



LEYSIN AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

2019 EDITION

# panorama

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS





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# Striving Toward Academic Excellence

By: Dr. Marc-Frédéric Ott

Head of School

**D**ear Alumni, Parents, and Friends,  
The past and coming year are marked by a continuous goal of achieving academic excellence at LAS. The changes include offering more flexibility in class scheduling (LAS Continuum of Education), the addition of the new LAS edge Program, and an upgrade in our assessment policy.

A few years ago we created three clearly distinct academic programs: Middle School for 7th and 8th graders, Preparatory Years for 9th and 10th graders, and Diploma Years for 11th graders and seniors. While it has worked quite well, starting this 2019/20 school year, the LAS Continuum of Education will be adding more flexibility into the program: Gifted and talented students will be able to be a part of our newly-created Accelerated Learning Program in Switzerland (ALPS) where, for instance, a student in grade 8 may be able to take grade 9 classes while still having to complete 12 years of formal schooling to earn the LAS Diploma. Class placement will be based mainly on skills and knowledge level as opposed to uniquely on grade level.

The newly-created LAS edge Program includes four concentrations: Design and Performing Arts Conservatory (visual and performing arts), Young Founders Incubator (entrepreneurship), Alpine Institute (outdoor leadership and education), and Da Vinci Lab (STEAM or Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics). The program is designed for students who wish to specialize in one of these concentrations and discover a direction for further studies. Specific courses will be offered as electives during class time and augmented in the after-school activities program. LAS edge Program is an exciting opportunity to allow students more depth in their areas of interest and passion.

After three years of work by the academic team, we are implementing our new assessment policy this 2019/20 school year. It will involve shifting from a traditional grading system, where academic grades are affected by class attendance and student conduct, to a standards-based grading system, where academic grades are uniquely measured by students' academic performance. In parallel, students will be assessed based on their learning behavior. A result of this is that we will encounter students, for instance, with excellent academic grades based on predetermined standards, who may have poor learning behavior. The hope is to increase their learning behavior and thus their grades and overall skills. This new policy will allow us to individualize and focus the support that each student requires. Part

of the new assessment policy will include one grading scale from 1 to 7 as mandated by the International Baccalaureate Programme. Why has LAS decided to make this change? Research has demonstrated that standards-based grading leads to improvement of student academic achievement thanks to higher student motivation levels. The implementation of this new assessment policy along with the LAS Continuum of Education and the LAS edge Program will no doubt help LAS strive toward academic excellence.

There are a few more changes I would like to share. As of summer 2019, we have completed the full renovation of the Esplanade building. The dormitory for our youngest boys, which was previously in the Eden building, will be transferred to the Esplanade. Eden will eventually be converted into staff housing.



Other changes are taking place in the Admissions Department. Thanks to the leadership of Ira Miles, Director of Marketing & Admissions, who started in August 2018, fresh ideas have been brought forward and are already being implemented.

The final change I would like to highlight is in the Development Department. After eight years as Director of Development, Ben Smith has moved on. Thanks to his leadership, we now have a professionally-run Development operation with a very strong fundraising and alumni relations program. On behalf of the LAS community, including LAS alumni, I would like to say a big thank you to Ben! As of July 2019 we are excited to welcome Ryan Joyce as the new Director of Advancement. He will go into further detail in his article about the role of the Advancement Office going forward.

As you have read, there is a lot happening at LAS and you can be proud of the school—your school. As you continue to share your LAS story with friends, relatives, and future potential LAS students, please continue to communicate your ideas and thoughts on the future with us. When the time is right for you, please also support our fundraising efforts, which help us to provide the best educational experience to the leaders of tomorrow who will contribute to the betterment of the world.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc-Frédéric Ott".

Marc-Frédéric Ott  
Managing Director, Head of School



# Table of Contents

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>03</b> Striving Toward Academic Excellence<br/>Dr. Marc-Frédéric Ott</p> <p><b>07</b> Celebrating a 70-year Legacy and Looking to the Future<br/>Dr. Christoph M. Ott</p> <p><b>10</b> Giving Summer Students an Edge<br/>Mark Gordon &amp; Ania Gruszczynska</p> <p><b>12</b> Alumni Spotlight: Lauren Rae Levy<br/>Anthony Leutenegger</p> <p><b>16</b> LAS Continuum of Education<br/>Sabina Schwedtmann-Lynch</p> | <p><b>18</b> Assessing Assessment<br/>Mat McLeod</p> <p><b>20</b> Why Support Research Centers at Schools?<br/>Paul Magnuson</p> <p><b>24</b> TEDxLeysinAmericanSchool – Dare to Fail Forward<br/>Daniel Patton</p> <p><b>30</b> Lost in a Winter Forest<br/>John Harlin III P '14</p> <p><b>34</b> Alumni Spotlight: Hannah Keen<br/>Hannah Keen '12</p> <p><b>40</b> Unlocking the Alps<br/>Mike Brinkmeyer</p> | <p><b>42</b> Development Becomes Advancement<br/>Benjamin Smith</p> <p><b>43</b> Honor Roll of Donors</p> <p><b>44</b> From the Advancement Office<br/>C. Ryan Joyce</p> <p><b>46</b> LAS United States Foundation Board Adds Four New Members!<br/>C. Ryan Joyce</p> <p><b>48</b> Alumni Spotlight: Askar Tashtitove<br/>C. Ryan Joyce</p> |
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# panorama

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## 50 Marketing LAS in Times of Educational Change

Ira Miles

## 54 The First Global Signature Series

Paul Dyer P '06, '16

## 58 Alumni Spotlight: Nicolas Hou

Anthony Leutenegger

## 64 Three Generations of the Ott Family

Dr. K. Steven Ott



*I am*

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# Celebrating a 70-year Legacy

## and Looking to the Future

By: Dr. Christoph Ott

Head of Operations

**D**ear LAS Community,

It is a pleasure to share with you some of the exciting developments that are taking place on the Magic Mountain and provide you with our plans for the future. Running operations at a school as complex as ours is a true balancing act. We must take each individual into account, whether studying or working, and include this into the larger context that is LAS.

The operational departments at LAS encompass a broad variety of areas that provide support for the educational programs at the school. These departments—advancement, food services, information technology, housekeeping, facilities and construction, and marketing and admissions—are comparable to the cogwheels, gears, and motors of the Aigle-Leysin train. They are essential for the cog train to make it up the mountain but are often invisible to the passengers.

While all of our operational departments have many ongoing improvements underway that will impact the school for years to come, I am most excited about the changes which took place this past summer, which you can read in more detail on page 10.



Seventy years ago, Sigrud Ott started her first summer camp, the International Ranger Camps, while her husband, Fred, was working for the US Air Force, planning and opening schools for military personnel. LAS was founded to increase international cooperation and, thus, is driven by the same ideals of the Ranger Camps that began in 1949. The ideals of compassion, responsibility, and innovation were the pertinent values that directed the school, with the intention of making the world a more open, friendly, and tolerant place in the wake of the Second World War. I am thrilled to report that after 70 years of summer programs and nearly 60 years of school later these ideals and values remain our guiding light.

Since 2018, and in preparation of the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the International Ranger Camps, a complete redesign of our summer program has taken place. We now have two summer programs running concurrently: The first, three two-week LAS *summer* sessions structured around three pillars: Language, Academics, and Sports. Second is the LAS *summer edge* program, a selective three-week program focused on personal development based on the LAS values of innovation, compassion, and responsibility.

This past summer we celebrated our legacy and offered special events and programs to



*Sutha and Jeyavathani Ponnuthurai started working at LAS in the Food Services department before the fall of the Berlin wall and his wife Jeya joined him the same year as the Olympic games in Barcelona.*

honor the anniversary year of the International Ranger Camps. One of the highlights was a joint production between the theater, videography, and music clubs resulting in an original film featuring the origins of the International Ranger Camps. More information on the program and celebrations can be found at [www.las.ch/summer](http://www.las.ch/summer).

This summer, a major step in our Campus Master Plan was completed, namely the move of the youngest boys from the Eden dorm to the fully-renovated Esplanade building. The LAS Middle School will have its own campus, allowing for a stronger alignment between the academic programs (Middle School, Preparatory Years, and Diploma Years) and their respective residential life programs. The Middle School will be mainly concentrated in Beau Réveil and Esplanade, while the Preparatory Years will be focused in Savoy and Beau Site. Finally, the Diploma Years will continue to be located on the Belle Époque Campus.

With the completion of all current campus projects, LAS will then be able to focus on building the new Performing Arts & Learning Center to be located just below Belle Époque and beside the church.

Another major development is in the area of Information Technology with the introduction of state-of-the-art software packages carefully chosen to meet our school's evolving needs. To determine ideal systems, each area of the school has gone through an in-depth analysis of requirement followed by a selection and configuration phase. Currently the last areas affected by this process are finances, human resources, and LAS Summer in Switzerland.

Fabrice Lemesle, who started as executive chef of our Food Services department in 2016, has continued to impress students, staff, and parents with high-quality meals and banquets. His latest project is the creation of a teaching kitchen in the Savoy dining room. This 'Food for Thought' kitchen will allow for food education and offer students an opportunity to better understand nutrition, health, and food preparation.

After almost 30 years of working for the LAS community in the Food Services department, Sutha and Jeyavathani Ponnuthurai have decided to pursue new goals. Sutha started working at LAS before the fall of the Berlin wall and his wife Jeya joined him the same year as the Olympic Games in Barcelona. On Friday, March 22, we hosted a celebration to honor their legacy with attendance from all departments of the school and heartwarming speeches by several members of our staff.

All the improvements above highlight how dynamic and forward-looking your school is. We strive to apply and live our mission statement each and every day. Many of the ideas above have been brought to us by LAS supporters around the world, so please feel free to reach out to us and share your thoughts.

Kind regards from the Magic Mountain,

Christoph M. Ott





# Giving Summer Students an Edge

By: Mark Gordon & Ania Gruszczynska

Director of Summer Programs & Director of LAS summer edge

**S**ummer has come and gone, and we can't help but marvel at how far our summer camp programs have come since Sigrid Ott first began "Yank Camps" 70 years ago. While LAS's summer program was originally intended to support the children of US military families throughout Europe, it has since developed significantly to cater to new generations of young explorers from all over the world. As we continue to grow and change, though, the principle objective of the summer experience at LAS remains the same—teaching by having fun and enjoying every moment of the learning experience!

Last year saw the launch of the revamped LAS Summer in Switzerland structure—we created two brand new divisions of summer that were met with enthusiastic response from our campers.

*LAS summer*, the first of the new programs, offers students a choice of Language, Academic, or Sports core morning programs, followed by a range of exciting activities and clubs that allow them to try something new almost every day. The second of the new programs is *LAS summer edge*, a camp for highly-motivated students who are looking for a unique summer experience.

This year during the three weeks of *LAS summer edge*, students learned about and grew in the areas of responsibility, compassion, and innovation—qualities inspired by LAS's mission statement. Throughout *summer edge* we ensure that learning happens outside of the classroom as much as possible. During Responsibility Week students learned firsthand how to be champions of a better and more ethical future. Students visited the

Hublot watch factory and learned about the importance of corporate social responsibility and how Hublot crafts beautiful products while still being accountable for their impact on the wider world.

Compassion Week introduced students to the founder of SolidariTEE, Tiara Sahar Atai. SolidariTEE is a student-run charity supporting refugees that, over the first two years of running, expanded to 35 universities across 5 countries. Students also met with Randall Zindler, former CEO of Medair. Together with Medair, Randall helped to coordinate the humanitarian effort following the Asian tsunami in December 2004. Randall spoke with the students about what it means to take part in activism.

Last, but definitely not least, Innovation Week set creative minds loose and helped to sum up everything our students learned throughout *summer edge*. Students worked together with a group of entrepreneurs from TAZEBAEZ who guided them through a process of designing, testing, and pitching a product that responded to a challenge they identified over the course of the program.

All the dynamic activities of LAS *summer edge* were complemented by a range of company and organization visits (including to CERN and the UN), presentations and workshops led by guest presenters, and a wide array of fun activities, such as indoor skydiving, paddle boarding, and parapenting, that will have students talking about LAS *summer edge* for years to come!

Most importantly, LAS *summer edge* created a close-knit family for its participants. A maximum of 30 students are accepted to the program each year, ensuring that every student gets the guidance they need to become a resourceful and creative thinker and develop the skills necessary to achieve their goals and ambitions. Students in LAS *summer edge* work with our personal development and leadership coach to track their progress and make feasible and sustainable plans for future projects. It is our pleasure to see them run for leadership positions in their schools back home, volunteer abroad, or fearlessly apply for their first summer job just a few months after the completion of our program. We are looking forward to seeing what the next LAS *summer edge* cohort will set out to achieve!



**ALUMNI**

**SPOTLIGHT**

**S '99**

**Lauren Rae Levy**

**ENTREPRENEUR. ADVENTURE ADDICT. CLIMBER.**

# To Arrive Where We Started

By: Anthony Leutenegger

Associate Director of Advancement

**T**he mountains surrounding Leysin have instilled a deep love of the environment within many students passing through LAS. Likewise the school's location in Europe has opened the eyes of many students to the incredible cultural diversity this continent has to offer. Lauren Rae Levy S '99 attended LAS Summer in Switzerland in 1998 and 1999 and attests that her summer camp experience "showed me a different world."

