



Spring 2011

# ST. PATRICK'S PRESS

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ON THE ROAD  
WITH ST. PATRICK'S



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**Photo:** The Co-Chairs of this year's Auction to Benefit the Financial Aid Program, Step Right Up! It's Circus Time, Nancy Balboa (center left) and Blair Giannini (center right) are pictured here with two of the entertainers from the evening. More than 400 members of the St. Patrick's community joined together on March 5 to support the Day School's Financial Aid Program that promotes and sustains socioeconomic diversity by providing grants to approximately 1 in 6 students.

# ST. PATRICK'S PRESS

## SPRING 2011

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**Photo:** As part of their world religions class, Grade 6 students recently took a field trip that included a visit to Saint Sofia's Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Washington Hebrew Congregation (pictured on page 5), Soka Gakkai Washington D.C. Buddhist Culture Center, and the Washington Islamic Center, pictured here.



# Taking the Learning Outside

## Exploring the Role of the Field Trip in the St. Patrick's Program

Peter A. Barrett  
Head of School

The bus that pulls up in front of the school to whisk students on their way, writes Assistant Head of School/Head of Upper School Dan Spector, “brings with it a sense of the unknown, a sense of the possible, and a sense of the real that can sometimes be overlooked in the daily routine of school life.” Even the more-worldly students of his division react with real excitement to the approach of any one of the variety of educational journeys that transport them beyond the schoolhouse.

While it may be the break in routine that explains the immediate allure of the field trip, there is no denying that the firsthand experiences such outings provide deepen curiosity, enhance understanding, and motivate further learning. Here at St. Patrick's, the journeys that our children take grow in complexity during their time with us. For our Nursery children, exploring the school itself provokes new questions and reflections. And “reverse field trips”—special events that enable our youngest students to stay on campus and still dance *The Nutcracker* or see and emulate sea creatures like the jellyfish, described elsewhere by Head of Nursery School Nancy White—provide unique learning experiences. The circle widens as children move to the Lower School. Early in the fall, Kindergartners are delighted to finally board big buses and head out to Butler's Orchard, a trip that marks an important step in an expanding circle of exploration that will take them to sites first in and near our city and, later, well beyond its boundaries.

All the journeys recounted in this issue of the *St. Patrick's Press* were selected, planned, enjoyed, and extended upon return with a clear recognition that students learn in many different ways and many different settings. All of them are closely tied to studies undertaken within our classrooms. Having worked hard to prepare for an upcoming fieldtrip, students are receptive and perceptive observers. They return to school brimming with new experiences, new knowledge, new images, new questions, new excitements made possible by these journeys.

St. Patrick's location in the nation's capital brings with it a wealth of resources available to teachers and students outside of the classroom. The museums, art galleries, monuments, embassies, concert halls, theaters, and houses of worship within the District itself, just minutes from the Whitehaven Campus and the MacArthur Campus, offer a variety of ways to extend and enrich the learning that occurs day in and day out in the classroom.

But the richness of our location goes well beyond the National Mall and the Smithsonian, the Kennedy Center, and Embassy Row. This edition of the *Press* captures how relatively short bus rides bring students to Maryland's Eastern Shore and the Chesapeake Bay, where Grade 4 sails on the 18th-century schooner *Sultana* and Grade 6 students travel to the Echo Hill Outdoor School to continue their study of what it means to live in the midst of one of the largest watersheds on the planet, or to Pennsylvania, where Grade 7 students complement their humanities classroom study of the Civil War at the Gettysburg battlefield and historical site. Jamestown and St. Mary's City—as Head of Lower School Gretchen Spencer reminds us, the first capital cities of Virginia and Maryland, respectively—beckon for Grade 3 students intent on understanding the early colonial settlements, why people travel to new places, and how geography and environment affect the way people live.





*"We want to deepen students' curiosity . . . to encourage them to watch closely, to listen carefully, to ask good questions, and to savor fresh insights . . . and also to have some fun along the way."*

**Photo:** Nursery students get their hands on some real fire equipment at the nearby Palisades fire station after studying fire safety in their classroom.

So whether the destination is right around the corner—the wetlands area adjacent to the Lab School, or Hillwood or, for our Nursery School children, the Palisades fire station or the national parkland adjoining our Foxhall Campus—or at considerable distance—Atlanta, Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery, where our Grade 8 students enrich their study of the Civil Rights Movement—we want to deepen students' curiosity in the real-life context of the wider world, to remind students that learning goes on well beyond the schoolhouse, to encourage them to watch closely, to listen carefully, to ask good questions, and to savor fresh insights . . . and also to have some fun along the way.

With respect to that last point, we should not miss a particular characteristic of these field trips, more prominent in some than in others, that goes beyond their academic content—namely, students take these trips with each other. As in the most effective classroom learning, field trips invite students to encounter new material, to gain better understanding, and to solve problems together with classmates. There are certain field trips on which the social curriculum prevails, such as the Grade 3 fall trip to Camp Letts, an all-day, outdoor, community-building adventure; the Grade 5 fall trip to Wilderness Adventure in New Castle, Virginia; or the Grade 6 early-June off-campus retreat, which marks the end of those students' elementary school years together. Other trips balance

academic content with group challenges. Even the Grade 8 journey to Georgia and Alabama, with its searing reminders of the Civil Rights Movement and the way that it shaped the America in which we live today, includes a stop at Atlanta's World of Coca-Cola for these young people whose days together at St. Patrick's will soon come to an end.

We recognize the perils of drawing too bright a line between the cognitive-academic and social-emotional lives of young learners. Feeling welcome and comfortable within a grade-level group, supported by classmates, and willing to push one's self and take appropriate risks . . . how can we separate those essential social-emotional characteristics from the forces that promote cognitive and academic growth in the academic classroom?

Just as we are certain that learning occurs in all sorts of different places, as a result of a range of different experiences, we are confident that young people—indeed, that all of us—construct meaning most effectively in concert with others, that knowledge is a social construct enhanced by shared experiences such as those described in these pages. The knowledge they construct, then, is knowledge about one's self and about each other, as well as about the science, history, art, or music that has drawn their teachers and them to any one field trip destination.

Among my favorite St. Patrick's field trips is one that long-time Grade 2 teacher Jan Nelson shared with us two years ago in the Winter 2009 edition of the *Press*, "From Idea to Implementation." In her article, "From a Spider to a Dinosaur: A Whopping Big Egg Story," Jan told us about the Grade 2 team's move away from an interdisciplinary unit on E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*—which, increasingly, all of the students had already read or (sigh) seen as a Disney movie—toward a lesser-known text, Oliver Butterworth's *The Enormous Egg*, in which an "astonished" hen lays what appears to be a dinosaur egg. (You can find that article in the *Press* archives available on our website, under Quicklinks.)

Given the prominence in the story of Washington, D.C., in general, and the National Mall and Museum of Natural History, in particular, teachers decided on a field trip to the museum "to tease out the locations we read about and designed a walking route where we could pause to read parts of the text and literally 'walk in Nate's footsteps.' We were delighted to find that the museum's dinosaur hall begins with a large exhibit on the stegosaurus. We even found a way to incorporate the unit into our technology classes, where we made maps of the Mall with all the monuments Nate and Uncle Beasley passed on their morning walks."

With so many activities radiating outward from a central literary text, the Grade 2 *Enormous Egg* unit offers a wonderful example of the kind of layered, textured experiences that gifted teachers strive to create for the bright, interesting, curious young people with whom we spend our days. The sampling of trips (by no means an exhaustive list) included in this edition of the *Press* expresses our conviction that field trips play an important role in such experiences, that they help bring classroom studies to life as well as promote important growth in our young people that goes well beyond academic content. As such, field trips are an essential part of the St. Patrick's program from Nursery through Grade 8. 🌱



Photo: Students examine the Torah at the Washington Hebrew Congregation with Rabbi Joui Hessel during their world religions field trip.





# a broader vision

## The Campaign for St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School

Since the October launch of the Public Phase of the campaign, efforts by campaign chairs and volunteers have yielded more than \$700,000 in new gifts and pledges toward the \$2-million public phase goal. Grade-level events concluded early this month, and our broader community of alumni, parents of alumni, grandparents, and friends will be invited to participate over the next several months.

To date, the campaign has raised more than \$6.7 million toward the \$8-million goal. A Broader Vision will finance the Day School's first regulation-size athletic field for our growing physical education and athletic programs and work to protect, maintain, and continue to enhance the existing Nursery through Grade 8 program through the reduction of debt and strengthening of our capital base.

The Day School is poised to sign a construction contract for the project, and planning for the ceremonial Groundbreaking on June 5 is underway. The new field on the Foxhall Campus will be ready for students in the spring of 2012.

