.*

## NEW TRUSTEE Q & A: **Charles Ombam**

MPFS welcomed new trustee Charles Ombam to the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2018. Charles is a husband, father of two MPFS students, and works as Direct Support at Devereux Adult Services. We are thrilled to have Charles and his positive energy on the Board! Learn more about Charles, his family, and what brought them to MPFS below:

### **Tell us a bit about where you are from and where you grew up?**

I grew up in Nairobi, Kenya and my father was a principal of Our Lady of Mercy Primary School. It was a small, Catholic girls school and we actually lived on campus. We lived there even after my dad passed away. I moved here in the US in 2001. I moved right here in Media and I have never left! I came here to Media and I was planning to play basketball but I had a height disadvantage (laughs).

### **What is it that you liked about Media?**

It is a small town, a nice area, and my brother was here. It was easier for me to adapt.

### **Tell us about your wonderful family!**

My wife Kathryn, I met her in 2006. We got married in 2008. I met her in a bookstore in Wayne. We talked about Kenya and African music. She became an active part of my big family. I am 8 of 10 children. I have 7 sisters and 3 brothers. She is the best. She has stuck with me. She is loyal. She makes me a better man. Kathryn works at Tyler Arboretum. She is the office manager and takes care of the library in the arboretum.

We have two girls: Emmah who is going into 4th grade and Agnes who is going into preK 3. They are just the best thing we have. They make us laugh.

### **Can you tell me about your education and what you do for work?**

I got my bachelors at West Chester University in kinesiology. Sports and fitness is a big part of my life. I also work with two different companies that provide specialized care for disabled people. I've been doing that for so long that my clients are almost like extended family now.

Another big part of my life has been music. I have sung and toured with a choir back home in Kenya. A couple of years back, I did a workshop on music and culture for schools in the area. My favorite

one was when I performed in Emmah's preschool class at MPFS a few years ago. I loved that! It's interesting because my dad used to like to sing. And he was always teaching kids randomly on the street to start singing. So, for me to sing in front of Emmah, it reminded me of my dad.

Also, Kathy and I did run a small organization BOMA (Books Opening Minds in Africa), which is Swahili word for village. Our main goal was to send books to a tiny primitive school in Kenya where I come from. The books were donated to Alwala primary school in Seme, Kisumu County. Though we've taken a small break from that, it was a great thing that helps me feel connected to my roots in a meaningful way.

### **Can you tell me how your family found MPFS?**

In the last few years, MPFS and the Quaker values has really grown to be a part of our family.

When Emmah turned two years old, I remember my wife went to every school in like a 20-mile radius! She was on a real mission to find somewhere that would be a good fit. When she came back home one day during this, she had tears in her eyes because she had just toured MPFS that day! She was sure she found the right place. It struck the right balance between the structured learning and explorative learning (for preschool.)

MPFS is just wonderful. I think each teacher brings so much love into educating the student community and we feel so fortunate that our children are receiving the best possible foundation.

### **What do you think are MPFS' greatest strengths?**

I think MPFS, in terms of diversity, we have been grateful to find that kind of diversity. I think the diversity is a big strength for MPFS.

CHARLES OMBAM... | *Continued on page 7*

## OUR NEWEST ALUMNI: CLASS OF 2019

### *Congratulations, Graduates!*

We want to extend a heartfelt congratulations to the graduating 8th grade Class of 2019! We are proud to send this group of curious learners, engaged citizens, empathetic friends, and leaders onto their next adventure in high school. This tight-knit crew will be missed and we wish them the best of luck! See to the right for their high school choices:

**Noah Boyd** - The Christian Academy  
**Manny Castro** - Delaware County Christian School  
**Jackelin Gonzalez** - Archbishop Prendergast  
**Hope Lane** - Friends Central  
**Soleil Morrison** - Hershey High  
**Simon Muther** - Strath Haven  
**Jenn Taylor** - String Theory STEM



Visit [mpfs.org/news](https://mpfs.org/news) to read Q&A interviews with each of our 2019 graduates!

## UPDATE ON THE CLASS OF 2015: Looking Ahead



Time sure flies! The MPFS Class of 2015 graduated from high school this spring and many will be heading off to college this fall. Congratulations to all and be sure to pay your friends at MPFS a visit soon! For those students we were able to reach before printing, see to the right for post-high school plans:

**Jaelynn Bethea** - Rowan University  
**Justin DiPrimio** - Jean Madeline Aveda Institute for cosmetology and Delaware County Community College for Business  
**Tasia Green** - University of the Arts  
**Avery Johnson** - Taking a gap year  
**Cole Parham** - Morehouse College  
**Liam Sinclair** - Emerson  
**Farid Stephens** - Norfolk State University

## MEET Teacher Devon Reichenbach

### Where did you grow up?

I grew up in central PA, in a small town outside of Hershey, PA - Palmyra. My neighborhood is considered “in the woods” and is right off of the Horseshoe Trail where it picks up the Appalachian Trail.

### Interests? Hobbies? Volunteer activities? Summer activities?

My interests include: crafting, painting, decorating houses, going to the gym, and searching for sea glass down at the shore. I love to spend time with family and friends (especially in the summer down in my family beach house in Avalon, NJ). I am a volunteer for Heifer International and raise funds for the Susan G. Komen 3-Day breast cancer walk. I started participating in the 60-mile walk in 2008 when my brother-in-law’s mother was first diagnosed with breast cancer. Over the years, I have raised about \$20,000 for breast cancer. I also enjoy watching the Eagles games with my Dad and sister.

### Where do you reside?

I live in West Chester, PA.

### Your education [names of college(s), degree(s)]?

I attended Susquehanna University for my undergraduate degree – dual certified: B.S. in Elementary Education and Early Childhood with a concentration in Psych. I am currently working towards my Masters in Education from LaSalle University.