Lauren was born in New Jersey, USA and spent much of her young life in the arts in New York, and around Broadway. She auditioned for a musical to attend LAS Summer in Switzerland and ended up winning the chance to spend part of her summers in Leysin working with the theater program. She played Lucy in "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown" and the following year played Jesus in "Godspell" and El Gallo in "The Fantasticks." Her first international casting, with a group of international students, was "unique, challenging, and one of her favourite memories on stage."

Beyond Lauren's on stage experiences, two of the most important things she took with her when she left Leysin were a strong mastery of French and a love of the outdoors. These two aspects have directly impacted her current life in Malibu, California, USA.

Shortly after completing a double major in music and theater, with a minor in French at the Frost

School of Music in Miami, Lauren went back to the Big Apple. Lauren applied to work with a high-end Parisian fashion designer opening a store in New York. In an interview to work at Catherine Malandrino with none other than Catherine herself and her husband, Lauren politely listened as Catherine and her husband spoke French in between questions. As the interview was being finished Lauren piped up with her final question: "Avez-vous d'autres questions?" Catherine and her husband were happily surprised to find out that this young candidate spoke French! Lauren was offered the job and was the youngest person to be a manager for the company. She went on to launch a new store location for Catherine which was a huge success, proving that if you give young people the reigns, and a chance, they can often see new ways to solve problems. Lauren is still a fashion consultant and entrepreneur today. Knowing another language is powerful, and through her dedication and a little help from LAS Summer in Switzerland, she used it to begin a career.

After arriving back from a short stint in Turkey working in fashion, Lauren was ready to try something completely different and moved to Malibu. By adjusting her priorities Lauren started to focus on balancing her professional and personal life. While on a hike she was approached by a "dude from Poland" who asked her if she wanted to learn how to rappel. With a bit of hesitation she said "why not" and so began her voyage into the



vertical world. Lauren is one of the few individuals in California who regularly Aussie rappels, meaning when she rappels down a mountain she does it facing forward. She also became a strong rock climber which 50,000 of her followers on Instagram can attest to when she uploads terrifying and somehow incredibly fashionable climbing photographs. LAS Summer in Switzerland is where her love of the outdoors began and her move to California is where it was rekindled.

Lauren currently has her hands full with a wide variety of different occupations and passions.

She is a style expert on TV working with Extra, QVC, and Inside Edition; she works in marketing and branding for her family-owned cookware company, Gotham Steel; she is a social media influencer and fashion stylist whose aim is to “give people confidence;” on top of all of this she is set to be married to celebrity chef Marcel Vigneron in November. Congratulations from LAS!

Lauren came back to LAS *summer* to speak to our students at the 70th anniversary celebration, but before she returned we decided to ask her a few questions:

# Q&A

with Lauren

**A:** *What are you most looking forward to with your upcoming visit back to LAS summer?*

**L:** Showing my fiancé the place that changed my life! I haven't been there since 1999, when I was 16, so it has certainly been a while. That being said, the memories I made in Leysin left such an imprint on my heart, it still feels like it happened yesterday. Also I'm super stoked about getting a few hours of rock climbing in! I've become an avid climber over the last 4 years and can't wait to get on some sport routes while I'm over there.

**A:** *Have you stayed connected with your fellow LAS summer alumni? If yes, who would be most jealous you are coming back for a visit?*

**L:** Yes! Some of them are even coming to my wedding in November! I think that all my friends would be jealous that I am returning to such an amazing place. If someone was going this week, I'd be jealous and I'm coming so soon! I'm pretty sure my friends in the States and Canada would be the most jealous though. It's a longer trip, so it's not something we can do from here as often.

**A:** *There are specialists and generalists—you seem to fall under the generalist category with your life and work experience. Why do you think that is an advantage? How would you impress the importance of this onto young campers at LAS summer?*

**L:** As someone who gets bored super easily, it has always been important to keep things moving and shaking! It's been advantageous to be well rounded, as it has led to many more opportunities than I would have had if I was only strong in one area—opportunities to travel, meet incredible folks all over the world, and, most of all, to grow as a human being. I feel that we grow the most as individuals when we are out of our comfort zones. People taking a chance on me in my career because they saw how well rounded I was has led to so many incredible life-changing events for me and made me the person I'm proud to be today.

**A:** *You picked up and moved to Turkey to continue your career in the fashion world. How did LAS Summer in Switzerland prepare you for this drastic life change?*

**L:** Moving to Switzerland alone at age 15 was the

first time I was really out of my comfort zone for a long period of time. I became fluent in French from being there as a result of Conversational French Class I took, and learned just how much the locals respect Americans (especially) when they try to adjust to another culture. This was the first time I was meeting folks from all over the world that were my age and had similar interests! Moving to Istanbul was a big move. I had never been to Turkey, only knew my investor, and didn't speak the language. But I tried my best to learn, adjust to the culture there, and continue to grow. The people around me noticed this and respected me as a result. Sure there were days that were harder than others, but I loved the challenge—it was a natural high. Learning that I could build my name and earn the respect of people who had no clue who I was prior to moving there was really something. They admired my courage, my fearlessness when it came to speaking up, and my ability to network outside of the NYC bubble. After one month in Turkey, I had been published in the second most circulated paper in the country (Radikal), People Style Watch Turkey, and ELLE Turkey. It was beyond rewarding for me to see that I could make a name for myself and build something from scratch, solely by being me.

**A:** *Finally, what will your message be when you speak to a group of campers coming from around 60 different countries around the world?*

**L:** Live a life of YES. Say YES to all the opportunities that present themselves to you organically through your journey of life that make sense to who you are, as you never know when or if they will come around again. Keep in touch with the people who have left imprints on your heart and have changed you for the better. It is so important to surround yourself with positivity and people who believe in you. Always wear your confidence and be true to who you are. The energy we put out into the world is what attracts the people around us and invites opportunities our way. Lastly, always keep an open mind. While it is so important to stay true to who you are, it's also important to listen to the advice of others and pick and choose from that, what works for you. Allow yourself to grow and you will.

📍 Malibu, California, USA

📷 @LaurenRaeLevy



# LAS Continuum of Education

By: Sabina Schwedtmann-Lynch

Dean of Academics

**T**he LAS Continuum of Education is the vision for the future of education at LAS. As the name suggests, the Continuum views every aspect of our program, from grade 7 to grade 12, as part of a continuous pathway contributing to the development of our students.

Part of this Continuum vision has included restructuring many of LAS's original basic tenets of education. We additionally will be incorporating new, cutting edge educational ideas and opportunities while valuing and enhancing a more traditional model of education. A key feature of the Continuum is a new program here at LAS, entitled the Accelerated Learning Program in Switzerland or ALPS. Through innovative classroom scheduling, ALPS offers students a mixed program

that plays to their individual strengths and needs in a way that the previous program found more challenging. For example, a student who excels in mathematics or the sciences can be placed in a class well above their traditional grade level, meaning that they are able to access classes with more challenging content to help drive forward their learning, abilities, and natural talents. This is not, however, restricted to mathematics and science: students whose abilities lie within the humanities, modern languages, or a myriad of other elective choices are able to participate in a more rounded and personalized educational pathway at LAS.

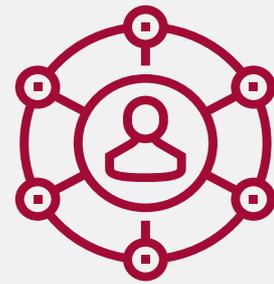
The Continuum also strives to ensure that students do not view their education in a compartmentalized manner, with each grade level being separate from



the others. It emphasizes for students that their high school education is a pathway of continuous growth and development, with each year serving as the building block for the next, leading towards the pinnacle of senior year and life after LAS.

Life after LAS is a key component of our students' education; not because we want to rush the adolescents entrusted to our care through their high school years, but rather because of a desire to help them understand the impact of the choices they are making throughout the entirety of their high school career. The introduction of a new whole-school timetable has also allowed us to devote specific time and attention in the school day to career pathway and university advising, beginning in grade 9 and carrying on through to grade 12. In this way, we are able to help scaffold students' experiences and expectations so that they are able to progress towards their individual pathways and success.

Education is an ever-changing landscape and if we are to stay current, we must adapt and change with the times. Programs such as the Continuum, ALPS, and LAS edge are giving us the tools to help students adapt to a future and professions that we can only imagine. This is the future of education at LAS and one that I feel blessed to count myself a part of.



## WHY THE LAS CONTINUUM OF EDUCATION?

1. Through innovative classroom scheduling, the Accelerated Learning Program in Switzerland offers students a mixed program that plays to their individual strengths and needs.
2. LAS edge allows students to explore specializations before they reach university.
3. The Continuum meets LAS students where they're at, encouraging them to study, improve, and explore.

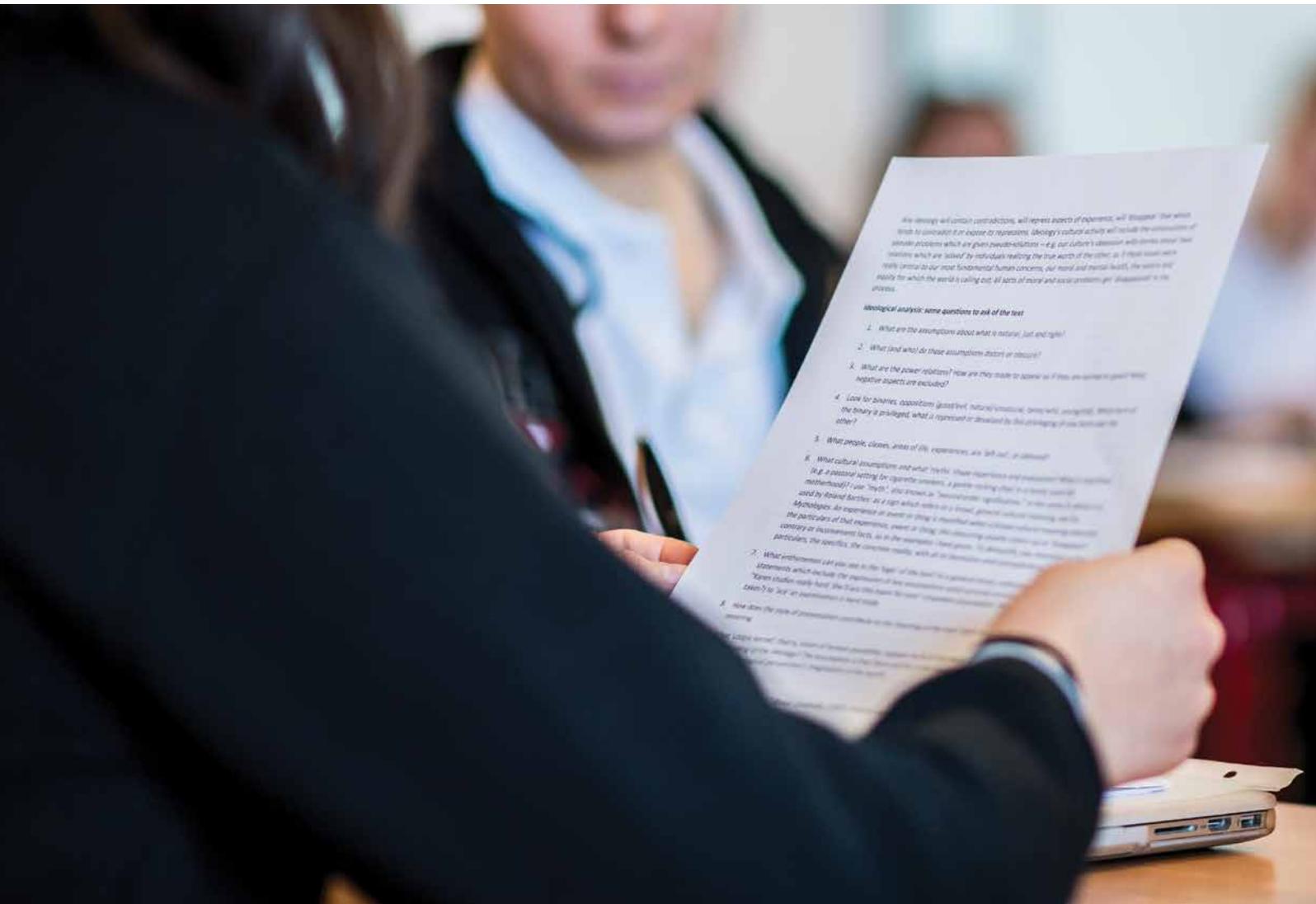
# Assessing Assessment

By: Mat McLeod

Physics Teacher

**T**o assess a situation is to make a judgement. When you take an assessment in school you are being tested to determine your current level of performance. There are two main types of assessment in schools. Assessment of learning is a snapshot of student performance. It reports on the current state of learning, often in the form of unit tests or exams. It is a benchmark and happens infrequently—once per study topic for instance. Assessment for learning provides information to students that will help them

to improve and progress. It may include homework and short tests but also conversations, idea sharing, self-assessment, and anything that would allow a student to develop their understanding of the learning process. Assessment for learning takes place very frequently and is the main method by which students are informed of their current progress and pathways for further progress. The question is, how do we develop a grading system that supports assessment for learning?