Please look for a newsletter with more information about the project and upcoming events in the coming weeks, or contact Carrie Ahlborn, Assistant Head of School for Development, at 202.342.3454 or [ahlbornc@stpatsdc.org](mailto:ahlbornc@stpatsdc.org) with any questions or to join us. Thank you to everyone who has supported the campaign so far!



**Right:** The most recent architectural rendering of the regulation-size athletic field on the Foxhall Campus, including the planned widening of Foxhall Road, the entrance to the campus, the 3,000 sq. ft. plaza area, and stadium seating for 600.



# Successful Expansion of Spanish Department Brings Language Instruction to Students Beginning in Grade 1



*Clara Cabezas*  
Spanish

Sketching monsters to learn body parts, designing Picasso-style portraits, composing dream-like pictures to reflect Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Magic Realism, or cooking rice pudding . . . these are the

some of the activities you might see if you visited a Spanish class in Grades 1, 2, or 3.

Although the advantages of learning a second language at any age are well-known, acquiring it at an early age may have specific benefits. Research shows that the human brain is most capable of acquiring a language between birth and pre-adolescence. Also, there is evidence that learners of a second language are more likely to develop a pronunciation and proficiency that are closer to that of native speakers.

With the extension of Spanish classes to the Lower School and the addition of a new member of the Spanish Department this year, St. Patrick's continues to move forward in its pursuit of academic excellence. Eric D'Aubermont and I are thrilled to welcome Annabel Coleman to the Spanish Department. A native of Venezuela, Annabel was a Grade 2 homeroom teacher at St. Patrick's until last year.

Beginning in Grade 1, Lower School students meet three times a week for 30 minutes, during which students learn vocabulary by singing, playing games, par-

ticipating in hands-on activities, and immersing themselves gradually in the language. We believe that students should learn language through culture and culture through language. With this philosophy in mind, students frequently are exposed to culturally authentic materials and activities. One of the Spanish Department's objectives is to create a comfortable and engaging environment that facilitates the student's oral comprehension and the use of basic vocabulary and phrases.

So how is it going so far? Even though we will not be able to compare results until Grade 1 students reach Grade 4, we already are seeing promising signs through the first two academic terms. There is almost no explicit grammar instruction in Lower School Spanish; however, students are becoming aware of how Spanish grammar functions. Many of them are starting to develop an intuition of what sounds better, even without knowing why. Also, many Grade 1 students appear to have an easier time learning the correct pronunciation and are acquiring a significant amount of vocabulary. Therefore, one would assume that this will allow students in the Upper School to focus on more complex topics in grammar and lexicon. But, most of all, we are excited to see students go home engaged in singing and practicing their Spanish. 🇪🇸



## Wolfhound Watch: Successful Basketball Season Concludes, Girls Junior Varsity Team Finishes Second in Conference

Capping off a successful St. Patrick's basketball season for Day School teams was the girls junior varsity team, which finished in second place in the Capital Athletic Conference regular season with a fantastic record of 10-3-1. The team's only Grade 4 student, led the team in points and earned an All-Tournament nomination at the Bullis basketball tournament.

The boys junior varsity team, having graduated seven players from last year's team, faced long odds at the beginning of the season. However, after coalescing quickly as a team and with lots of determination, focus, and practice, the Wolfhounds fought their way to a hard-earned 5-5 regular-season record. The only returning starter and co-captain, led the team in points, free throws, steals, and assists. The other co-captain led

the team in rebounds, blocks, and points in the paint.

On the varsity side, the girls team finished the season with a 5-6 record. Led by a strong group of Grade 8 players, the varsity girls fell just short of defeating Westminster in the first round of the CAC tournament. Three Wolfhounds were selected to this year's All-Star team.

The boys varsity team, of which half the members had never played organized basketball at the beginning of the season, made significant strides over the season, and most games were highly contested. Despite one half-court basket, the team was eliminated in the first round of the CAC playoff tournament.



*This Grade 4 student rises above the competition on her way to the basket. She was the team's only Grade 4 student and the top scorer.*



*This Grade 6 student and junior varsity co-captain heads in for a lay-up. He led this year's team in scoring.*

PHOTOS BY WILLY HOFFMAN



## Author and Editor Alan Murray Speaks at Parent Reunion Luncheon

Alan Murray, Deputy Managing Editor and Executive Editor Online for the *Wall Street Journal* and father of Lucyann '02 and Amanda '04, headlined this year's Parent Reunion Luncheon in October. Alan reminisced about his years at the Day School, imparted wisdom from his years of experience at the *Wall Street Journal*, and read from his bestselling new book, *The Wall Street Journal Essential Guide to Management*. Alan has worked at the *Wall Street Journal* since 1983, where he served for more than a decade as the Washington bureau chief.

Chaired this year by April McClain Delaney, Nancy Sidamon-Eristoff, and Page Smith, this year's eighth annual Parent Reunion Luncheon drew more than 100 parents of alumni.

Save the date for next year's luncheon, Friday, September 30!



**Above:** Parent Reunion Luncheon speaker Alan Murray is shown here with April McClain-Delaney, event co-chair. The other co-chairs were Nancy Sidamon-Eristoff and Page Smith.



## Authors Norton Juster and Justine Kenin Highlight Book Fair

The Parents Association held its annual Fall Book Fair in November, a fundraiser that celebrates reading and the Day School's philosophy of Exceptional Literacy. Co-chaired this year by Ann Kaye and Karen Kelliher, the event was highlighted by two spectacular authors—Norton Juster and Justine Kenin.

Juster, author of the beloved children's classic *The Phantom Tollbooth*, spoke to students in the Upper School about the art of writing and his inspiration for various works including *The Dot and the Line: A Romance in Lower Mathematics*, which in its short-film adaptation won an Academy Award. Justine Kenin (**pictured left with students**) shared with Lower School students her new book, *We Grew It—Let's Eat It!*, which follows two young girls as they grow, tend, harvest, and eat their very own fruits and vegetables.

## Grandparents and Special Friends Visiting Day Continues Tradition

As part of a longtime Day School tradition, 350 grandparents and special friends spent the morning of November 23 visiting classrooms, attending chapel, and spending some quality time with students for Kindergarten – Grade 6 Grandparents and Special Friends Visiting Day.

Chaired by Kelly Lugar, this year's event was a smashing success. Students were thrilled to be able to share their time at St. Patrick's with such honored guests. As a souvenir, each grandparent and special friend received a picture frame with the St. Patrick's logo during the visit, and a photo of each visitor with his/her student was sent as a memento. We are looking forward to next year!





## Lift Every Voice and Sing: Kwanzaa Karamu Celebration Draws Crowd



Led by teachers Erica Thompson and Stacia McFadden, more than 50 students participated in this year's Kwanzaa Karamu celebration in December. Kwanzaa was created by college professor Maulana Karenga in 1966 to help African Americans remember and celebrate their heritage and culture. It is based on seven principles such as purpose, self-determination, and creativity. Older students shared these principles in a Poet's Café format (**pictured above, right**). They wrote and performed "infomercials" to "sell" the principles of Kwanzaa.

The youngest children participated in a call-and-response song (**pictured above, left**) inspired by Ella Jenkins, "Did You Feed My Cow?" Jenkins is best



known for her use of the call-and-response pattern that is dominant in the songs and chants of West Africa. The students learned about some inventions that were created by African Americans. They acted out a "Twilight Zone" play, imagining a world without these important inventions such as the stop light by Garrett Morgan or the light filament by Lewis Howard Latimer. Along with learning about African American history, the students also shared some modern culture as they danced the Electric Slide along with members of the audience. The program finished with the singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," often known as the Black National Anthem. The evening ended with a potluck supper.

## Students Continue Mission of Service at Annual Gifts for Good Fair

The Day School continued its tradition of service with the fifth annual Gifts for Good fair in early December. Each year, students identify worthy causes to support, and classes and families set up booths with information about their selected charity. Attendees are able to make donations to the selected organizations in lieu of purchasing gifts during the holiday season. Nearly 300 people came to "shop" for alternative gifts and made generous donations of nearly \$22,000 that will support more than 30 causes to help individuals, communities, and even animals near and far!

This year, both local and international nonprofit groups were represented, including the Bishop Walker School, World Wildlife Fund (**pictured right**), Pennies for Peace, and the Feline Foundation. Gifts for Good continues to allow St. Patrick's students to make their "presents" felt around the world, and reminds students, parents, and community members alike of the true spirit of the holiday season.

Many thanks to the coordinators of the event, students and families who organized booths, and everyone who attended.