### Prior jobs (teaching or otherwise)?

I taught 2nd grade down in southern Virginia at Grove Park Magnet School my first year out of college, then I taught 4th and 5th grade in West Chester, PA at Goshen Friends School for 12 years.

Now I have been teaching 4th and 5th grade here at MPFS for two years.

### Why did you choose MPFS?

I love the flexibility and joy that comes with teaching at an independent school. I can take the curriculum and find ways to bring each student’s ideas and interests into a lesson to enhance the overall learning environment. Students learn so much more when they are excited about what they are learning and feel comfortable in their learning space – here at MPFS that comes naturally.

### What do you think are MPFS’ greatest strengths?

The thing that struck me as most impressive about MPFS when I first arrived was how many roles and hats every one of the faculty and staff has. They go about their day at school with a smile on their face and are always willing to lend a hand. It is inspiring to work with a team that lives the school’s mission and looks out for all. Another thing that I enjoy about MPFS is that the students are free to be themselves.

### What strikes you most about the MPFS community? Your class(es)? Your students?

This year has been wonderful, being able to loop up with my students from last year- such a unique opportunity. We were able to hit the ground running in the



*T. Devon joined MPFS in 2017 and teaches 5th grade.*

beginning of the year both socially and academically. They have kept me laughing for two years straight and always amaze me with the things they accomplish both individually and as a class.

### What are some of the ways you prepare the students for the next level in their education?

They have had various opportunities to engage with older students, including peer facilitating and participating in PE twice a week for 3 hours total with the middle schoolers. During STEAM week 5th is mixed in with the middle school for the entire week. For their final trimester literature circle unit the fifth graders read and dissected the book *A Long Walk to Water*, which is a book that the entire middle school read as well. This book was then discussed and woven into conversations during STEAM week. Fifth graders this year started working in the same math curriculum that middle school uses in preparation for a seamless transition to T. Jen.

self-worth, compassion, and empowerment. At MPFS, values are taught, lived, and carried forward by students who continue to demonstrate effective, integrity-filled action personally and professionally.

Some examples of recent service learning projects include our preschool students collecting old markers to recycle, school-wide food drives for the local community food bank, baking healthful casseroles for local homeless shelters, collecting needed supplies for local animal shelters, tagging trees in Glen Providence Park, and much more. This year's STEAM Week, which focused on the theme of water, had students across grades thinking about the importance of clean water in their community and around the world, testing water from local water bodies (as well as water from as far away at the Nile River), and designing innovative ways to clean contaminated water.

What makes Service Learning at MPFS unique is that it very organically infiltrates many aspects of programming all year round and across grades. Our students learn that giving back is not something that should simply happen once a year around the holidays and that there are many different ways to give back and be stewards of the planet. The intentional teaching of this testimony allows students to see themselves as agents of change who have the power and skillset to make a difference on their own and to ask for help from parents, teachers, or other community members to make an even larger impact.

A wonderful example of this kind of thinking in action happened this past winter, when our Middle School students made warm blankets for those in need. Instead of delivering to local shelters, students requested they hand-deliver blankets to homeless people in need in Philadelphia. Students traveled to 69th Street in the cold and gave out their blankets to anyone who needed the extra warmth. "Just seeing the people's faces and joy when they got the blankets... They didn't expect them and it was a pretty cold day," said 8th grade graduate Jennifer Taylor. "It's good to look out for people," said Manny Castro, another member of the Class of 2019, "I feel like empathy can be a big part of that. It's good for the community to care about people."

While the last "S" in the Quaker SPICES can stand for several different things, MPFS students are taught to embrace this testimony in whatever way mobilizes them to be active, engaged citizens to better their community. From organizing a student climate march to walking hand-in-hand with their partner class to deliver non-perishables to the local food bank, MPFS students learn the impact they can make on their world and take that lesson with them well beyond 8th grade graduation.

### **Having looked at so many schools for your children, what do you feel was the top reason you were drawn to MPFS?**

I think after Kathryn came back from visiting MPFS, she found that it was a place that would accept us and a place we could trust. I remember after we'd been at MPFS for a bit, my wife, she had a motto that was, "In MPFS we trust."

### **What do you feel strikes you the most about the MPFS community?**

I think the MPFS community is inclusive. It's a wonderful community. The teachers bring so much love. Everyone has their own stories, being such a diverse group of people in this community, but I think one defining factor is that every family really wants the absolute best for their child.

### **As a new board member what do you hope to bring to the Board of Trustees at MPFS?**

I think the thing I have learned over and over again in life is that no matter what you are going through there is a way through. Of course, for the Board, all the raw materials are already there. We have dedicated parents, we have wonderful teachers, and a fantastic community; so, the foundation is already there. I just hope to be a calming and joyful presence on the Board.

I think the only thing I would say is I may have a slightly different perspective and I might want to help develop relationships with the community [that] may benefit MPFS overtime.

## Come explore with us!



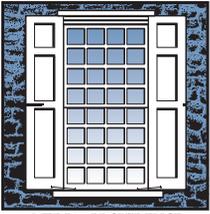
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**IMPORTANT DATES:**

**Back to School Night**  
September 26

**Fall Admissions Open House**  
October 11

**Pizza Pumpkin Night**  
October 11

**Grandparents & Special Friends Day**  
November 27

610.565.1960  
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Our community gathered together this spring to honor Head of School Earl Sissell on his 19 years of service to MPFS – 10 as Head of School – and to wish him well in his next adventure! If you'd like to make a gift in T. Earl's honor, please visit [mpfs.org/farewell](http://mpfs.org/farewell). Contributions in T. Earl's honor will benefit financial aid for MPFS students. Essential to our mission, this Fund is dear to Earl's heart.