It's not an easy question to answer. Everyone likes traditional grades. At the simplest level a grade could just be a yes/no statement—for example “Can you rearrange equations?” “Yes”—great! “No”—oh dear. At a more advanced level a grade scale might be used—a percentage scale, letter grades A to F, or even GPA. These grades, however, are usually associated with how much of an assessment task has been completed. They do not always help explain where the grade came from. And, if applied to all assessment tasks, they do not always assess the same thing. For example, a student is given a 10-word vocabulary test in a French class. They get 9 out of 10—an A! They must be doing really well! They then complete an exercise that invites them to use those same words in context, perhaps writing a descriptive paragraph. This time they only get a C, they are not very good at using their vocabulary. So what is the overall grade? A? C? The average score—B? Which of these tells the true story? Which of these will inform the student of what they do well and where they need to focus in order to improve?

A different grade scale is needed: A standards-based grading scale.

Standards-based grading involves more than just grading based on overall score. Each level of the grade indicates a particular level of skill. In order to progress to the next level a student cannot just study harder, they need to understand what level they are currently functioning at, and what is required to reach the next level.

The International Baccalaureate uses a 7-level standards-based grade scale. Each level corresponds approximately to a level of thinking complexity. A higher grade does not just mean ‘knowing more,’ but also working at a higher cognitive level. This is loosely based on Bloom’s taxonomy—a hierarchical ordering of cognitive skills.

Let’s look at the student learning French again. They have very good recall skills. They are able to memorize key vocabulary. However, no matter how much vocabulary they remember, they are still unable to use the words correctly to form sentences—they need to move from a basic level of recall to a higher level of application, the ability to use their knowledge in context. On a scale from 1 to 7, the highest level of recall would be level 4. Level 5 indicates good beginnings in applying their knowledge. Level 6 would indicate the ability to use their knowledge effectively. But what of level 7? Level 7 is the highest cognitive level and indicates synthesis—the ability to evaluate, compare, and create new ideas in unfamiliar situations.

By using a 1 to 7 grade scale, a student is gaining information not only about their current progress, but also the pathway to improvement. If this grading scale is used across the entire school, that student will be able to transfer their skills between subjects, it will be clear to the learner where they stand and where they will go next. It will be assessment for learning.

As we enter the 2019/2020 school year, we are very excited to be implementing standards-based grading at LAS. A traditional grade for a student records their ability—but it does not help them learn. Standards-based grading shows what a student’s current abilities are and gives them direction for future growth. We are confident this system will assist our students in their journey to become independent learners and develop important skills that they can carry with them into university and beyond.



# Why Support Research Centers at Schools?

By: Paul Magnuson

Director of the LAS Educational Research Center

**O**ur research center at LAS has steadily grown since it was officially christened LAS Educational Research (LASER) over five years ago. It's also now been ten years since we started the first professional learning program for faculty that led to LASER.

In the past ten years we've accomplished a lot.

We support professional development for all faculty members. Our programs have covered working with English language learners, supporting students with special needs, leveraging technology in the classroom, and creating self-directed learners. From time to time we have brought in outside speakers or hosted small conferences on climate change, language teaching, science and innovation, computational thinking, Agile for education, the International Award, and more.

Annually we support eight faculty members with curriculum and research projects, and host ten or more visiting scholars from around the world. Our resident and visiting scholars have published and presented internationally, sharing their research, teaching, and curriculum with educators and parents face-to-face and in magazines, journals, and book chapters.

We run three large school events each year: the LETS Day climate change study, the Globe Day academic conference, and the Global Futurizer entrepreneurship day. Every summer we host (and assist in teaching) the international Masters program of Endicott College, which is specifically designed for teachers in international schools.

We've led the four-year accreditation process, created a new model for the Middle School, led





students through the Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels of the International Award, and served on special interest groups and committees for the climate, professional development, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math).

We've developed three separate tools for professional development. We regularly offer presentations, called LASER Focus Talks, for students and faculty, as well as small TILE presentations (Talks in Innovation, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship), and a more involved TEDx production.

We also host educators who come to us to learn about innovative teaching and learning, to date from Egypt, Russia, Taiwan, and Turkey. We also travel to schools and conferences in those countries and others to run workshops and to consult.

Along the way we've forged collaborative partnerships with educators and entrepreneurs in schools, universities, and companies.

Each of these activities is exciting on its own. Taken all together our programs add tremendous value to our school. Here are a few of the reasons why.

## **Providing professional development**

A good teacher makes a difference in what students learn. A great teacher makes a lot of difference. We are great as teachers when we continually reflect on our teaching and how our students are learning. We benefit from constant inquiry into how we can best motivate students to think deeply about content and practice skills like collaboration and perseverance. As soon as we begin thinking that we already know best, that we've seen it all, we begin to lose our edge and become less professional.

Like in most areas of our lives, we advance individually through interaction with others—when we engage in discussion we are challenged to reevaluate what we have taken for granted and what we haven't been able to see. For that we need a community of practitioners. Folks who think like us, but not exactly like us. People who understand our challenges but approach them differently.

## **Modeling ongoing learning**

When we as faculty commit ourselves to ongoing discussion and reflection, demonstrated and supported by teacher meetings, research projects,

and new curriculum, students come face to face with the reality that learning doesn't stop after class, after the term, after high school, or even after university. While often the message a student might understand is something akin to "learn this and you'll be ready for life," the message they really need to internalize is "learn this and you'll be ready to learn something else you will need in life." Classes that present content in neat unit chunks punctuated by neat unit exams do not demonstrate lifelong learning very well. Observing adults, already professionals in their field, who never cease to learn, does.

The big takeaways from school can go far beyond the content of the class if we as adults demonstrate what those big takeaways are. In short, we teach by modeling the creation and support of systems that allow for ongoing learning through interaction with others. We model communities of practice so that students take an attitude to learning with them into their university lives and future careers.

### **Sustaining teacher interest**

Teachers have a unique job. Certainly there are colleagues to work with and learn from. However,

the majority of the workday is not spent with other teachers. The majority of a teacher's day is spent alone, amid the small cohorts of students that appear in the room four or five times a day. It is easy, without outside support, to fall into patterns of practice that reinforce themselves, to the point that these patterns eventually seem to be the only way to do things. This repetition provides expertise—to a point.

Having the support to further one's practice, to improve and change, and to share good practice with colleagues to help them improve and change, breathes life into the job. Continual professional development brings new challenges, new thoughts, new twists. In short, a research center brings variety, which we all crave. It makes us feel alive. It may also help teachers stay at a school longer, decreasing faculty turnover and retaining expertise.

### **Recognizing teachers as professionals**

All of us like to feel validated in our work and our day-to-day efforts. A research department that offers multiple opportunities for teachers to further their practice and share what they do with other



interested teachers can play a major role, to put it simply, in making teachers feel good. We feel good when we are appreciated and when our work is recognized. Behind closed doors a teacher's work may easily be underappreciated and go unrecognized, especially if that recognition relies almost entirely on feedback from students.

The research center allows teachers to share their work. Applying for grants through the research center gives teachers a chance to explain why their innovation and effort matters. Presenting their work to other teachers (not students) gives them a chance to shine and grow. Publishing work gives teachers a level of credibility that is different from the individual satisfaction of teaching a good class that is not shared with other practitioners. More than once a resident scholar, one of our own faculty, has shared with us that the recognition and support of work through the research center has reinvented their work at school.

## Admissions

This is not the first justification for a research center that comes to mind for educators, but an admissions office also has good reason to support a vibrant research center. Teachers with good training who model lifelong learning, are interested, and feel professional, are going to create a better teaching and learning environment than untrained, disinterested teachers. That's a fact.

On average, a better environment for students should lead to higher student retention and better academic results, which makes recruiting new students easier. Parents and students benefit from increased educational opportunity, which makes for happier families with better student results, which leads to better academic achievement. This is a cycle that benefits everyone: student, parent, teacher, admissions office, and college counselor.

A research center has a role to play, starting with each individual teacher reflecting just a little bit more on their practice with their colleagues. We at LAS are now in a position not only to support our own teachers through LASER, but also to consult with other schools who would like to benefit by establishing their own research center. We look forward to sharing what we have learned over the past 10 years and continuing to learn as we further grow our own program.





# LeysinAmericanSchool

x = independently organized TED event

## Dare to Fail Forward

By: Daniel Patton

Science Teacher

What do you get when you combine energetic students, passionate teachers, engaged community members, and a global organization committed to fostering positive dialogue and making a difference? TEDxLeysinAmericanSchool—Dare to “Fail Forward.” This student-led, teacher-supported, community-focused event took place in the Savoy Black Box Theater on the gorgeous afternoon of November 24, 2018. From the moment the lights dimmed and the iconic TEDx logo flashed on the big screen to the end of the final inspiring talk, all in attendance experienced the meaningfulness carried by this reputable event. Let’s take a look behind the scenes at the people and processes that drove the event’s creation.

The journey started six months before the big day when a group of interested student and teacher volunteers met to begin the process of understanding the TEDx rules (there are some 60 pages of these), applying for an event license, and charting the vision for what would become a unique LAS take on the classic event. Over time and several more meetings, volunteers gravitated toward special interest committees, each headed by a student-teacher duo, in the

areas of execution, speaker preparation, venue/camera/lights, marketing, and hosting. The sheer number of items to think about, plan, prepare, practice, and bring to fruition in order to ensure a professional-looking and inspiring event was mind-boggling. That said, the energy and willpower of the volunteers was great enough to take on the challenge. What happened within these groups, and throughout the whole process, was a real-world educational experience where elements of self-determination, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration led to the acquisition and practice of useful skills.

An early decision that the TEDx planning group made was to focus on two overarching themes, namely “failing forward” and “environmental sustainability.” It was through the lens of these dual ideas that all important decisions were made. For example, in order to reduce the event’s carbon footprint the group decided that speakers should be local, as defined by living within walking distance of LAS (or within the reach of public transportation). Also important was that the speakers spoke not just of their successes and triumphs, but concentrated on times when things



didn't work out exactly as planned. These so-called "failures" are, in fact, incredibly important in the learning process and should be analyzed and reflected upon rather than discarded and forgotten. This was a message the planning group wanted the audience to come away from the experience thinking about.

Learning happens anytime challenge brings about changes in mentality, and our planning group certainly had its challenges! As the event approached our committees increased their

efforts and overcame various obstacles such as sickness of key players, equipment malfunctions, and missed deliveries. At one point, just as the show was to begin, an IT issue forced us to make a quick change of plan. Our team seamlessly adjusted, went to plan B, and saved the day. The audience was none the wiser and the show went on! The sense of relief and accomplishment among the group was palpable and the smiles on their faces were a sign that they successfully completed a monumental task—one they would remember fondly for the rest of the school year and beyond.

**“Experiences like TEDx that expose you to new ideas, people, and challenges are the building blocks of positive relationships, academic success, and taking pride in one's community.”**

*- Kevin Jennings (teacher, mentor, hosting committee)*



# Our Talks

## Pain is an Advantage

*Speaker: Benoit Dubosson*

Based on his life story, his talk has an aim to change people's encounter with pain, and most importantly to help them deal with it.

## Stop. Start. Reflect.

*Speaker: Laura Mpofo*

Her talk is focused on low self-confidence. Laura believes low self-confidence is one of today's major issues that affect youth and even adults. This is mainly a result of our greater exposure to social media compared to earlier generations. Low self-confidence acts as a barrier that hinders people from succeeding or living up to their fullest potential and later results in regret and depression when people realize how much they could have achieved had it not been for their low self-confidence.

Laura is very passionate about this topic because she believes that she was also a victim of low self-confidence at a certain point in her life. She was fortunate enough to work through it and become the more confident and risk-taking young lady she is today. She hopes to kickstart other people in that direction through her talk.

## Where Failure Meets Success

*Speaker: Larry Ware*

Framed by two tales of difficult escapes from storm-blasted mountains, Larry Ware shows us that in the mountains—as in life—success is not so much about reaching your intended goal as it is about character, humility, and appreciation for the truly essential.

## Life Goes On

*Speaker: Katrine Villumsen*

Katrine started running when her mom encouraged her to start to get over a relationship gone bad. What she started with doubt she turned into a passion, competing over the past years in a number of mountain trail races.





Re-union; 2 to 1

*Speaker: Nicolas Vaudroz*

Nico Vaudroz will share tales from his somewhat unconventional journey from perceived failure to widely acclaimed success. In his own words:

:: man :: hu-man :: in this moment :: living :: kind of conscious :: choices :: towards light :: in and out :: reunion :: 2 make 1 :: which is three :: tree of life :: who is it for :: for us all? :: who are we? :: Unity? :: still in the illusion of separation? :: free will :: experience :: recreation :: beyond all dualities :: beyond all fears of not belonging :: oneness :: my wish :: my goal ::

A Bike Map for Education's Future

*Speaker: Robert Barnett*

When people ask me about the biggest challenge facing education, this is what I tell them. Our one-size-fits-all model may be incredibly efficient as a means of content delivery, but it is failing to give our young people the education they need and deserve. We've taken one of the highest forms of human thought and turned it, through years of rigid curricula and high-stakes testing, into a stress-inducing slog. Surely we can do better than that!