*In each edition of The Press, we bring you short biographies of current Day School faculty and staff. We are proud to share the stories of the many accomplished people who make St. Patrick's the outstanding institution it is.*



## Lisa Merotto

PK Teacher

Traveling through Australasia and the South Pacific in 1989, PK teacher Lisa Merotto both met her husband-to-be and discovered her passion for teaching. During two years living in Fiji, Lisa worked at a local preschool and was so inspired by the students that she decided to make teaching her path in life.

Lisa earned an honors degree in fine arts and education and a master's degree in education from Middlesex University in London. Recently she has been exploring the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching young children and spent a week last summer at St. John's Preschool looking at those teaching methods in the classroom. She plans to visit the Reggio Emilia network of schools in Italy in the near future. This summer, she is looking forward to taking part in Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

"Young children make you appreciate the details of day-to-day life that we often stop seeing as adults," says Lisa. "Their sense of wonder and enthusiasm is a joy to be around." Lisa believes that in the early years of development, children are forming who they are as individuals. "Our role as teachers is to provide a supportive and enriching environment that allows the child to develop through exploration and discovery."

Outside of the classroom, Lisa enjoys spending time with her family, including her two children and husband Dino. She enjoys painting and has recently become enthusiastic about photography.





## Shelly Basile

### Upper School Science Teacher

Upper School science teacher Shelly Basile began working with children in her teens as a swim instructor and tutored inner-city students in math and science during her college years. "I love the energy and enthusiasm children bring to everything they do," said Shelly. Enthusiastic about science, math, and research, she believes that teaching is the "natural fusion" of everything that she is passionate about.

Shelly graduated with a bachelor of science degree from Trinity College in biology with a focus in biochemical entomology. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in environmental science at the Johns Hopkins University. This is Shelly's eleventh year teaching at St. Patrick's; she spent one year teaching at the Potomac School before coming to the Day School.

As an educator, Shelly believes that every child is born with an innate set of gifts and abilities. She believes that her responsibility is to help students realize each of their own unique talents. And as anyone who knows Shelly will attest, her sense of humor is a trademark of her style. "There is nothing better than having a good belly laugh with my students," says Shelly. "The kind of laugh that makes your sides ache and tears flow. I can only imagine that kind of fun happens more in teaching than in any other profession on the planet."

Shelly has two children and a six-year-old lab named Sassy. Her husband Dom is "busy trying to save the world" at Conservation International. "If it were up to my son," says Shelly, "he would wear a cape to work."

# On the Road with St. Patrick's

Whether close to home or far afield, students at the Day School travel frequently beyond our walls to expand their knowledge, live the lessons they learn in the classroom, and carry out St. Patrick's commitment to serving others.



*Photo: Grade 6 students enjoy free time during their stay at the Echo Hill Outdoor School on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. At Echo Hill, students participate in teambuilding games and conservation projects and apply their science knowledge.*



*“The world is so full of a number of things,  
I’m sure we should all be as happy as kings”*

*-Robert Louis Stevenson*

*Introduction by Nancy White  
Head of Nursery School*

When our youngest children arrive in September, step from their cars, make their way up to the Courtyard door and then, with backpacks and lunch boxes in tow, climb the stairs to their classrooms, we understand that they are venturing out from the safety of home or of much smaller childcare settings to the larger world of school at St. Patrick’s. Each day is exciting, as they explore different areas of the classroom and the expansive playground, learn new skills, and make new friends. What an adventure! From this solid beginning, we gradually widen the experiences of the children. In ways that respect the young child’s perspective on the world, and mindful of maintaining what is familiar and comfortable, we introduce new experiences gradually and within the context of what is known or being studied.

Often, we set out on foot to find out about our immediate environment. For us, a field trip may involve finding the Nurse’s Office and popping in to see Mr. Barrett. We may visit the Elementary School Library or, as part of a fire safety unit, use checklists to inventory the school’s exit signs, fire extinguishers, and fire alarms. (While most of that study is done in-house, a walking trip to the Palisades fire station may enhance the unit.) Come May, we head over to the Gymnasium and Performing Arts Center to see the Kindergarten Circus. Soon after, eager to see what the next year might look like, our PK students travel to Kindergarten classrooms and the Kindergarten Playground while our Nursery classes spend a morning in the PK classrooms.

In addition to these meaningful walking field trips, we explore the larger world not by taking to the road, but rather by letting the road come to us. A highlight of the year occurs just before Christmas when ballerinas from Ballet Petite turn the Great Hall into a theatrical venue, complete with costumes and props for us to use as we dance *The Nutcracker*. The children are always eager participants. In their classes, they have read *The Nutcracker* and listened to the music, anticipating the moment when they would take on the roles of the soldiers and Clara and dance by the enormous tree in the Great Hall.

We took another “reverse field trip” in February when Michelle Valeriani brought her Dinorock production to our Nursery and PK children, sparking new interest in dinosaur families. And then, in April, when the PK classes were well into their in-depth study of the ocean, the whole Nursery School spent a morning learning about the secrets of the deep via Discovery Theater’s *Under the Sea* presentation. The PK musicals often result in similar explorations.

Last spring’s introduction of a woodland-themed study and music program provided a chance to walk in a nearby parkland. Debra Graham, our Special Investigations teacher, and Martha Estroff, our Nursery School science teacher, organized the “Walk in the Woods” described in the accompanying article. It was such a success that we intend to put on our hiking gear and repeat it every spring going forward.

It won’t be long until our Nursery and PK children board those big buses that we see waiting for the Lower School and Upper School children on the way to field trips. In the meantime, we are happily finding our own ways to explore the larger world near and far.



# A Walk in the Woods

*By Debra Graham  
Special Investigations Teacher*

*Martha Estroff  
Nursery School Science Teacher*

*"Where are you and Angus going?" asked Henry's mother.*

*"Exploring," said Henry. "We will probably discover the whole world before we're through."*

*"Try to finish exploring the world before it gets dark."*

*"All right—if a bear doesn't catch us."*

*-Mark Taylor, Henry the Explorer*

In this spirit, the PK classes set off last April to capture the excitement, adventure, and fun of an expedition to the woods.

Our first stop was St. Patrick's Foxhall property. Shhh. We spotted a doe and two yearling fawns, browsing for fresh green plants at a favorite watering hole. The PK class crowded onto the edge of the property and crouched to watch. The deer turned their heads to watch us. Soon their ears flicked, tails rose with a snap, and they were off, bounding into the thick cover of the undergrowth.





**Photo (top left):** Nursery students begin exploring the plants and animals they may encounter during their walk in the woods before they take their trip. This then-PK1 sits with a deer that had found its way into Ms. Gasperetti's classroom.

**Photo (below):** Nursery students gather around a fallen tree stump with Mrs. Graham, Special Investigations teacher, to see if they can spot anything living there.



We examined the deer habitat. We followed deer tracks to another watering hole and along the muddy hillside. Where were the deer going? Which plants did they eat for food? Where did they sleep?

We continued our walk and entered Glover-Archbold Park off of Hoban Road. Only three blocks from school, we crossed from a residential neighborhood into a world of towering trees, lush growth, and startling quiet. Rays of sunshine pierced the shaded woods in diagonal sheets.

The woods were filled with new growth. The children spread out along the path to discover. We showed them Jack-in-the-pulpit plants, ironwood trees, and May apples. The children grew in competence and confidence as they rushed ahead to find Jack-in-the-pulpit plants growing in new locations. They unfurled plants to show us their discoveries.

Our explorers tested themselves physically as they picked their way around tree roots, climbed over logs, and walked up and down steep hills. We came to a stream and faced the question of how to cross and not muddy our shoes. The adults straddled the muddy stream and, supporting each child under the arms, swung them to the other side. Like early explorers, the children waited in line and conquered the obstacle one-by-one.

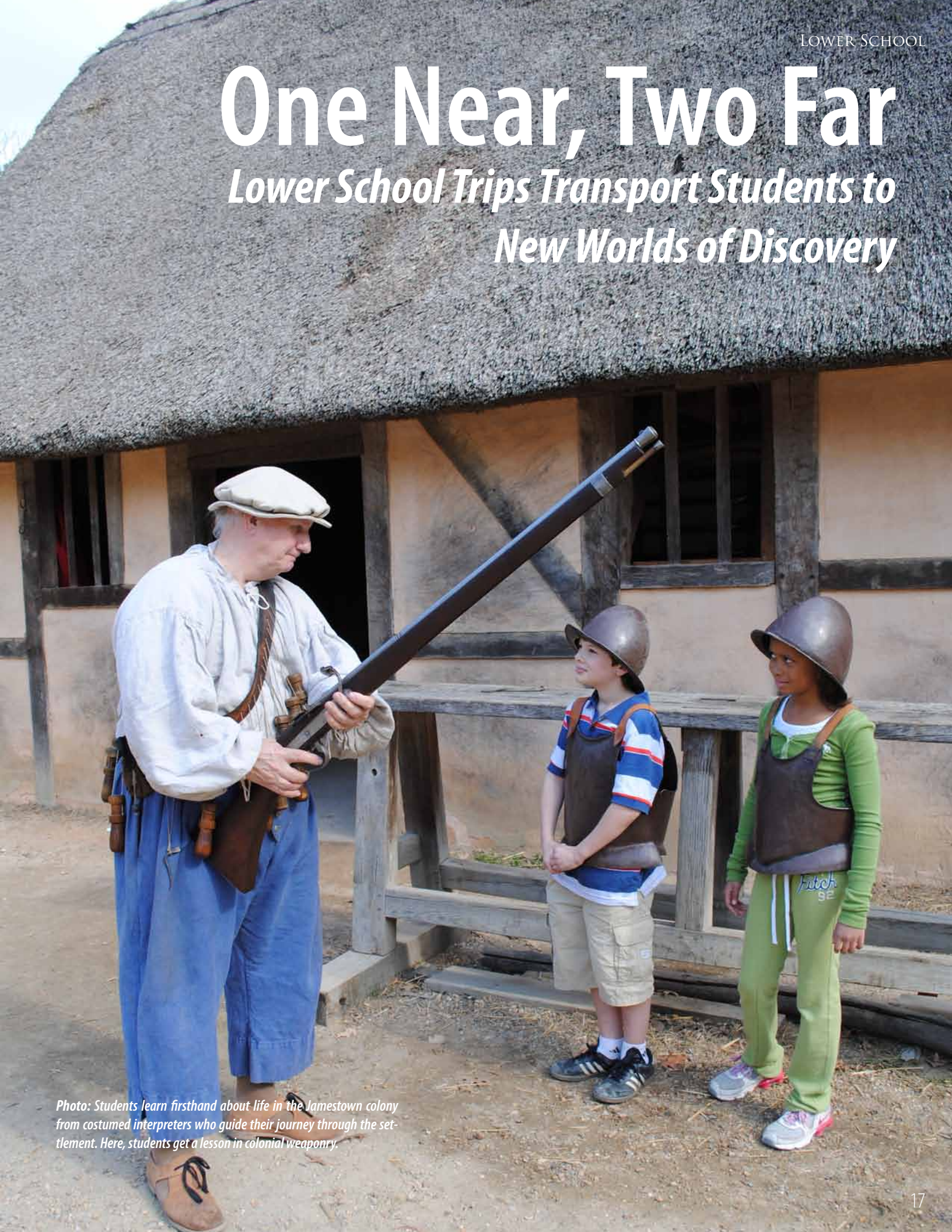
A visit to the woods requires bravery from the children. Is there something hiding in that hole? Are there bears in the woods? Aren't all of these plants poison ivy? As a group we explored and questioned and we discovered a world of fun and adventure.

There's magic for children in the simplest things, and some of the simplest things can be found in our backyard. When children first learn about their world they focus on themselves and their families. We help them gradually broaden their understanding of the world. A visit to the woods shows them a whole new world—and it's only three blocks from St. Patrick's. 🍀



# One Near, Two Far

*Lower School Trips Transport Students to  
New Worlds of Discovery*



*Photo: Students learn firsthand about life in the Jamestown colony from costumed interpreters who guide their journey through the settlement. Here, students get a lesson in colonial weaponry.*





**Photo (left):** Grade 1 students traveled to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens in Northeast Washington. The gardens were acquired by the National Park Service in 1938 and since then have been a shining example of wetland habitat and aquatic plant species here in the nation's capital. The visit complements students' study of wetland habitats in their classrooms.

**Photo (right):** The beautiful Hillwood Museum, the former home of Marjorie Merriweather Post, houses a treasure trove of art and artifacts from all over the world—but particularly from Russia, to which Post's husband was the American ambassador in the 1930's.

*Introduction by Gretchen Spencer*  
Head of Lower School

From the time they enter Kindergarten until they leave the Lower School after Grade 3, Lower School students and their teachers take numerous field trips, from walking excursions to visit the nearby wetlands at the Lab School as part of Grade 1's study of wetlands to climbing aboard buses that take Grade 3 students to faraway Jamestown and St. Mary's City. In between those very near and very far trips, Lower School students visit many fascinating places in and around Washington, D.C. to expand their knowledge, bring units of study alive, and deepen their understanding of people and places.

Field trips are never just one-day events. From careful preparation before a trip, to follow-up activities after the trip, field trips provide a special lens through which learning becomes more meaningful and more focused. There is a Confucius saying that reads, "I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand." The kind of engagement and exposure to learning outside the classroom that field trips offer contributes greatly to understanding the world—both present and past.

Here, teacher Anne Field describes how Grade 1 students' trip to Hillwood, the home of Marjorie Merriweather Post, provides a special lens that helps to bring Russian culture alive. We also examine how Grade 3 students' trips to Jamestown and St. Mary's City (the first capital cities of Virginia and Maryland, respectively) help them to better understand the two questions that guide their study of the early English settlements in America: Why do people travel to new places? How do the geography and physical environment of a place affect the way people live?



# Dragons, Eggs, and Tsars: Hillwood Museum

*By Anne Field*

*Lower School Resource Teacher*

As Grade 1 teachers, we know that six- and seven-year old children develop and revise their understanding of geography, history, and culture over time and—in the special way children do—through their own eyes, experiences, interests, and desires. We also know that through stories that engage the imagination, we can begin the process of expanding their understanding of places and people and times different from their own. And so we begin much of our social studies with an age-old artifact of culture—folktales. We are, of course, fortunate in having access to views and information about the wider world not available to teachers just a few years ago. The Internet, with its instant connection to other people and places, can bring images and information directly into the classroom. These resources provoke questions, expand understanding, and show live images unlike those in books or photographs. But we also know that without the links to imagination, wonder, and curiosity found in story and so important to children, these sources of information can be limited and

limiting. Our visits to Hillwood (and other museums) help us establish the link between our work with literature and traditional curriculum resources and our children's developing understanding of the world as it is, and was. There is so much that can be learned when we begin with, "Once upon a time, in a land far away. . ."

Perhaps not as well known or frequently visited as other museums in Washington, Hillwood is tucked away on its own little hillside near Rock Creek Park. Every other year, Grade 1 students travel through its gates and into a world of Russian history, art, literature, and magic.

As we enter the house (once owned by Marjorie Merriweather Post, whose husband Joseph Davies was America's ambassador to Russia from 1937-1938), we are greeted by a museum guide and educator who begins our tour by introducing us to Catherine the Great, ruler of Russia from 1762 until 1796. Her portrait covers the longest wall of the great staircase, and the children see her wearing a tiara and holding an orb and scepter, symbols

of royalty and power. Our guide explains that the laurel leaves in the picture are a symbol of victory. Catherine is victorious indeed, having conquered land all the way to the Black Sea, unifying vast areas as a new and resource-rich imperial Russia.

Gazing up at Catherine in her lush, ermine-trimmed robe, the children ask, "Was she married to one of those tsars?" "Is she really a queen?" "She looks like a grandmother!" says another. "But she does have a princess dress on," is the last assessment. Now the children revise their mental images of "queen" as they see the real woman largely responsible for the expansion and consolidation of the large and powerful country so long connected to our own. They have already learned that Russia is the largest country in the world, straddling two continents, and is home to the world's deepest lake and the longest river in Europe, the Volga. Although she is not young, Catherine looks every bit the image of power and majesty, perfectly capable of remaking her part of the world.





**Photo (left):** Grade 1 students examine the collection of Marjorie Merriweather Post at the Hillwood Museum. Treasures from all over the world, including rare Fabergé eggs (shown here), are on display.

**Photo (opposite top right):** Grade 3 students explored the dwellings of colonists in the Jamestown settlement.

**Photo (opposite bottom right):** Students spent time aboard a replica of one of the three ships that brought the original settlers to Jamestown.

Hillwood is a museum but was lived in as a home. Mrs. Post collected an amazing variety of Russian treasures that gleam inside lighted cabinets, nestle inside velvet-lined cases, and hang on damask walls. As we walk (ever so carefully!) into the first room on our tour, we are surrounded by porcelain, many pieces bearing images of St. George and the dragon. St. George, our guide tells us, is the patron saint of Moscow. As the children know from our reading of folktales and other stories, characters often represent ideas or values important to the people who remember and tell their stories. Now they see, at every turn, St. George, powerful and brave, slaying magnificently fierce dragons. And, in the center of this room, inlaid on the floor, is another symbol of imperial Russia and the Romanov family—the double-headed eagle that looks both east and west, claiming power over a huge land, connecting one continent to another. They see again the orb and scepter in its claws. Even our younger students are learning that countries choose images that affect how they see themselves and how they want other countries to view them.