**SCAN TO WATCH  
THE TALKS  
ON YOUTUBE**



**TEDx**  
**LeysinAmericanSchool**  
x = independently organized TED event



# ExtraTEDxtrials Help Planet Earth

By: Stéphanie Ameri

LAS Eco Club Supervisor

## WE MET THIS CHALLENGE BY:

1. Sending paper invitations and signs embedded with seeds that could be planted afterward.
2. Inviting local speakers who could walk or use public transportation to cover the short distance from their homes to the event site.
3. Serving local, organic, vegetarian finger food. We also used washable dishes, cutlery and glasses, refrained from using any straws, and provided recyclable paper napkins (made available but not individually distributed). No plastic bottles were served.
4. Making recycling points accessible and recognizable for disposal of different types of waste.
5. Giving speakers gifts of organic seasonal vegetables from local food producers.

All events, including TEDx, have an environmental impact in terms of garbage, energy use, pollution from transportation, heating or air conditioning, consumption of water, use of paper, and more. Did you know, for example, that during a typical five-day meeting, 2,500 participants will on average use 62,000 dishes and containers, 75,000 napkins, 75,000 glasses, and 90,000 cans and bottles?

Organizing events with a low environmental impact is not only possible, it's vital. The idea is not new but today, considering all the environmental destruction we are witnessing on our beloved planet, any other choice seems absurd.

If you intend to organize a sustainable event, you must reduce the event's environmental impact in a concrete and effective manner. Take Bon Jovi, for example, who powered a concert for nearly fifty thousand people in Buenos Aires using biofuel for energy. Another example is Têtes de Bois, an Italian folk-rock band that has found a way to turn their concerts into pure collective action: concert viewers bring their own bikes, or rent them, to power the lights and amplification without external electricity! Or, take the Eco Logico festival in Stromboli for example, which offers the audience eight days of live performances that forgo electricity and rely on illumination provided by the sun and by fire.

When we decided to host a green TEDx event at LAS, Bon Jovi, Têtes de Bois, and the Eco Logico festival were all shining examples of what is possible when a group of eco-conscious people work together. For our event the challenge we took on was to animate a Saturday afternoon by organizing a sustainable event that can radically change the mindsets of its participants. From design to practice, the goal was primarily to limit the event's carbon footprint. Concretely, we wanted to limit our negative impacts: to reduce consumption of natural resources, to reduce waste, and to limit our overall impact on the environment.

We also made sure that suppliers, customers, and guests knew that it was an environmentally-friendly event so that all participants were aware of the green choice they made.

Here at LAS we believe that "the sum of many small actions can make a big difference." As you can see, these approaches are easy to implement, can be fun to organize across generations, and contribute their bit to the fight against climate change.



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# Lost in a Winter Forest

## A Challenging Start for the International Award at LAS's First Gold Qualifying Journey

By: John Harlin III P '14

Director of the LAS Alpine Institute

**F**rankly, I'm a little worried. Six of my students are on a snow-covered ridge and most of the time when I check my phone the screen says "no service." The students are on cross-country skis with backpacks full of food, but they don't have sleeping bags or tents. They're supposed to sleep in a hut tonight—but there's not enough time left for them to get there before it gets dark.

These LAS seniors have already done their International Bronze and Silver-level Awards, so they know how to plan a trip, follow a map, and take care of themselves. They're used to not having adult supervision, as that's the rule for every "qualifying journey" with the International Award. Simon Curson, their faculty "assessor," and I, their "Award leader" supervise from a distance. In other words, we're well out of sight but available in case of emergency. Yet we're deep in the woods, darkness is falling, temperatures are dropping, and cell phones have no reception. Simon has been trailing them and I went ahead but now have to double back. When Simon and I meet we have found no sign of students. Our collective near-century of mountain experience says this could be a challenging night.

The International Award is the world's largest "youth achievement award." Founded in 1956 by the Duke of Edinburgh in Scotland, the original idea was to give young men a way to develop their character between the finish of school at age 15 and the start of Britain's national service at age 18. A couple of years later girls were added to the program—initially as a separate strand and then increasingly integrated. Now the Award is offered in over 130 countries and has had over 8 million participants.

The original program was designed around four sections: Pursuits and Projects, Rescue and Public Service Training, Fitness, and Expedition. These have since changed into Skills, Service, Physical Recreation, and the Adventurous Journey. All are pursued outside the classroom and require dedicated long-term effort. Goals must be followed over a period of three to twelve months, depending on which level of the Award they are pursuing. Skills, Service, and Physical Recreation opportunities are as wide-ranging as the young people who pursue them; these could be knitting, volunteering, and football, for example. Such activities are the real core of the Award because they're designed to encourage commitment and perseverance in all aspects of life.

At LAS it's the Adventurous Journey that gets all the attention, however. Most young people have never experienced what it's like to live in nature, camp under the stars, or hike for days carrying food and shelter on their backs with the responsibility of making all their decisions on their own without adults being present. Sure, modern camping is luxurious compared to how humans lived for most of our history as a species—but it's still utterly unknown to the vast majority of today's urban youth.

Our Gold students should not be lost. They completed their Bronze Award three years ago, their Silver Award last year, and have prepared their maps carefully for this Gold journey. They know how to read a compass and topographic map, to carry a load, to keep going when they're tired; but this is their first time in the rolling forests of the Jura Mountains along the French/Swiss border. This land is tricky—it all looks the same.



Now Simon and I have met in the forest. Neither of us has seen any sign of the students. We know the team has enough equipment to make it through the night. We know there are no cliffs or danger zones that the students need to be concerned about (that's why we chose the Jura for this winter adventure). We also know they'll be cold, tired, and unable to complete their Gold Awards if they end up sleeping in the woods without a warm shelter.

There's no cell phone reception where Simon and I rendezvous, so we ski back along the route checking for signals. One bar shows up. A phone call comes through: "We're lost!" The signal vanishes again.

Next time the signal comes back we tell them quickly, "Send us a ping of your location. And stay there!"

Signals come and go, but eventually we discover their location on a map, two kilometers away. We find them before dark in the little nylon safety shelter they were carrying. This shelter, called a "bothy bag," lets a group sit together sharing warmth, protected from wind and rain. You can't lay down to sleep, but you're safe from the elements. It's what they would have spent the night in if necessary. It turns out they had been following the trail nicely, but a set of ski tracks led away into the woods and they followed these tracks off the ridge. They were in the process of fixing their mistake when we made phone contact and told them to stay put.

Now that Simon and I know the students are safe, we ask them to show us a plan of how they'll exit the woods as quickly as possible, even if it means dropping down the hillside to a road that will lead to the hut. Night is falling fast and it's time to get out. They have three more days to go and will need to find their own way the whole distance to pass the test.

We finally reach the hut at 10:30 at night, many hours after dark. They cook the first meal they packed, plan a route for tomorrow that sticks to popular trails, and crawl into bunk beds well after midnight. Day one fades to black.

The next three days our students followed well-established cross-country ski trails without incident. There was a snowstorm, rain, sunshine, snowball fights, and dancing; their journey ultimately ended in success, with many of them achieving their Gold Award. Congratulations to these incredibly brave and hard working young men and women! We are thrilled for them and excited for this coming school year's group.





**ALUMNI**

**SPOTLIGHT**

**'12**

**Hannah Keen**

**REGISTERED NURSE**

# It's a Small World After All

By: Hannah Keen '12

Registered Nurse

**L**eysin: a small village that lies nestled within the Swiss Alps. That is usually the first thing you think of if you know Leysin. The next thing you might think is, since it is so small, most people must not have the pleasure of knowing this Magic Mountain. When you add Leysin American School into the mix, however, it changes that perspective completely. Leysin isn't as small as you might think. This little village connects people from all over the world, all walks of life, and in the least likely of circumstances. I'll go ahead and give you an example.

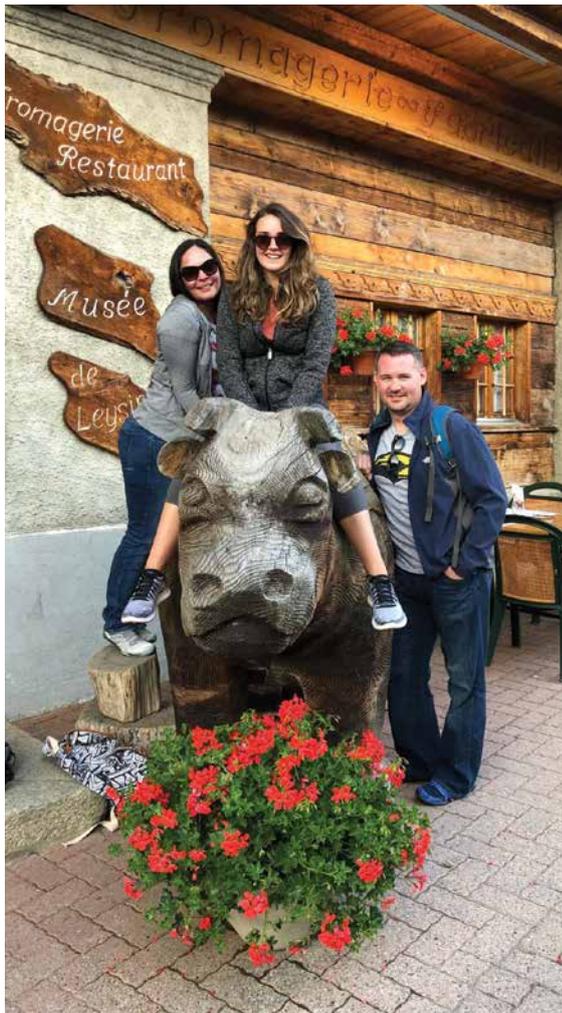
I had been living in Houston after graduating from nursing school in Galveston, Texas, for just over two and a half years. I started my nursing career in the Texas Medical Center at Houston Methodist Hospital in the Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU). I could not have found myself a better hospital, unit, or team to start my nursing career with. I loved my job and I knew I had hit the jackpot. In September 2018, I had just returned to my job in Houston after taking a couple of months off to work at LAS *summer* as one of the camp nurses. It was my first summer back at LAS *summer* since 2014. I had moved to Leysin with my family when I was twelve years old and attended LAS from 2008 to 2012. I couldn't stay away too long and returned for both summers in 2013 and 2014 to work while I was attending university. When it came time for nursing school, I knew I wasn't going to be able to keep up with my routine of returning to Leysin

every summer but knew I would be back someday. That day was in June 2018.

When I told my coworkers in Houston that I was going to be gone for the summer, the first question was always, "How did you get away with that?" My reply was, "I just asked." The next question was, "Well, can I come?" As you can imagine, my answer was always, "Yes!"

Two of my closest nursing coworkers, Illiana and Jeremy, ended up visiting Leysin with me before LAS *summer* commenced. We hit all of my favorite spots: Eagle's Nest, Prafandaz, the Fromagerie, you name it! They were in awe of the fact that I had grown up in a such a stunning and breathtaking place. It was a true honor for me to share this sacred spot with them. They went back to Houston raving about Leysin to all of our coworkers and patients.