As we continue our tour, the children see icons with golden-robed figures and Fabergé eggs, once given by members of the royal family as Easter gifts. Our guide tells us that there are only fifty Fabergé eggs from the

royal collection in existence. The children are in awe of the jewels and tiny portraits that cover the eggs on display. “Are those really diamonds?” they ask. “Is that real gold?” “Why did they give the eggs?” Power is displayed in more than one way, we notice.

As we move into yet another room, the children see paintings depicting scenes from Russian life. In “The Boyar Wedding” are a group of people around a table, celebrating a marriage. Our guide points out the varying headpieces on the women, each indicating the particular family or geographical area of Russia they come from. “I’d like to wear that one,” says one girl. “I like the dresses, but not the hats,” says another. In the same room are serving dishes for the traditional Russian welcome of bread and salt. The Russian word for hospitality, in fact, comes from the words for bread (khleb) and salt (sol)—khlebosolstvo! Russian art and objects show us not just queens and how they looked and lived, but also other more familiar people, and they also give us a window into their lives. “That’s a long word, but sol sounds like salt to me,” says one boy.

Now we move outside and down a forest path and, coming around a bend, the children see it—the dacha! With its carefully fitted log walls, brightly painted gingerbread

trim, and sloping roof, it resembles houses they have seen in folktale illustrations. The children exclaim, “It’s just like the house in Baba Yaga!” “No!” says someone else, “It’s the one in Bony-Legs!” It is real, but we all have the feeling we have just walked into a Russian fairy tale. Who might be inside? Anna and her brother Ivan from Anna and the Seven Swans? The beautiful, clever Vasilissa? Or could it really be Baba Yaga’s house? We all think not—too pretty and, unlike the house of the iconic Russian witch, it does not stand on chicken feet! Alas, we are not to find out; the dacha is closed and (here’s a small disappointment) is not the home of anyone, real or imaginary. It houses special exhibits and is being prepared for a new one.

Our tour ends with a craft workshop where the children design and create their own jeweled treasure boxes. Eyes grow wide as the children see boxes of “jewels,” velvet ribbon, and gold and silver filigreed stickers. How delightful it is to make new examples of the treasures they have just seen! As they gather their creations and thank our guide, every child is smiling. In just one morning they have traveled into a different world that has connected classroom questions and knowledge to a new, real experience of another time and place. Teachers and children feel we have had at least a little taste of Russia—her land, people, history, and magical stories. 🌿



# Passport to History: Jamestown and St. Mary's City

*By Gretchen Spencer*

*Head of Lower School*

*Shannon Scott*

*Grade 3 Teacher*

*Trissy McHenry*

*Asst. to Head of Lower School*



## Jamestown

In February, after reading the children's historical novel *A Lion to Guard Us* that tells the story of three children traveling by ship to meet their father in the newly established settlement of Jamestown and reading nonfiction about the struggles of the fledgling colony, Grade 3 students travel to Jamestown, Virginia, for a full day of exploration. They visit the reconstructed Powhatan village and imagine that, as Powhatan children, their job might have been to stand in the raised shelter in the garden and scare away the crows to keep them from eating the "three sisters" (corn, beans, squash), gather firewood from the nearby forest, or help scrape deer hide clean with a sharp stone.

*Jamestown was hard to survive in because of the diseases, low food supply, and no water.*

From there, students visit the reconstructed Jamestown Fort where they pretend to be soldiers practicing their drills (with long sticks), watch a musket loading and firing, cook cornbread over an open fire, and attend church, which the colonists did twice a day Monday through Saturday, and three times on Sunday.

*If you missed church once your food was taken away. If you missed it twice, you were beaten. And the third time you were executed.*

Students view the sheaves of tobacco drying from the cross beams in the store room and learn how it was sent in barrels back to England, as the English were desperate to







**Photo (left):** Grade 3 students learn the operation of a colonial ship's cannon from an historical interpreter while her classmates look on.

find a way to make Jamestown profitable for the Virginia Company. Later in the day, they visit the reconstructed glass factory, as glass-making was another industry that the colonists tried to make profitable.

*The glass factory was the first factory in North America. Did you know that the original color of glass is green?*

The students trek down to the docks and visit replicas of the three ships—the Susan Constant, the Godspeed, and the Discovery—that transported the first 104 men and boys to Jamestown in 1607. They climb aboard and sit in the cramped space that served as a bed (flea and all) and listen as the guide describes what the voyage was like.

*The voyage was long and hard and even if you survived the trip, you probably wouldn't survive in Jamestown.*

## St. Mary's City

In the late spring, students again travel back in time to historic St. Mary's City, Maryland where they take part in another full day of exploration and discovery of life in the

17th century. The trip offers the Grade 3 students a unique comparison to Jamestown. Known as the first settlement in Maryland, St. Mary's City is one of the most historic locations in the United States and is the best preserved founding site of a 17th-century English colony in North America. Students focus on life during the period, the hardships the settlers faced, their use of natural resources, and their relationship to the Yaocomo Indians.

Students spend the day touring different parts of the city. They begin the morning visiting an English plantation, a garden, and a tobacco field. Students participate in a wide range of activities, including picking rose petals to be used for medicinal purposes and making sachets, planting tobacco seedlings in the fields, observing livestock, and pretending to be archaeologists. Students have the opportunity to experience life on board the Dove, a representation of the original boat that carried settlers from England to the New World. They visit the Ordinary, the first public inn in Maryland, and see and work the first printing press too! The group also explores the village where the Yaocomo Indians lived. They learn about their shelters, food, and clothing and how the Yaocomo Indians helped

the settlers by teaching them skills for survival.

As students leave, they remember to curtsy and bow to the docent and the people in colonial dress to show our respect and appreciation for letting us experience a small part of history.

When the Grade 3 students return to their classrooms, they compare these two important early settlements in which the roots of American history took hold and grew. Students are able to explore in depth the questions that guide their social studies throughout the year—Why do people move? How do the geography and physical environment of the place affect the way people live?—with firsthand knowledge and a deeper understanding of the ways the early settlers in Virginia and Maryland, and the Indians with whom they interacted, shaped their daily lives and the early history of these two colonies. 🌱



# From the Forest to the Bay

## Upper School Trips Leave No Stone Unturned



*This student prepares to cross the swinging bridge during the Grade 5 Wilderness Adventure trip. Students spend three days and two nights at the camp in New Castle, VA, fostering a connection with nature and engaging in confidence- and team-building activities.*



**Photo (right):** Grade 6 students enjoy hanging out tentside during rest time from a busy day exploring wetlands and learning about the Chesapeake Bay at Echo Hill Outdoor School.



### *Introduction by Dan Spector*

*Assistant Head of School/Head of Upper School*

By the time students reach the Upper School (Grades 4 – 8), they are well-versed in what it means to go on a field trip. Still, the sight of a bus pulling up in front of the school building excites students in ways that surprise even the most veteran teachers. That bus, or whatever means of transportation stands in its place, brings with it a sense of the unknown, a sense of the possible, and a sense of the real that can sometimes be overlooked in the daily routine of school life. On some level, the students recognize each of these elements and synthesize them with exuberance and joy, reminding us of their eagerness to learn new things.

The Upper School trips that you will read about in the pages that follow draw together, as do the Lower School trips featured elsewhere, school studies and unique off-campus experiences that reinforce those studies. As you read, you will also see how, as the children grow into young adults, we stretch these trips in time and content, allowing our students to challenge themselves in new ways. Grade 4 teacher Ellen Cremer shares reflections from students on the experience of traveling on an 18th-century British schooner. Grade 5 teacher Thérèse Khan highlights the culminating experience of the Grade 5 year, the Dig, a multi-day trip that takes students off-campus for a simulated archaeological dig. MacArthur Campus Director Tim Coleman describes the Grade 7 trip to Gettysburg, which has been designed include two core elements of the Grade 7 program—American history study and service learning. Last, Grade 8 humanities teacher Ann Adams reflects on what is the culminating experience for any graduate of the MacArthur Campus, the annual trip to Atlanta, Birmingham, and Montgomery, capping the two-year study of American history with a full look at the Civil Rights Movement.



*Grade 4 students have the opportunity to set sail on an authentic 18th-century schooner on the Chesapeake Bay. Guided by professional sailors, they experience life at sea firsthand.*

# Sailing on the *Sultana*: Adventure on the Chesapeake

*By Ellen Cremer*  
Grade 4 Teacher

Together we travel on the bus over the Bay Bridge as the sun is rising. We collectively exhale as the Chesapeake Bay comes into view. It is a spectacular sight. We are on our way to sail the *Sultana*, a replica of an 18th-century British schooner. Since we left our

classrooms and books behind at St. Patrick's earlier that morning, we have high hopes for a full day of outdoor fun and learning in Chestertown, Maryland during the annual Grade 4 fall field trip.

Learning on the *Sultana* is different from learning in our classrooms on most days. It is experiential, which means that students learn by doing. For many students, this type of learning is exciting because it is active and involves touching and feeling. In fact, the *Sultana* crew provides a context for the series of articles that students have previously read and discussed in their classrooms. Throughout the field trip there are references made to colonial life in Chestertown, to the new taxes that anger the colonists, and to the colonists' protests that follow. Students naturally make meaningful connections to their social studies curriculum by drawing comparisons to their own lives and experiencing aspects of daily life as a *Sultana* crew member, a ship builder, and a colonial child. The quotes below illustrate some of the connections students are making.

*"In the colonial times you would play hoops [a colonial children's game] for fun when you had free time. I liked hoops because it's like sports. You get to let your energy out and have fun. So, in the colonial times, I bet there was a kid who liked hoops as much as me."*

*"We went to see where the model *Sultana* was built in an area called the *Sultana* Shipyard."*

*"While we were there, we saw lots of amazing things like how the colonists put cotton in the sides of the boat between the wood. We also saw how they had to leave the wood outside for a year or two to dry out. We also set a fire in the canoe to hull it out. We got to put cotton in wood with a partner. Using a special tool, we pushed the cotton into the wood. The colonists did this because water would get into the cracks of the ship."*

In most cases, the excitement commences once students go aboard the *Sultana*. The *Sultana* crew rotates small groups of students through several learning stations. On the *Sultana* deck, groups collect and analyze marine animals, determine the depth of the Chester River using a rope with knots, learn to read a maritime map, and steer the *Sultana*. Below deck, students examine the sleeping quarters of the colonial shipmates, the food they ate, and their methods for treating a variety of maladies. Below are a few students' reflections on their experiences.

*"We were on the *Sultana*, a British schooner which was used during the 18th century. On the *Sultana*, there was a cutout through which you could drop a fishing net in the water. Before we could drop the net, a classmate of mine kissed Bob the Buoy for good luck, and he threw it in the water and said, "Buoy in." Then four volunteers threw the net in, and we waited and the captain explained something else. Finally, we pulled up the net and guess what we found in there—a white perch, a sardine, a spot fish, and a crab with a fish in his claw!"*

*"On the *Sultana*, you don't steer the boat with a wheel but with a tiller. To use the tiller, a person would have to be on one side and another person on the other side. One person would push and one person would pull. When you turn the boat, it does not turn right away. You have to be patient because the boat is so big, it can't turn just like that."* 🌿





**Photo (left):** Grade 5 students unearth their first artifact during the Archaeological Dig. Three homeroom teams scramble to discover as much as they can about the imagined civilizations their cohorts have created.

## The Best-Kept Secret: Grade 5 Goes Digging

*By Thérèse Khan*  
Grade 5 Teacher

The Archeological Dig is a long-standing tradition at St. Patrick's and continues to be a culminating activity of the Grade 5 experience. It is a project that promotes creative and analytical thinking as well as cooperation and teamwork. It also provides 10- and 11-year-olds with an opportunity to practice keeping a secret for approximately a month.

Though this field trip to New Castle, Pennsylvania lasts only two days, the project begins weeks before behind the closed door of each homeroom. Under the guidance of their homeroom teachers, the students apply the information gained from our ancient civilizations unit to create three fictitious civilizations, one for each classroom. Once the details are hammered out, the students use their ingenuity to turn recycled materials into artifacts that give insights into their civilizations' government, social structure, language, religion, values, economy, and citizens' daily life. The atmosphere can be described as a Santa's workshop full of busy elves making artifacts rather than toys.

The day before we leave for the Dig site, the artifacts are boxed up along with shovels and trowels and loaded

onto the school's pickup truck. The following morning, before the sun rises, the children arrive and load their suitcases onto the coach bus and board with their day-packs loaded down with work gloves, a hat, sunscreen, water, and bug spray. It is a two-and-a-half-hour drive to Hickory Hollow Farm, the Dig site and home of former St. Patrick's art teacher Pam Jones and her husband Harry.

In preparation for our arrival, three pits have been dug a safe distance from each other so that the details of each civilization remain a secret. Each homeroom is divided into two groups and, while one group works at the pits, the other group goes on various adventures. These include a hayride, milking cows, making butter, an introduction to archery, picking strawberries, exploring the ecosystem of the farm's pond and, under the guidance of Mrs. Jones, observing and drawing animals, which are models borrowed from the taxidermy shop in the area.

Once the artifacts and shovels are unloaded and delivered to each pit, the burying of artifacts is the first order of business. All the artifacts are laid out and organized chronologically according to when they would have developed in the life of the civilization. The earliest artifacts are buried first, followed by the most recent. One group

buries half the artifacts and then the children switch and the second group buries the remaining items.

After lunch, each homeroom moves to the pit they are to excavate. The students learn the procedures archeologists follow and are then rotated through the jobs of digger, measurer, recorder, and bagger. It is always amazing to witness the excitement as artifacts are discovered, for the young archeologists seem to forget that less than 12 hours ago the artifacts were not there. By lunchtime the following day, the recovered artifacts are loaded back onto the pickup truck and returned to school for analysis.

Back at school, the children spend two days decoding the language and analyzing each artifact to gain a comprehensive understanding of their unearthed civilization. Once this process is complete, each homeroom is then transformed into a museum exhibit of its civilization. All three homerooms meet in the Common Room to share their findings and see how close they were to solving the mystery. Then and only then can the veil of secrecy be lifted. The presentation is followed by a museum tour of each civilization and a massive cleanup. Some students are so reluctant to part with the artifacts they made that many are taken home, dirt and all. 🌱

# Following the Road to Freedom

*As the capstone of their experience at St. Patrick's, students in the Grades 7 and 8 program embark on an ambitious two-year interdisciplinary humanities curriculum that takes them from America's native, European, and African roots to Civil Rights.*

*As a supplement to their classroom readings, discussions, and activities, students in Grade 7 travel to the site of the Battle of Gettysburg where Union soldiers turned*

*back Lee's Confederate army and changed the course of American history. While there, they engage in more of the service learning that is a hallmark of St. Patrick's.*

*At the end of their Grade 8 year, students re-trace the journey of the Civil Rights Movement with a visit to Atlanta, Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery. Students relate firsthand to the struggle of the country's most famous activists by literally walking a mile in their shoes.*



*Grade 8 students are shown here crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, where in 1965 marchers for equal voting rights were met with violence by state troopers.*





**Photo (left):** Current Grade 8 students are pictured here during their trip to Gettysburg as Grade 7 students. They cultivated vegetables in a community garden as part of the community service portion of the trip.

# History and Service Intersect During Visit to Gettysburg

*By Tim Coleman*  
MacArthur Campus Director

As valuable as excursions beyond the classroom are to the education of our students, it can sometimes be difficult to maintain a balance between field trips and work in the classroom. The best trips, of course, expand upon the themes and lessons taught within the four walls of the school. All the better, though, when a trip can do so for more than one area of the curriculum. Each spring, as an extension of the American history work being taught in the humanities classroom, Grade 7 students travel to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to explore the battlefield and retrace the footsteps of the soldiers who fought there almost 150 years ago. In addition, as part of the service learning curriculum for Grade 7 students, St. Patrick's has partnered with Gettysburg College to offer our students service opportunities in a vastly different environment than the urban one from which they hail. Together, the two threads weave a powerful learning experience in a setting that is only a few hours away.

The historical portion of the trip focuses on the many Civil War sites near the battlefield and the surrounding area, including the sites of Pickett's Charge, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and the high-water-mark of the Confederacy. Following their tour, students meet with Gretchen Natter, the Director of the Gettysburg College Center for Public Service. Mrs. Natter runs a workshop for St. Patrick's students on hunger, homelessness, and poverty in rural communities. By this point in the Spring Trimester, Grade 7 students have already worked with groups in the Washington D.C. area, including So Others Might Eat, D.C. Central Kitchen, the Capital Area Food Bank, and Salvation Army's Grate Patrol exploring hunger and homelessness in an urban setting. In working with Mrs. Natter, students are able to discuss the similarities and differences between the constituency they have served and the one they will be serving, noting that while the experience is similar, the face of hunger in rural Pennsylvania is different than the face of hunger in urban D.C. The workshop ends with a preview of the sites where the students will be working in the morning.