Fast forward to September 2018. I had been home and back at work for about three weeks and I had just started a night shift. I was assessing my second patient when I heard my name on the overhead call system. I was busy with my patient so I ignored it. About ten minutes later I was still in my patient's room getting him ready for the night and talking to his family, when my coworker, Illiana, came rushing over. In the doorway, panting, she said, "Hannah, when you get a minute, you have to come to Bed 23." I said, "Is it urgent?" She replied, "No, but you need to come when you get the chance." I



*Jeremy and Illiana visiting Hannah in while working at LAS Summer in Switzerland in 2018.*

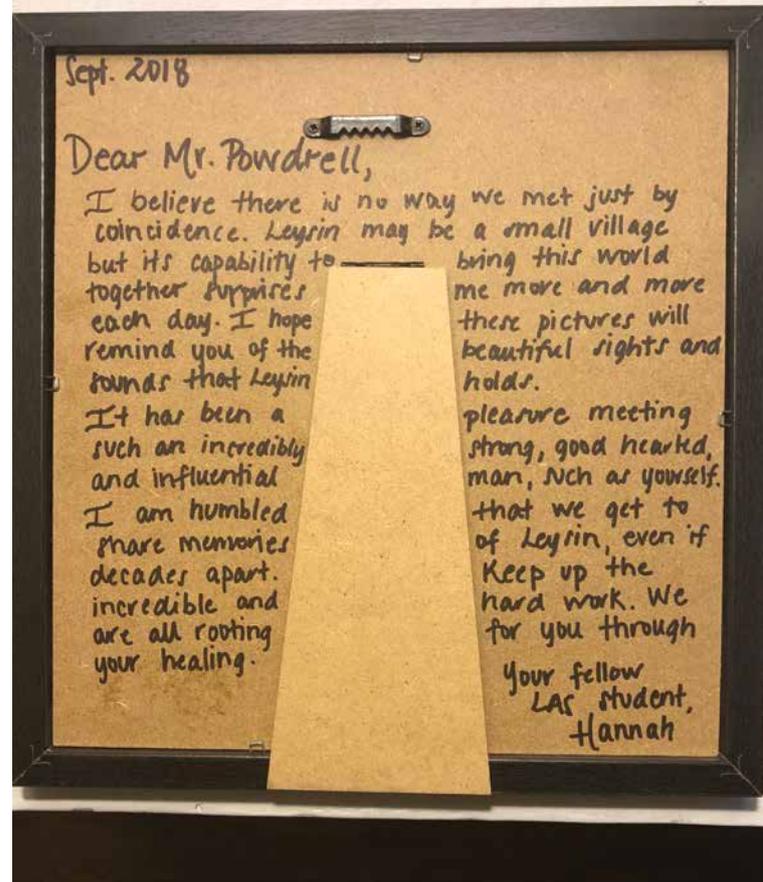
finished up with my patient and their family and started heading down to Bed 23. I couldn't help but wonder what I was walking into. Am I getting pulled into doing a favor? Am I about to see something insane? Wait, is there a cute doctor down there? Clearly my head was racing. As I approached Bed 23, I slowly looked inside and saw a man lying on the ICU bed on a ventilator. There were also two women, one younger and one older, standing at the bedside, and Illiana was attending to the man in the bed. My first thought was, "What's so exciting?" As Illiana looked up and saw me, she said, "Hannah, come in!" I walked into the room and introduced myself to the patient and the women. Illiana quickly got to the point and said, "Guess where Mr. Earle went to high school?" nodding her head towards the patient in the bed. I took another step inside and responded with, "Where?" She looked at me with a big smile and replied, "LAS!" My eyes grew wide and I couldn't help but blurt out, "SHUT UP!" I quickly covered my mouth with both hands and started apologizing. I was shocked. I stepped in closer and took a look at the patient and

realized he had a fresh tracheotomy (an artificial airway that is placed through your neck in your trachea) which meant he wasn't able to speak, but he was blinking quickly. His wife stepped up and explained that Earle had attended LAS in the fall of 1969 with his younger brother. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. This was the beginning of an incredible story.

Earle Powdrell attended LAS for the 1969/1970 school year. He went on to study at the University of Colorado and earned himself a Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Engineering, which led him to developing technology for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and national defense for most of his career. He holds three United States patents in aerospace, including the machinery that trains astronauts and cosmonauts to dock to the International Space Station. In short, Earle was a rocket scientist.

When he was 56 years old, Earle was on a classified military assignment in Dallas, Texas. He was in his apartment when he started feeling fatigued and getting blurry vision. More than 24 hours later, paramedics found him down in his apartment after his wife, Kathy, a theater teacher, had been concerned that she hadn't heard from him. He was admitted to a local hospital in the ICU, unable to speak or move. The doctors found that he had suffered a brain stem stroke. The doctors told Kathy and their four children that Earle was in a vegetative state with no future quality of life. Within 72 hours of this event, Earle started to blink. Earle's family was told that these were just reflexes but they knew otherwise. The doctors were trying to convince Kathy and their family that they should deny care and let Earle go. That wasn't an option for the Powdrells. Finally, a doctor agreed to test Earle's cognition by asking him to solve a "difficult" mathematics equation. What is the square root of 25? You best believe that Mr. Earle Powdrell, the rocket scientist, blinked five times. Those five blinks saved his life.

Earle was then diagnosed with Locked-in Syndrome, which is characterized as having complete paralysis of voluntary muscles, which includes having no means of producing speech, limb, or facial movements—except for the movement of his eyes. Earle was conscious. He could think and reason, but couldn't show anyone. He could recall all the events that occurred during his hospital stay, including hearing the doctors tell his family that he was in a vegetative state, even though he was completely alert and aware. His daughters taught him to look up to signify yes and to close his eyes for no. That was his only way of communicating before he got his Tobii, an eye-



*Hannah Keen gifted a picture frame to Earle to remind him of “The Magic Mountain”*

tracking communication system, which he uses to write and speak and has allowed him to have a voice again and to recall his story, starting with mentioning that the “difficult” math equation he was given was a joke.

There I was, about nine years after Earle’s event, hugging both his wife, Kathy, and his daughter, Lindsay, as they told me his story. We all had tears in our eyes. I went over to Earle and held his hand and started telling him how I had just been in Leysin for the summer working at LAS *summer*. He couldn’t control his excitement and was looking up and up and up! I started asking him, “Do you remember Eagles Nest?” Earle looked up. “Do you remember Prafandaz?” Earle looked up. “What about Savoy?” Earle consistently looked up! I mentioned La Farandole, an LAS hotspot for a delicious sandwich, but unfortunately Earle closed his eyes to signify he didn’t recall. Our connection was instant, which isn’t uncommon when it comes to an LAS connection, but this one was different. Kathy had a picture of Earle’s LAS ID from all those years ago as well as a picture of Savoy with an arrow pointing to Earle’s dorm room. I was telling Earle that he definitely had the best view in town with that room. I was completely lost in the moment of joy, excitement, and pure disbelief, when I realized I had to get back to my patients on the other side

of the unit. I promised I would return later, but before I left the room, Kathy pulled me aside and thanked me. She said she hadn’t seen him so awake and animated since he had been admitted into the hospital that past week. I thought, “Why is she thanking me?” That’s when I knew the Powdrells and I had met for a reason.

Through that whole shift, I kept running over to Bed 23, wanting to know more from Kathy about their story. Eventually Kathy went to sleep but I would go and see if Earle’s eyes were open. If they were, I would ask if he was comfortable, or if he needed anything. Of course, he would always look up to say he was comfortable and blink no to needing anything—Earle never complained.

The next night I came into work and went straight to Bed 23 to stop by and say hello. Kathy decided to FaceTime Earle’s brother, David, who had attended LAS with Earle, to introduce us. David had the same shocked look on his face that I had the previous night. All of us quickly became family.

Within the next few days, Earle was gaining strength and improving, so he was transferred to a step-down unit upstairs in the same building as my ICU. For Earle, this was a great step. For me, selfishly, I was a little upset not to see Earle and Kathy in my



unit anymore. Kathy claimed that the memory of Leysin that I brought to Earle couldn't have come at a better time. It couldn't have been a coincidence. This led me to thinking of what I could do to remind Earle of Leysin when I wasn't around. I wanted Earle to always have a piece of Leysin with him, whether it was in the hospital, in rehab, or hopefully when he got to go home. I did some thinking and thought, "What is everyone's favorite thing about Leysin? Something you can't get anywhere else in the world?" And it came to me. Obviously, the beautiful and unforgettable views! I had made myself a "Swiss Window" a few years back with my favorite views in Leysin and hung it up in my room. I wanted to make Earle his very own "Swiss Window." I got two different pictures printed, one of the Dents du Midi, to remind him of the view he had while living in Savoy, and one of a group of cows with a backdrop of the mountains, to remind him of the sounds of Leysin. The pictures were pinned on a small board with "Leysin" and "The Magic Mountain" written on it. When Earle got transferred to the other unit, I would text Kathy during each shift I worked, and check in on her and Earle, then visit them in the morning with a cup of coffee for Kathy before I left. One of those mornings, with misty eyes, I presented Earle with his "Swiss Window." It was a moment I will never forget.

Earle had a long road to recovery, and his recovery still continues today. He made it to rehab but ended up back in our ICU another time, then back to the step-down unit, and then back to rehab

again. He had to relearn how to eat and swallow and work on his ability to close his mouth. To say it was a very trying time for the Powdrell family is an understatement. But the perseverance that Earle portrays and the love that Kathy shows her husband are unbelievable. Kathy always says, "Giving up just isn't an option."

Earle returned to work after his stroke but is now retired. However, you best believe Earle's retirement doesn't mean not working. Earle continues to work as an advocate for individuals with disabilities and as a motivational speaker.

***"I did not choose this stroke. It chose me. In my daily life I have tried to prove that there can be quality of life even if you're locked in. I went to work right after my stroke and continue, to this day, to work on restoring the wiring of my mind."***

– Earle Powdrell

Earle also visits Capitol Hill every year to address the congressmen and senators, with Kathy by his side, to advocate for those with disabilities for a better quality of life. He fights for equal access for every disabled individual.

***"Bringing attention to quality-of-life issues for people with disabilities is as important as my work in the aerospace industry. No one recovers from a stroke in the 28 visits paid for by most insurance companies. I share this truth with congressmen and senators at Roll on Capitol Hill. You cannot train for a marathon or the NBA or NFL in 28 days. How can we expect people to recover from a stroke in 28 days? I'm fighting to give this decision back to teams of doctors and therapists and to patients and their families."*** – Earle Powdrell

As you can see, Earle Powdrell and his wife Kathy are exceptional people. Everyday is a challenge for the both of them but giving up is never an option. And the best part? They are members of our LAS family. LAS provides an instant connection between alumni once you leave the Magic Mountain. There are only a handful of people in this world that can understand the view we got to wake up to every morning, or the pure joy we felt when our teacher announced, "It's a ski day!" or the excitement we had waiting for our flight to our spring cultural destination. It's a rare experience and it's rare to find someone who can share that experience with you, no matter the generation.

I believe everything happens for a reason, and there was a reason why my coworker came to Leysin with me last summer. If it wasn't for her visiting Leysin

and knowing LAS, she wouldn't have made that connection with Earle, and I wouldn't have had the pleasure of meeting a fellow LAS alum. I keep in touch with both Earle and Kathy to this day and got to visit them before I left Houston to head to Leysin to work another LAS summer. We met at Earle's favorite Mexican restaurant in town. He had just come from a doctor's appointment. I sat across from Earle and told him about my summer plans. You could tell he was excited for me. I promised to email him pictures while I was there. I also had the pleasure of introducing him to my parents, both of whom worked at LAS. It was a lunch full of catching up, sharing Earle's story, and reminiscing about Leysin. Lindsay, their daughter, called during lunch and I even got to catch up with her on the phone. Earle and Kathy were upset to hear about my move from Houston but were very encouraging and promised to keep in close contact.

LAS has introduced incredible friendships to me throughout my years as a camper and as a student during the school year. I can speak on behalf of myself and Earle, that LAS has continued to introduce lifelong friends in our adult life and we are eternally grateful. It has been an honor having Earle come into my life and we have promised it is going to stay that way.

📍 United States

📷 @hannahh\_lauraa



**“I will continue as a motivational speaker proving that no matter how small your ability is—even if it’s only the blink of an eye—you can live a productive life in your home filled with the love of family.”**

*- Earle Powdrell '70*



# Unlocking the Alps

## Running, Skiing, and Cycling Through Switzerland

By: Mike Brinkmeyer

Athletic Director

probably sound like a broken record when I meet new students during orientation week. I look at each new face and remind them to take advantage of all this school and mountain have to offer. I tell them to try something new, pursue a goal of personal growth, and hopefully by doing so find a new passion to pursue in life.

I'm not sure if I actually spoke these words to Sai Chawaldit '19 five years ago when he arrived at LAS as an incoming 8th grade student from Thailand. Regardless, he has certainly fulfilled all of the above and more. He is an accomplished snowboarder, ski tourer, road cyclist, mountain biker, and runner. When he arrived here in Leysin, he was none of these yet.

I recently had the pleasure to sit down and talk with Sai and reflect on how much he has grown as an athlete and as a young man during his time here:

**M:** *Why did you decide to come to LAS?*

**S:** My parents wanted to send me to a school in Switzerland. They chose LAS because they saw plenty of opportunities for me to participate in sport and to explore the beautiful outdoors.

**M:** *How did you get involved in sports at LAS?*

**S:** During my first year here I competed for the swimming and cross-country teams and I had some success in a few races. I enjoyed being on teams with other athletes, but these sports were really about individual efforts which I found I excelled at.

**M:** *So you found your way into training for running and cycling on your own. Is it harder to train yourself rather than being on a team with a coach?*

**S:** I love running and cycling and so I make my

own training plans. My father gives me some advice because he has completed 11 Ironman triathlons. For cycling, I had to get used to riding here in the mountains, which made it a new and hard challenge. It continues to make me stronger. Another challenge all athletes have is to balance studying and training, but I find sport helps me build discipline for studying too!

**M:** *Did you have any experience with winter sports before coming to LAS?*

**S:** I had never seen snow before I came to LAS! As an 8th grader I signed up for snowboard lessons and quickly progressed to the advanced group by grade 10. In grade 11 I wanted to try something new and learned how to ski. I then took the avalanche/backcountry ski course. I loved it! It allowed me to ski in some beautiful and quiet places in the mountains that other students and people are unable to normally get to.