On Friday morning, we divide the Grade 7 students into three service groups. Each year has varied in terms of the service performed. For example, last year, one group of students maintained and cultivated vegetables at a community garden, another worked with seniors at a Gettysburg senior center, and another helped prepare and distribute food at a food bank. Students returned from all three experiences enthused and invigorated by the service they performed, the people they met, and the opportunity to work together.

The two themes of the trip interact beautifully. The Gettysburg battlefield and historical site attracts large numbers of tourists each year. By performing service for the surrounding community, we are able to give back to those that have provided us an opportunity to learn and further our understanding of such an important site in American history. In addition, by working to serve those suffering from hunger and homelessness in an environment very different from our own, our students broaden their own definitions and understanding of who is hungry and homeless and why. 🌱

# One Small Piece of the Solution

## Grade 8 Explores the Civil Rights Movement

By Ann Adams

Grade 8 Humanities Teacher

Imagine that you are a barber. It is 1912.

You are shaving a cus-

tomer with a long, straight-edge razor. As he talks to his colleague, you suddenly realize that your customer is the man who murdered your father 20 years earlier—and got away with it.

What do you do? Try not to be too rational because, chances are, with that blade no doubt stopped dead against this man's throat, you wouldn't be.

Unless, of course, you are African American and you have developed superhuman self-control in your dedicated climb to become the owner of the most successful barber-shop in Chicago. And you know that one gleam of anger, even far short of murder, will cost you your life's work, will cost your daughter her father, will cost every African American barber under your employ his job, and will set back advancement for every African American in Chicago, perhaps beyond. What white man would ever trust his neck to the razor of a black barber again?

It gets worse. What if this customer knew all along that you are the son of the man he murdered? And he is sitting in your chair to prove a theory to his colleague—that all African Americans are subservient and should never be treated as equals.

And you know that your carefully honed calm, while it is preserving so much, is also preserving this stereotype.

Does the metaphor of being between a rock and a hard place spring to mind? Or, alternatively, damned if you do and damned if you don't?

Well, the scenario itself, taken from Charles Chesnutt's "The Doll," a short story read this year by Grade 8 students, is a metaphor that captures the primary reason America experienced the modern Civil Rights Movement. Slow, quiet progress was not achieving anything near to equality.

When we say that the civil rights trip is the culmination of our study of 20th century American history, we mean it. W.E.B. Du Bois was correct in stating that *the* problem of the 20th century was the problem of the color-line—in the United States and throughout the world.

But our pilgrimage in tribute to the movement is not just in recognition of a legacy of deferred justice but also a tribute to another primary theme of our humanities program—the hoped-for triumph of American ideals.

When we return from our trip, I ask the students who and/or what were the heroes of the movement. They rightly name many leaders, starting with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But they also rightly say every individual who risked harm, loss of job, even death, to join a march, a boycott, or a voting drive. But none of these heroes could have gotten anywhere without our Constitution to back them. As Dr. King stated in his very first speech as the leader of the bus boycott, "If we are wrong, then the Constitution of the United States is wrong." In a radical, unprecedented act of

illumination, our Founding Fathers invoked the rights of all to liberty, justice, and equality of opportunity—however much we may to argue about what they truly meant.

Grade 8 humanities is a study of how those values or ideals have slowly—and certainly not without struggle—lifted us up out of countless unjust realities, from political corruption to labor abuses, from reactionary policies to racial and ethnic prejudice.

Students contemplate throughout the year the sometimes conflicting relationships among personal freedom, legislation and bureaucracy, and achievement of these ideals. President Teddy Roosevelt wrote, "No matter how honest and decent we are in our private lives, if we do not have the right kind of law, we cannot go forward as a nation. That is imperative; but it must be an addition to, and not a substitution for, the qualities that make us good citizens." Much of the New Deal legislation proposed by the second President Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, he claimed was necessary because the financial leaders of our country had abdicated their *moral* responsibilities. Sound familiar?

What does all this have to do with our Civil Rights trip? All of these issues come together in the fight for civil rights.

In the early years of the trip, three or four teachers drove minivans through the ad hoc street design of Atlanta and across the interstate to Birmingham. Later we added a stop in Montgomery, where we visit the Rosa Parks Museum, which chronicles the planning of the bus boycott that first



showed the power of mass protest in this country in 1955.

We visit Dr. King's first church as a new minister, and his home, where one night at his small formica kitchen table we learn that he asked God whether he should continue—and continue risking his own life and his very young family's life. That night he felt he received a divine message to proceed for the greater good.

We travel to Selma, where we symbolically cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the site where protesters in 1965 were turned back violently by Alabama state troopers. President Johnson called in the National Guard to assure the safety of the marchers for the full 54-mile march to Montgomery, where they would register to vote at the state capitol. Retracing the route by bus, we stop at the National Park Service's interpretive center that chronicles the march and

the Tent City where countless African Americans who dared to register to vote were forced to live after losing their jobs and their homes.

Because of such injustices, Montgomery's Southern Poverty Law Center was created, now also the home of the magazine *Teaching Tolerance* and the powerful Civil Rights Memorial and Civil Rights Memorial Museum. The organization and its memorial and museum highlight above all the importance of the individual. Dr. King's mighty words serve as the backdrop for the memorial, but the memorial itself honors 40 martyrs of the 14-year movement, and the museum chronicles the martyrs to all forms of intolerance and hate in the years since then.

We actually begin our journey in Birmingham because it is home to the Civil Rights Institute. I will never forget my first visit in 2002. I had never seen a museum like it. After an introductory video on race relations in Birmingham in the 19th century, the screen rises and visitors are invited to literally walk through the history of the fight for civil rights, starting in the Jim Crow South—the entire period between collapsed Reconstruction and the beginning of the modern Civil Rights Movement. We face re-creations of segregated water fountains, buses, school rooms, neighborhoods, businesses. If we didn't get it before, we do now. The rest of the museum again recreates the major moments of the movement itself—the lunch counter sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, and the major marches, including the March on Washington in 1963, at which Dr. King delivered his now-famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

But the most enlightening artifact in this museum is an NBC-TV documentary filmed in 1963. Birmingham was known as the most segregated city in the country and had also been nick-named “Bombingham” because of the number of violent attacks primarily by the Ku Klux Klan. (In fact, the institute was intentionally built across the street from our other destination in Birmingham, the 16th Street Baptist Church, where four young girls were killed when a KKK-planted bomb exploded while they were changing into their choir robes.) The filmmakers interviewed many citizens of Birmingham, trying to capture the climate of the city, and he found the heart in one elderly woman wearing a flowered hat, head of the local arts committee, who ingeniously illustrated the “excellent relationship between the races in Birmingham” by telling the story of how she had enabled a young black girl, who had won first place in the annual art contest, to enter a public library, normally closed





**Photo (p. 29):** Students visited the tomb of Martin Luther King Jr. in Atlanta, pictured here.

**Photo (opposite page, top):** Grade 8 students gather around the Civil Rights Memorial outside of the Southern Poverty Law Center and Civil Rights Memorial Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. The memorial, which records the names of the martyrs of the Civil Rights Movement, was created by Maya Lin, designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

**Photo (opposite page, bottom):** At one of several destinations on the Civil Rights trip, Grade 8 travelers spent time in Selma where in 1965 marchers began their pilgrimage to Montgomery.

**Photo (right):** Students pause at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. The predominantly African American church was bombed in 1963, killing four young girls.



to blacks, so that she could see her art on display. A close second was a city official who explained that a good farmer never let his black chickens mix with his white chickens.

These clips bring home the limitations of laws and even of mass movements. *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court case that desegregated public schools, was held hostage in the South until mass protests began to force change. But they could not change the feeling of racial superiority so entrenched in so many hearts.

This museum makes clear that video coverage of the protest movement gave necessary momentum to the larger Civil Rights Movement. Short-lived mass protests had been tried before—especially after the two World Wars, when many African American soldiers came home to injustice after fighting “to make the world safe for democracy.” But without nationwide exposure, these protests were quickly crushed and hushed. Starting in 1955, the footage of the hatred, violence, and irrational defenses of racism aroused an entire nation.

The last question we face, when we return from the trip, is “Where are we today?” Did the students notice that a large part of the tourism in the South is based on the Civil Rights Movement? Yet, right next to the Voting Rights Museum in Selma is the headquarters of the Sons of the Confederacy. Schools are desegregated in Birmingham, but only 10% of the children in the Birmingham public schools are white; the rest now attend the private schools that sprang up after *Brown vs. Board*.

In some ways, the progress is great. King’s vision in his “I Have a Dream” speech is a reality at St. Patrick’s and in countless schools in every state. A black man is President of the United States.

What I hope that my students see is that we have a choice, but the choice really depends, as Theodore Roosevelt said, on the morality of the citizens. Our government is a democracy because only that form of government allows the most individual political freedom. That freedom was the battle cry of the Civil Rights Movement. But with that freedom comes responsibility. Each of us has to root out prejudice in our hearts, just as each politician and businessman and woman has to root out corruption in theirs. Where do you start?

This trip is one small part of the solution. Does this seed take root? The Grade 8 students depart on this trip with a wide range of agendas. They are 14. They are about to leave the school. The trip is as much about them and their friendships and a final bonding farewell as it is about civil rights. It is as much about the common experience of drinking Italy’s favorite (and to the 14-year-old American palate) most disgusting Bitter Aperitif at The World of Coke in Atlanta as it is about reliving the experience of crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

But here are two reflections that represent many responses over the years:

*“As I visited these places, I thought more about what God was calling Moses to do. God called for Moses, because he needed him to go to the Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt, and God was able to ask Moses and get his attention by disguising himself into a burning bush. This situation was very similar to the Civil Rights Movement, because African Americans called for people to help them get rid of the injustice in the United States. African Americans got the public’s attention through non-violent protests, where their souls and chances of being treated as equally as white people burned like the bush. During the Civil Rights Movement, everyone could see this injustice needed to be fixed. Everyone should have the right to a good education, to work at any kind of job, and to be able to walk the streets like a regular human being. During the times of segregation, many people thought achieving equality for African Americans was too great a task to handle. Yet with hope and faith, many passionate people, who were mostly African Americans, were able to initiate the Civil Rights Movement.”*

*“Some things that I learned on the trip that made me proud to be an American are the progress we have made with integration and the idea that so many Americans had come together to fight and stand up for their cause and prevail. This shows me that many Americans can be brave, generous, and hard-working. It shows me that America can overcome the bad parts of their history and become an even better country.”* 🌱



# ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

## Alumni Profile: Oscar-Nominated Director Sean Fine '86

*The Press spoke with Sean Fine '86 about his life, career, and inspirations. Portions of an article published in the Washington Post ["Savoring the Oscar Limelight; Chevy Chase Couple Nominated for Documentary," by Petula Dvorak, February 24, 2008] are reprinted here with permission from the author.*

Filmmakers Sean Fine '86 and his wife, Andrea Nix Fine, were nominated for an Oscar in the documentary category for their 2008 film *War/Dance*. The film tells the story of a group of Ugandan refugee schoolchildren who are escaping the ravages of civil war by training for a dance competition.

Sean Fine comes from a line of prominent Washington photographers and filmmakers. His grandfather is the legendary photographer Nate Fine, who was a Redskins photographer for nearly 50 years, and his parents are Paul and Holly Fine, one of the nation's most celebrated documentary teams.

But the family didn't push him into film. As a student at St. Patrick's and Georgetown Day School, he preferred to muck around in the Chesapeake Bay, poking at bugs and fish and frogs. He majored in zoology at Connecticut College and wanted to be a marine biologist. On a whim, he took a summer film class at New York University.

"I'll never forget: I left the editing room at 3 in the morning after editing all night. I was walking down the street, and that was the moment I knew I had to do this for a living."

Sean had the eye, too. He won an Emmy in 2001 for a documentary about a string of pigeon poisonings in New York, *The*

*Pigeon Murders*. He chased killer hornets in Japan and followed displaced children in Colombia.

Then he met a colleague at National Geographic. Andrea Nix, from Rochester, N.Y., had slogged through Botswanan swamps filming crocodiles and could banter for hours about cinematography. Like Sean, Andrea had an epiphany with film after studying several subjects in college.

"With documentaries, it's like going to school your whole life, always learning something new," she said. When Andrea called Sean from the Arctic Circle, reporting over a line crackling with static and the shouts of drunken Inuit hunters in the background that she was running out of food, he understood. When he called her from Uganda to tell her he had malaria, she knew the feeling.

Sean and Andrea married in 2003 and left National Geographic to form Fine Films. The next year, they made a documentary about fatherhood and produced their first son.

Then they heard about the crisis in northern Uganda, where thousands of children have been orphaned, kidnapped, and turned into soldiers to fight in a 20-year civil war. The children of one of the region's largest refugee camps were practicing for a nationwide dance competition. Their tortured spirits were freed by dancing and music.

**What documentaries or documentary filmmakers have served as inspirations for you?**

My parents being filmmakers have probably been my biggest inspiration. They not only taught me documentary filmmaking techniques but taught me that making documentaries is more than getting the shot or making the right edit, it is about people — listening to people and opening your heart and mind to their stories.

**What project are you currently working on?**

Fine Films has just finished a documentary about Olympic Gold medal skier Lindsey Vonn, is in post production on a documentary about a family battling a rare disease called progeria, and is in the process of writing a scripted feature. Personally, we have become very involved with the people of Patongo. Andrea and I are legal guardians for one of the children that was featured in the film *War/Dance* who now goes to a boarding school in Canada. In 2006 we founded the Patongo Fund to improve the lives of children who can't escape the violence of this seemingly endless war outlined in *War/Dance*. Thus far, the film's outreach has raised funds to support the education of Patongo students in boarding schools safely removed from the conflict, and construction will soon begin on a music education center in the camp for primary school students. For more information visit the fund's website [www.thepatongofund.org](http://www.thepatongofund.org).

**What advice do you have for aspiring film-makers?**

Get out there and learn. Make films. In this day and age, there is no excuse for not making a film a week. The technology is there; all you have to do is practice. Also, carry around an idea book all the time. You never know when inspiration might strike.



## Vested in the Future: A Conversation with Manar Morales

Choosing the right school involves a number of decisions. As we worked our way through this important and anxiety-ridden process, we eventually toured St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School and became very excited about the programs and the opportunities it held for our son, Jacob. We made the right decision on that spring day in 2004.

Fast forward . . . our family has grown, we have been a part of the St. Patrick's community for over seven years now, and our three very active boys are currently enrolled at the school. The entire family could not be happier, in particular my father—who including our boys has had seven grandchildren attend the school. St. Patrick's is a caring, diverse community, inclusive of all faiths, which nurtures moral growth and values the potential and dignity of every student.

David and I want our boys to live intelligently, creatively, and humanely (as much as three brothers can under one roof) as contributing members of society. Through our volunteerism, we witness firsthand how the St. Patrick's administration, faculty and staff take pride in instilling these principles in the curriculum and in social and religious settings, which makes David and I feel as if we have an entire team of individuals vested in our boys' future.

Again, we are frequently reminded that we made the right decision. Just last year, one of our boys asked, "Mom, do you think St. Patrick's will have the college campus ready when I graduate from high school?" How's that for a broader vision!





**St. Patrick's**  
EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL

4700 Whitehaven Parkway, NW  
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[www.stpatsdc.org](http://www.stpatsdc.org)

*Our Mission*

*St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School strives to create a diverse learning community of students, teachers, and parents who recognize the infinite value of every participant as a child of God. We are committed to developing character, advancing human understanding, and promoting academic excellence in our students in order to prepare them to live with integrity, compassion, and purpose.*

# SAVE THE DATE

## Chapel Honoring Faculty and Staff

Friday, May 20, 8:30 am

## Grades 7 and 8 Performing and Studio Arts Night

Friday, May 20, 6:30

*Grandparents and special friends of Grades 7 and 8 students are invited!*

## Kindergarten Circus

Friday, May 27, 10:30 am

## Foxhall Campus Groundbreaking

Sunday, June 5, 4:00 pm

*Look for your invitation in early May!*

## Grade 6 Graduation

Thursday, June 9, 7:00 pm

## Grade 8 Graduation

Friday, June 10, 7:00 pm

## Young Alumni Reunion

Monday, June 13, 5:00 pm

## Class of 1981 30th Reunion



**Saturday, October 1, 2011**

Join classmates and their families for Family Fun Day on Saturday, then enjoy a dinner for adults that evening. Contact Willy Hoffman ([willy@howard-hoffman.com](mailto:willy@howard-hoffman.com)), Corinne Hauser Tardio ([CHTardio@aol.com](mailto:CHTardio@aol.com)), or Brooke Stroud Carnot ([brooke@carnot.us](mailto:brooke@carnot.us)) for more information.



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