**M:** *What advice would you give to students coming to LAS?*

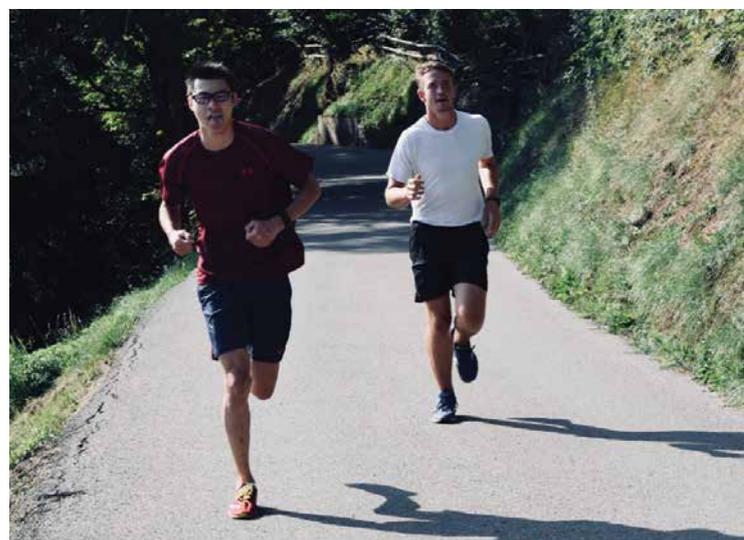
**S:** To come here with an open mind and not be worried even if you are interested in sports or hobbies that the school doesn't offer. LAS teachers have been great in taking me out road cycling, they have introduced me to backcountry skiing, and have helped me to do my own training as an after-school activity. I show them how serious I am and they work with me outside of the normal structure of the school to achieve my goals.

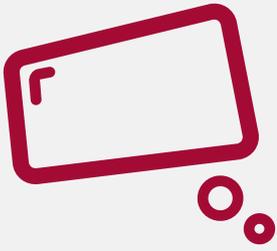
**M:** *What are your goals in sport? What do you hope to accomplish after life at LAS?*

**S:** I want to run a full marathon this summer and also complete a half Ironman. These are big goals for me. I am very competitive and when I run 5 or 10 km races I usually am on the podium, so I will have to train very hard to have similar results in longer races. I have already run a half marathon and finished in one hour and a half, a goal I had set for myself. I hope to continue to compete in running, cycling, and triathlons while I am in university. I plan to stay in Switzerland and go to hotel management school, which should allow me to continue.

**M:** *Will you come back to Leysin for a visit after you graduate from LAS?*

**S:** Of course! I have a lot of great memories after five years here and I will come back to ride the mountain roads and snowboard on the pistes I know so well. I will also be here to visit my brother and sister who are students at LAS as well.





Dear Alumni, Parents, and Friends,

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Over the past eight years, it has been an honor and a privilege to establish the LAS Development Program with you. When I first moved to Leysin from the US, I never could have imagined the impact building this program would have on me, and eventually my family. I have been welcomed from America to Saudi Arabia to Japan with open arms and indescribably generous hospitality.

Leaving is always a mix of emotions. I am sure you remember the excitement and sadness with which you departed the Magic Mountain. Like you, I feel exactly the same way. I will forever consider Leysin a second home and I know I will find my way back.

I leave satisfied knowing that the LAS global network is bigger, stronger, and more well connected. I also leave knowing that the campus has better facilities and greater program support. Finally, I leave knowing that LAS continues to look to the future to build the best school for generations of students and to make your connection more valuable.

I look forward to reconnecting when our paths cross out in the wide world. I will always cherish the friendships and memories we made. Thank you again.

Gratefully yours,

Benjamin Smith

# Development Becomes Advancement

By: Benjamin Smith

Former Director of Development

**T**he LAS Development Program continues to grow and expand. Visitors to campus, global reunions, and support for LAS are on the rise. This past year, we held our first official Global Signature Series event in Playa del Carmen (see Paul Dyer's article on page 54), we nominated our first group of alumni to the US Foundation Board (introductions on page 48), and we partnered with Graduway to launch our first stand-alone alumni community platform: LAS Global Connect. All things that could not have been possible without your input and support.

During the past year, alumni, parents, and friends have contributed to our many areas of support, including funding for four scholarships and several early gifts to our next upcoming campaign.

The Development Program has had a change in the title and leadership. My family and I have taken a new opportunity at the Canadian International School of Hong Kong. The office will now be known as the Advancement Office, headed by C. Ryan Joyce. Introduction 46. Anthony Leutenegger will remain the familiar face in the office as the Associate Director of Advancement.



Scan to join the  
our community  
on LAS Global  
Connect!



# Honor Roll of Donors

## *January 2018 through Spring 2019*

Leysin American School greatly appreciates the generous support we have received from our alumni, family, and friends. This support has allowed us to continually increase the quality of our programs and facilities while supporting our students as they strive to become *innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world*.

This year our donors have generously supported academic program enhancements in the Middle School, Preparatory Years, and Diploma Years; alumni initiatives, scholarship programs, the Sethule Orphans Trust, the Ted Groom Memorial Scholarship, the Terry Fox Foundation, and our next capital campaign.

DeLona Allers & Stefano Sbrighi	Grace Jin P'23	Stefanie Ott P'18 (Chair, Board of Trustees)
Anonymous (25)	Masakatsu Kayamori P'21	Thom Padick & Joan Flynn
Raphael Aschenbrenner	Michael & Bonnie Kelly P'19	Maja Panayi
Robert Barnett	The Kolman Family P'18	Leo Peltier P'22
Adam Bradford	Son-Jung Kuo P'22	Xiaodong Peng P'23
John Bray	Malia Le Mond	Andrew Przekurat
Mike Brinkmeyer	Bradley Bond	Pixie Rath '11
Caroline Brocvielle	Anthony Leutenegger	Juan Pablo Regidor '04
Ellen Bruce	Wei Liu P'20	Carlos Represas '98
Dr. R. Campanaro '95 & Ms. P. Matthie	Paul & Daiva Majauskas P'14, '16	Igor Rugal P'24
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Chemodanova P'18	Kellie McGill	The Smith Family
In honor of Vladimir Chemodanov '19	Laura Meagher	Anastasia Soldatova '10
Tom Cosgrove	Wolfgang Meusburger P'02, '05 (Trustee)	Laura Sommariva
Yannis Costopoulos & Irini Molfessi P'20	Ian & Suzy Meyskens P'16	Michelle Starke
In honor of Filippos Costopoulos '20	Lucy Mierzejewska	Pascal (Trustee) & Agathe Stefanie P'18
Ajibola Dawodu P'18	Ira & Jennifer Miles P'23	Dottie Steward
In honor of Taofeeqat Dawodu '18	Fundacion Montemayor Gonzalez	Nicola Cosgrove
Aaron & Katy Deupree	Alain Mouawad P'21	Tetiana Surzhyk P'20
Joelle Durrenbach	Fiona Murphy	Ken & Emiko Takayama P'18
Alex Flynn-Padick	Kim Oppenheim & Jamie Skove P'16, '20	In honor of Kentaro '18
Paul Fomalont	Marc-Frédéric Ott (Head of School, Trustee)	Mio Tamura P'19
Mark Fryer	Christoph (Head of Operations, Trustee) & Gosia Ott	Katie Trupiano
Sarah Graham	Dr. K. Steven (Honorary Chair, Board of Trustees) & Doris Ott (Trustee)	Connor Weik
Rene Guignard		Andres Yarte P'19, '21
Qi Guo P'19		Jin Yongxue P'23
John Harlin III P'14		Anonymous
Tom & Marta Harneshaug P'19, '21		In honor of Fengyuan Chen P'20
Benjamin Jackson		

## What do our abbreviations mean?

We are pretty comfortable with our shorthand at LAS! With that said, our abbreviations evolve and grow over the years and we want to make sure our readers can follow along. Take a look at our guide below.

**LAS** - *Leysin American School*

**LASER** - *LAS Educational Research*

**ALPS** - *Accelerated Learning Program in Switzerland*

**BEC** - *Belle Époque Campus*

**MMAC** - *Magic Mountain Athletic Center*

**TILE** - *Talks in Innovation, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship*

**John Smith '98** - *John's graduation year from LAS was 1998*

**John Smith S '98, '99, '00** - *John attended summer camp at LAS in 1998, 99, and 2000*

**John Smith P '14, '16** - *John has two children who attended LAS and their graduation years were 2014 and 2016*

# From the Advancement Office

By: C. Ryan Joyce

Director of Advancement

**A** few months into living at Leysin American School and I am still pinching myself every time I get to say “Greetings from Leysin!” Since the moment I arrived at LAS in early July, I have felt welcomed by and in awe of this community, the breathtaking surroundings, and the impressive history of the school. During the LAS Summer in Switzerland sessions I have enjoyed meeting an impressive group of LAS alumni from around the globe spanning several generations. Each of these graduates has dedicated their summer to returning to LAS to give back to our community. In short, it is an honor and a privilege to be a member of the LAS family and I greatly look forward to meeting many of you and hearing about your experience here.

You may be asking, “What does the Advancement Office do?” Previously known as the Development Office, Advancement seeks to engage with students, parents, alumni, past parents, and friends of LAS in a variety of ways while advancing the school’s mission of **“developing innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world.”** Essentially, the Advancement Office is here to serve you and to keep you connected to our school in a variety of ways.

For several years under the leadership of outgoing Director of Development, Ben Smith, and current Associate Director of Advancement, Anthony Leutenegger, our office has led the way in reconnecting with graduates from around the globe, and hosting meals, happy hours, symposiums, and events on campus and around the globe. In many ways, alumni engagement has never been so strong and as we look toward the next few years we are excited to further the development efforts in our

Advancement Office while also mapping out a plan to keep our community excited about all things LAS! Below are a few of the many ways we hope to keep in close touch with you—we ask that you keep us abreast of your life, what you have been doing since your time at LAS, and consider attending a reunion or returning to the Magic Mountain at any time! After all, you are the living, breathing embodiment of our success as an educational institution.

Advancing the LAS Mission 2019 and beyond:  
Engage, Participate, and Support.

## ENGAGE

Our office hopes that your time at LAS will keep you interested in staying in touch with your fellow classmates, teachers, and counselors. We offer a number of reunions and events throughout the world, free of charge. Even if it has been a long time since you have interacted with friends from LAS, we hope you would consider attending and hearing about your school today. Our events calendar can be found on our alumni portal, LAS Global Connect, and our private Facebook group. We update this regularly when a new event is planned. Events range in size and there isn’t a group “too small” or “too large” for us to come and see you. If you are interested in hosting or helping plan an event in your city please contact C. Ryan Joyce at [cjoyce@las.ch](mailto:cjoyce@las.ch) or Anthony Leutenegger at [aleutenegg@las.ch](mailto:aleutenegg@las.ch).

## PARTICIPATE

Our graduates are accomplished, successful, passionate, caring, interested, and driven. With that said, we ask that all alumni stay connected through

our alumni portal: [www.lasconnect.ch](http://www.lasconnect.ch). Here you can virtually connect with fellow alumni spanning 6 generations, arrange a meeting, find common ground in your areas of business, or simply meet for a meal or drink when you are in the same city (send us a picture if you do... or, better yet, post it on the Connect feed!). This is an easy way to bring our global community together and keep the LAS spirit going year round.

## SUPPORT

We are fortunate to be a part of an incredible institution where students, parents, alumni, past parents, and friends can leave their imprint on a global scale. Many times, that initial imprint begins with the relationships established at LAS and then permeates into a career, a lifestyle, or a mindset where our school mission, either intentional or not, will carry you throughout your lives. We want to ensure that the next generation of LAS community members continue this legacy. Therefore we ask that you participate in giving back, so that others may have the same experience you did! LAS will never settle and will always strive for excellence in all that we do. **Your support through a donation is a clear signal to our students that our community wants to continue to succeed in new, innovative, and exciting ways.** By giving back to LAS you are truly creating a legacy that will greatly impact the next generation. To find out more about how your gift to LAS can make a lasting impact please go to: <https://www.las.ch/support>. For questions regarding school philanthropy, please contact C. Ryan Joyce at [cjoyce@las.ch](mailto:cjoyce@las.ch).

On behalf of the Advancement Office I want to thank you for all you do to allow LAS to be one of the finest institutions in the world. I cannot wait to spend time with you, to thank you personally, and to raise a glass to your time in Leysin. Please never hesitate to contact us and remember: LAS turns 60 years old soon (see the advertisement on page 71)! We are planning a blowout celebration on the mountain... stay tuned for more information and a save-the-date for this unmissable celebration!

Sincerely,



C. Ryan Joyce  
Director of Advancement  
[cjoyce@las.ch](mailto:cjoyce@las.ch)  
+41 79 855 6725



## Meet C. Ryan Joyce

### *Education:*

Bachelor of Arts,  
Theatre and Philosophy,  
University of  
Scranton, PA USA

### *From:*

New York

### *Moved to Leysin from:*

Phoenix, Arizona, USA

### *Previous position:*

Director of Advancement  
and Speech & Debate  
Coach at Phoenix Country  
Day School, AZ

### *Hobbies:*

Hiking, skiing, traveling

### *Fun facts:*

Ryan has previously lived in Ireland and Germany and is the oldest of five siblings all living throughout the United States.

# LAS United States Foundation Board

## Adds Four New Members!

By: C. Ryan Joyce

Director of Advancement

**F**or nearly 60 years, LAS has been fortunate to have incredible financial support and leadership from parents, alumni, past parents, and friends of our school. In order to allow our fundraising to develop over time we established several foundations and governing boards in order to make the process seamless and to guide us along the way. Donations from US residents or those with financial ties to the US are usually made through our 501(c)(3) US Foundation. This will allow for a completely tax-deductible gift made to LAS. For those outside the US, giving comes through our Swiss Foundation or directly to LAS through pledges, checks, and gifts made online at [www.las.ch/support](http://www.las.ch/support).

Toward the end of the last academic school year we were thrilled to add four new members to our US Foundation Board and to thank two outgoing members for their tireless service guiding our board. If you are interested in knowing more about our foundations and governing structure please reach out to me, C. Ryan Joyce, at [cjoyce@las.ch](mailto:cjoyce@las.ch) at any time.

Thank you, Carol Moore and Dan Schmalz, for serving the LAS community since the inception of the US Foundation! We are so grateful for your leadership throughout the years.

Welcome on board, John, Bill, Gregory, and Brian!

## Leysin American School Board Leadership Structure

### *LAS School Board*

Stefanie Ott, Chair  
Wolfgang Meusburger P'02, '05, Vice-Chair  
Marc-Frederic Ott, Head of School  
Christoph Ott, Head of Operations  
Pascal Stefani P'18  
Jeff Paulsen

### *LAS School Honorary Board*

Steven Ott, Chair  
Maurizio Fabbri, Vice-Chair

### *LAS Swiss Foundation Board:*

Dorris Ott, Chair

Henri Baudraz, Vice-Chair

Steven Ott  
Stefanie Ott  
Michel Rochat

### *LAS US Educational Fund for the Future Board:*

Bill Carney '69  
Brian Knapp '96  
John Sutton '98  
Gregory Marks '10

### *Emeritus:*

Carol Moore

*For more information on leadership opportunities, please contact C. Ryan Joyce, Director of Advancement at [cjoyce@las.ch](mailto:cjoyce@las.ch).*



### **John Sutton '98**

*Senior Account Director, Gartner,  
Boston, MA, USA*

John reconnected with LAS at his 20th reunion last summer. He is very engaged with his classmates. He is an executive with a global research and advisory firm in Boston. A native Texan, John brings a unique mid-career and family perspective to the board. John understands Leysin American School's drive to increase its engagement and fundraising; his parents were some of the first annual fund donors to LAS. John is a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin and Northwestern University.



### **Bill Carney '69**

*Entrepreneur, Professor, Board Member,  
Cambridge, MA, USA*

Bill is one of Leysin American School's first 4-year students. He is also one of the first alumni to be re-engaged by our development efforts. Bill has been an alumni induction speaker, profiled in Panorama, DJ for three consecutive LAS proms in the '10s, and he donated his professional services as a marketing/sales expert during an admissions retreat. Bill is currently on several boards, has founded/backed multiple companies, and is a professor at two international universities. Bill is also a connector among the first LAS graduates. This year he plans to move back to Geneva. Bill has degrees from Wayne State University, IMD Business School, and George Washington University.



### **Gregory Marks '10**

*G10 FX Spot Trader, Citigroup,  
New York, NY, USA*

Greg is an up-and-coming young alumnus. He manages the trading of several major currencies for Citigroup. Greg was outspoken as a student with a true desire to make LAS the best school it could be. Greg has attended every NYC event since his graduation and he has helped to promote several LAS initiatives among his peer group. Greg graduated from Fordham University and he is highly engaged with LAS.



### **Brian Knapp '96**

*Executive Director, JP Morgan,  
Chappaqua, NY, USA*

Brian is also one of the first alumni to re-engage with LAS. He has donated and pledged to include the school in his estate. Brian is well connected within his class and he has volunteered to help several young graduates moving to NYC. Brian understands development and he will bring a high level of corporate management experience to the board. He also has two young daughters that could be potential LAS summer or academic year students. Brian is a graduate of Bowdoin College and NYU Stern School of Business.

**ALUMNI**

**SPOTLIGHT**

'98

**Askar Tashtitov**

**FINANCIAL SERVICES**

By: C. Ryan Joyce

Director of Advancement

I had only been in Leysin for one month when I had the privilege of meeting a member of the LAS class of 1998, Askar Tashtitov. A day before Askar walked into my office to have a cup of coffee, his longtime friend, Christoph Ott, had let me know that his former camp friend was in town and wanted to see the campus. As the story goes, Askar and Christoph first met in the mid-1990s at LAS's Summer in Switzerland. Christoph was home for the summer and Askar came from Kazakhstan to enhance his English and French speaking and both young men enjoyed their free time on the basketball courts in the fresh air of the Alps. As the two battled on the court

they formed a strong friendship off the court and as the summer wound down Askar made it clear that Leysin and the LAS community had made a strong impression on him. He asked to stay an additional week of summer and he and Christoph became roommates. Shortly after arriving home in Almaty he began inquiring about attending LAS and, keeping in touch with Christoph, spoke with the Ott family about enrolling as a student the following year. Askar graduated from LAS in 1998 and attended Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, graduating with a bachelor of arts in economics and history. Today, Askar, his wife, twin sons (10 years old), and daughter (4 years old), live in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

# Q&A

with Askar

**R:** *Tell me about LAS in the 1990s!*

**A:** Well, in many ways it was the same as today in terms of the close family community, the beautiful setting, and the welcoming atmosphere. However, when I was a student we had a very large expat community and not nearly the number of nationalities represented at the school today. I was just happy to escape the heat of Kazakhstan in the summer and to play basketball in Leysin, but once I got here and immediately formed a close friendship with Christoph, it became clear that this was going to be much more than a summer trip—I was going to figure out a way to come to school here!

**R:** *Other than reuniting with the Ott family this summer, have you had the opportunity to connect with other alumni or former teachers while being in Leysin?*

**A:** Seeing the Ott family immediately brought me back to my days as a student—they are THE school family. However, what I learned was that there are far more LAS alumni from my time who work for the camp in the summer, who visit with their family, and who send their kids to the LAS Summer in Switzerland programs. Not only that, but I'd be out at Top Pub with alums in the evening from time to time and famous LAS teachers like Fred Sharp would walk in—he's a legend from my time! So, to my surprise, I had lots of opportunities to catch up with classmates, former teachers, and recent graduates. It's comforting to know that the LAS community is as strong today as it was when I was a student.

**R:** *Your twin 10-year-old boys attended the LAS summer program this July... was this, perhaps, a way of introducing them to one day matriculating as LAS students?*

**A:** I wanted my boys to experience LAS like I did—first in a summer program and maybe down the line, as students. Obviously, LAS is a bit more expensive today than it was in the late 1990s so I'd have to weigh all the options in terms of sending them to school here in the future, but if we can make it work that would be wonderful. This school allowed me to form relationships with people from around the

world and any time I travel for work or pleasure I'm always asking, "Who do I know from LAS who lives here?" That alone is something I'd love to pass along to my boys.

**R:** *As you know, we are building toward our 60th anniversary as a school and we will be hosting reunions and gatherings across the globe in anticipation of the capstone event in Leysin, June 17-22, 2021. With that said, what would motivate you to give back to LAS as an alumni and to encourage others to do the same?*

**A:** That's easy: student scholarships and teachers. As an alumnus, I am sincerely proud of the fact that I am part of several generations of Kazahks who have attended LAS almost since the school's founding in 1961. I would love to gather fellow alumni from our country and have all of us donate to send a worthy young Kazahk man or woman to LAS. To be able to keep the tradition alive of having smart, curious, and passionate students from Kazakhstan attend LAS, regardless of financial circumstances, would make us all very proud. On that note, I know I speak for many alumni when I say how much I feel indebted to the teachers at LAS for all they did to not only educate us but act as our parents when many of us were far from home. Giving toward an endowed fund in honor of one of our influential teachers would make perfect sense for what they gave to us.

Our conversation had to wrap up as Askar needed to pick up his sons after a complete day at camp. About 20 minutes after he left the Advancement Office, I could hear Askar and his sons down the hallway chatting about what the kids had done at camp today. They were using words like, "Savoy," "Eagle's Nest," "Prafandaz," and "Berneuse." I can only imagine how that must feel for Askar, a father of two boys, to hear them comfortably talk about the exact locations and buildings he spoke about some 20 years earlier in a small town in the Swiss Alps far from home.

📍 Almaty, Kazakhstan



# Marketing LAS

## in Times of Educational Change

By: Ira Miles

Director of Marketing & Admissions

**I**n times of change, marketers tend to position their products as new, different, and innovative. When changing the way a product is marketed we must consider what the motivating force is behind this change. The short answer is almost always financial. What becomes increasingly significant is whether that financial catalyst is an internal force or an external one.

When a company has an inferior or underperforming product and begins to operate at a loss, ownership often hits the panic button and we see a “fire sale.” Out of immediate necessity the company and its product need to be reinvented. This internal catalyst for change in such a case is usually poor products and performance and so the market identity needs to break from that reputation and be seen as a completely different entity.

Companies do not tend to make such changes when achieving their sales goals. During periods of sustained financial success a company will begin to do market exploration and product development for the impending downturn. They begin to evaluate what is next based on the direction of their consumers and market. As an example, oil companies such as Aramco can be seen investing heavily in alternative technologies. Petroleum is still a hot commodity but it is running out. What is next for these multinational companies when their product is gone?

This is the situation LAS finds itself in, in the world of education today.

The state of education today finds itself in one of the most transitional periods in modern history. Steven Ott confided in me recently that he believes society has



not faced such a seismic shift in pedagogical doctrine since the introduction of public education. Leaving the details of classroom pedagogy to professors and teachers, from the business perspective of education, I am inclined to agree.

Historically, boarding schools promised a high degree of academic success in a very traditional manner. It was this consistency that attracted the best universities to many boarding schools. Therefore, these students would provide the universities with a dependable and consistent standard of excellence. It was a symbiotic business relationship where each player knew the rules and the standards. This was business as usual for a quarter of a millennium.

Like every other industry, technology has reached the doorstep of education. It is impacting our

industry not just in terms of the classroom tools and techniques, but in its ability to disrupt the natural balance of the value of education. With global tech leaders such as Apple and Google openly filling professional positions with non-degree candidates, it is hardly surprising that the value of postsecondary education is in question. Many, but not all companies are seeking new methods of acquiring talent via non-traditional avenues.

Alibaba founder, Jack Ma, said on a panel in Davos in 2018 that "... if we do not change the way we teach, thirty years later we will be in trouble, because the way we teach, the things we teach our kids are things from the past two hundred years. It is knowledge based and we cannot teach our kids to compete with machines, who are smarter. We have to teach something unique that a machine can

never catch up to. In this way, thirty years later our kids have the chance.”

Ma went on to cite the skills necessary for successful educational instruction over the next thirty years. He identified values, self-confidence, independent thinking, teamwork, and care for others as chief among the skill-based tools our children will need most to be successfully employable in the future. He is right. What use is my knowledge of history when I carry the internet in my pocket? The question then becomes: who will best demonstrate their ability to use the informational content and tools being developed today? The obvious answer is those with a skill-based, rather than content-based, education. This is the value of a skill-based education.

Therein lies the problem. Universities, particularly those traditionally accepted as the most competitive, have not changed their means of evaluation of today’s high school graduates. The best business schools, law schools, and medical schools still look for the strongest GPAs and test scores. These graduate programs are still, in turn, the place where the top firms, hospitals, and companies cull their young talent. We can see the change in tide relative to how business will be done in the future. But for now, within academia, the supply chain proceeds as it always has. Industries, including education, have not yet committed to trading out the priority of content-based knowledge for skill-based talent.

LAS also sits at this crossroad in education. How will your beloved LAS, in its third generation of family tradition, prepare our children to achieve the highest university placement possible and still make them workplace competitive for jobs that do not yet exist? How, too, will we market the product the world seems to be consuming today while investing in the tools our students will need to be competitive in tomorrow’s marketplace?

This year at LAS there are many programs being implemented to prepare students for both content and skill-based training for short and long-term success. You will see changes in the assessment policy meant to help students focus not just on an acquisition of knowledge, but giving them cause to demonstrate an ability to implement said content. This is how ingenuity is developed.

You will find an increase in English language requirements for program participation, most noticeably in the LAS edge program, specifically designed to bring the skills Ma refers to, to the forefront of the LAS curriculum. LAS edge sits comfortably within the 9-10 curriculum during this academic year. It is designed for high-achieving students. They will utilize tools such as SCRUM methodology and will participate in problem solving events such as Odyssey of the Mind. This language requirement is one example where we request that our students develop a competency

**“... if we do not change the way we teach, thirty years later we will be in trouble...”**

*- Jack Ma, Alibaba founder*



in content in an effort to enhance their skill-based experiences in time.

The three divisions of the school have been reorganized under the leadership of one Dean of Academics, Mrs. Sabina Lynch. Each division will shed its separate daily schedule for a more flexible universal schedule. Our most academically competitive students will now have easy access to higher level classes, sooner. Class placement will be ability based, not age or schedule based, providing a more student-centric system of learning in the academic content areas.

Further, each division will also have an Associate Dean. Their focus will be on ensuring that instruction of our academic content is intertwined with project-based learning that will further develop traits such as teamwork, independent thinking, and creativity.

Infamous word smith and beloved New York Yankee, Yogi Berra once quipped, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it!" Mr. Berra's quotes were often logic bending but in this case, apt for LAS at this crossroad in education.

The school leadership has demonstrated a focus on responsible student commitment to traditional measurements of academic success by raising the academic bar for our students ranging from the ELA 1 entry point to the IB.

LASER, LAS edge, and our new assessment policy demonstrate their commitment to developing student innovation in content and skill development.

Perhaps the most essential and timeless of the skills that Mr. Ma mentioned is one that has rested at the very core of LAS since its inception. One does not come to LAS to learn of our community without hearing about our family atmosphere. That core family value that Sigrid and Fred brought to LAS almost 60 years ago is centered around what Ma called "care for others." Our students, no matter their educational direction or career have always left our walls with a deeper understanding of what it means to "care for others." Or, as it manifests in our mission statement, we will continue to develop the compassion that both today's world and tomorrow's will have a great need of.

The structuring of these programs is in preparation for our future investments. These investments in our graduates' futures as well as that of our institution are designed to maintain our current economic success as an elite educational opportunity for today's young men and women. They are also an investment in the programs that will provide for the demands of tomorrow's world. In this way, LAS will continue to depend on its mission statement as the guiding principle for its program development. From a marketing perspective, we have not reinvented our product as much as we have gone back to the foundation of our school's success and determined that we can position our students and our school for both short term and long term competitiveness in the marketplace.



## Meet Ira Miles

### *Education:*

Associate of Fine Arts,  
Art Institute of Philadelphia,  
Philadelphia, PA, USA

Bachelors of Arts, History  
Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY

### *From:*

Pennsylvania

### *Moved to Leysin from:*

Malvern, PA, USA

### *Previous position:*

Assistant Head of School  
for Enrollment, The Phelps  
School, Malvern, PA

### *Hobbies:*

Guitar and cooking

### *Fun facts:*

Ira has been a student,  
teacher, and administrator at  
3 different boarding schools

# The First Global Signature Series

## LAS at the Beach—March 2019

By: Paul Dyer P '06, '16

Director of Admissions, Americas & Corporations

**T**ake fifty members of the LAS community and put them at a beach resort in Mexico and what happens? An incredibly good time. From March 1 - 4, 2019 members of the LAS family gathered at the beach resort of Playa del Carmen (45 minutes south of Cancun) on the Mayan Riviera. Alumni as well as current and former parents shared happy memories, reconnected with old friends, and enjoyed new adventures hosted by none other than Steven and Doris Ott. It was readily apparent that the special bond formed on the Magic Mountain becomes part of our collective souls, whether we were at LAS recently or many years ago.

This was our first worldwide reunion, dubbed the Global Signature Series, and guests arrived from as far as Norway and Bulgaria. We enjoyed sun and fun but most of all each other's company. There was a fifty-year difference between our eldest attendee (Jim Handsfield '64) and our youngest (Allison Fisher '16). In between were alumni of all ages, parents of past students, past LAS and summer faculty, and significant others.

One of the most impressive aspects of the reunion was how quickly the group bonded. Age and generation melted away. What remained was the shared experience from Leysin that made all of us

open-minded, curious, friendly, eager to learn from each other, and excited to form new connections. Stories were shared of cultural trips, proms, and ski days. Of course, it helped that we were in a beautiful place with sandy beaches, warm sunshine, and plenty of tropical drinks.

Our base camp was Mamita's Beach Club, owned by Mr. Jorge Marzuca, whose daughter, Alexa, was an LAS student. It was the perfect venue for our happy hours, gala dinner, and beach party. Many thanks to Mr. Marzuca and his family for being such wonderful hosts. The nearby pedestrian boulevard, Quinta Avenida, provided an ideal spot not only for strolling, shopping, and dining, but for our numerous after-parties, including one memorable night at a local disco where our multi-generational group danced until the sun rose! Guests enjoyed day trips all over the region, including to the Mayan ruins, snorkelling and scuba diving, and a trip to the island of Cozumel.

For those of you who attended LAS at the Beach, thanks for making the reunion so special. For those of you who were not able to attend, don't worry! The big LAS 60th reunion is already being planned for 2021 in Leysin. Stay tuned for more information!

**A special thank you to Jim Handsfield '64 for all of the photos from this event.**

**For those of you who attended LAS at the Beach, thanks for making the reunion so special. For those of you who were not able to attend, don't worry! The big LAS 60th reunion is already being planned for 2021 in Leysin. Stay tuned for more information!**







**50+**

LAS Alumni



**5**

Decades  
of Alumni  
Represented



**4**

Days of Fun

**1**

Global Reunion

**ALUMNI**

**SPOTLIGHT**

'95

A close-up portrait of Nicolas Hou, a man with a beard and mustache, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is wearing a dark t-shirt. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some indistinct shapes like a light fixture.

**Nicolas Hou**

**ENTREPRENEUR. TECH BLOGGER. FOODIE.**

# Adapting to an Ever-Changing World

By: Anthony Leutenegger

Associate Director of Advancement

I've had the pleasure of meeting Nicolas Hou '95 3 times. Our first meeting was a campus tour of LAS a few years ago. Since then we have met twice. After our first meeting away from the LAS campus I resolved to always let Nicolas choose our meeting spot—it typically involves an incredible restaurant. The first was JiaWei, a Chinese restaurant in Geneva where they hand-roll their own noodles. Our next meeting place was an incredible sushi spot called Nagomi. In fact, it's so good and Nicolas has been so many times that he is on a first name basis with the Itamae "sushi chef." Nicolas proposed to his wife at the same 2 tiny seats at the bar we were meeting at, and he once rented out the entire restaurant for his birthday, not that it's big—20 guests would be a tight fit. We received a very warm and friendly welcome.

The meal is an exquisite orchestra called Omakase, "Chef's Choice." A true symphony of tastes. The chef kept serving us until we gave up, refining each order based on his thoughts, what was in season, and our reactions to the previous one. We went through several rounds of "maki" before some interludes of Japanese specialties: barbecued fish full of egg roe, deep fried tofu in broth followed by a few handrolls, and lastly fatty tuna rubbed in garlic—a big hit to say the least. Dessert was a black sesame pudding. The décor was traditional. It was quiet and quaint, like teleporting for a few hours to Osaka or Tokyo.

As we dipped our sushi into the soy sauce and enjoyed every bite, we both pulled up an imaginative world

map. A Bourdain-style conversation ensued as we plucked special memories of meals had around the world. Nicolas is a foodie. He travels for culture, and an integral part of that is how and what people eat. Dim Sum in Hong Kong, multitudes of Chinese dishes on the mainland, and all washed down with Tsing Tao beer; Japanese curries, and Korean bibimbap also made the headlines. Asian food is his thing and he told me that "food is the culmination of culture and history."

Nicolas's passions go beyond food and have begun to meld into his professional life. From entrepreneurship, to artificial intelligence (AI), to technology, Nicolas's story, like many other graduates, connects back to LAS. He attended LAS for 2 years, graduating in 1995. He chose LAS at the time to improve his English, attend an IB-school (albeit there were only 10 IB students at the time), and to "get a jump" on attending an international university. He attributes many of his established soft skills, such as self-management, people skills, cultural understanding, and entrepreneurial thinking to living at a boarding school. By starting a barber shop and dorm store in the Savoy, Nicolas had begun to put these skills to work at an early age.

I asked Nicolas what some of his favorite memories on the Magic Mountain were: "I have so many great memories, but some that stand out include ski day, our amazing volleyball team, spending time with my closest friends and favourite teachers including John Gidding and Mr. Sharp, and coming back to teach French at LAS Summer in Switzerland.

# Nicolas Hou's Top 10 Restaurants in Geneva





Nagomi Sushi  
Rue de Zurich 47, 1201 Genève



Chez Grégoire  
Rue de Montchoisy 21, 1207 Genève



Nagomi-San  
Rue de Lyon 1, Geneva 1201



L'Adresse  
Rue du 31 Décembre 32, 1207 Genève



Dagli Amici  
Rue Maunoir 16, 1207 Genève



JiaWei  
Rue de Lausanne 56, 1202 Genève



Café de Peney  
Route d'Aire-la-Ville 130, 1242 Satigny



Nagomi Tempura  
Rue de Zurich 47, 1201 Genève



Café de la Limite  
Rue des Charmilles 11, 1203 Genève



Inglewood  
Boulevard du Pont-d'Arve 44,  
Geneva 1205 Switzerland



*Scan me*



After LAS, Nicolas completed his Master of International Law at the University of Lausanne. He then left to work for Reuters for several years before moving into the corporate world at Honda Motorcycles and then Saxo Bank. Interestingly the financial crisis in 2008 was one of the most pivotal moments in his life. Nicolas found himself unemployed and unable to find another job. It was then that he decided to change his path and opt out of a typical job with financial security to start his own company. He hasn't looked back since.

Being an entrepreneur has lots of risk but it also has a lot of freedom, and this was priceless. Nicolas created his parent company "Colosse" and has since created several companies under this umbrella. He noticed that break-ins had increased in Switzerland after the financial crisis and began a special lock company called LOKI, which made it much more difficult for thieves to break and enter. Also under the Colosse umbrella is DAJE!—a Roman-style pizzeria with several locations in French-speaking Switzerland, J12, Ministry of Cuteness, and CXO. All are forms of passive income, something Nicolas swears by. If you can create a business that runs and produces money itself, or with minimal management, it gives you the ability to use your time for other important things. Currently he is working on a few projects, one being a luxury street fashion brand that aims to be eco-friendly. Another is working in the background for a talent-search platform with a venture capital in New York. Finally, he's about to launch a platform that will list all the martial arts clubs in Geneva (and then other activities) called WATODO. All projects under the Colosse brand.

If all of these simultaneous projects weren't enough Nicolas is also a well-known blogger. He is a guest writer for Bilan Magazine, considered to be the Harvard Business Review of Geneva. His columns focus on robotics and AI. In the same vein he is a frequent broadcaster of AI and tech-related podcasts.

I asked Nicolas some questions relating to AI in education. "It's going to be huge." Some challenges include the fact that students are often further ahead of the technological curve than their own teachers, and teachers are sometimes slow to adapt.

I also asked for his thoughts on banning cell phones in classrooms. "It's a typical human reaction to ban what we don't understand. We need to put more effort into understanding what impact cell phones have in the classroom, even though we have a limited time and budget in the education sector. Once we have this knowledge we can better discuss how to adapt."

Just as we at LAS are adapting to our students and the ever-increasing role of technology in the classroom, Nicolas is himself adapting to the ever-changing world of entrepreneurship; whether it's being leaner or greener we all agree that change is happening more rapidly and more forcefully than ever. The organizations which adapt the most efficiently are the most likely to succeed. While finishing our meal I realized that partnerships and collaborations with our alumni are a very important part of our growth. Working with them is a way we can continue to adapt. After all, they are the embodiment of what we offer as a school, they are our product. As Nicolas has proven during the financial crisis, his ability to negotiate turbulent times by adapting rapidly to change is reflective of the education and the tools he attained at LAS. Nothing makes us happier as a community, than to see our members pick themselves up and truly succeed.

📍 Geneva, Switzerland

📷 @jundooz

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LEYSIN AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

# Three Generations of the Ott Family

By: Dr. K. Steven Ott

Honorary Chairman of the Board

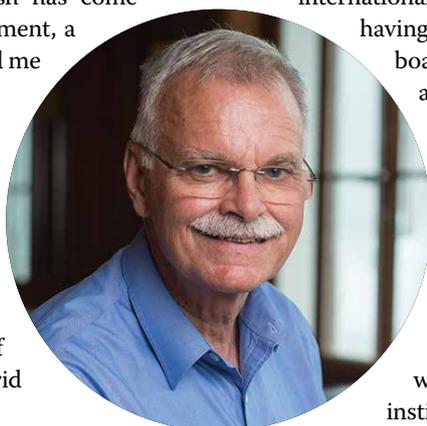
On September 21, 2018 I chaired my last LAS board meeting, turning over the chairmanship to my daughter, Stefanie. Apart from tying up some loose ends, all formal responsibilities for the operation and development of the school ended for me. My thoughts at the time were that perhaps, on occasion, our children would seek our advice—or request that we see parents and even travel to visit with alumni and families of enrolled students. Happily, my wish has come true. Despite this continued involvement, a major phase of our lives for Doris and me has ended.

We are thankful to parents and students, teachers and staff, and the people of Leysin, who shared the vision of a school community that encompasses international understanding to contribute to peace in the world—the premise of the founding of LAS by Fred and Sigrid Ott in 1960.

The transition from the founders to us, the second generation, was filled with risk and with the danger of failure. Fred and Sigrid retired in 1978 when we were still living in Saudi Arabia, turning over school leadership to the LAS board. In the years that followed, the school suffered from the lack of a guiding hand and rapidly dropped in enrollment. In July 1982, three members of the LAS board informed us that they planned on closing the school, since the 28 students

expected in the fall were largely insufficient to meet financial needs. They suggested that we take over the school—we accepted. Thus began the greatest adventure of our lives, an opportunity to build LAS into a school that would realize the original vision of its founders.

By 1997 LAS was recognized as one of the leading international boarding schools in Switzerland, having accumulated several ‘firsts’—first boarding school in Switzerland to be accredited by the US-based Middle School Association (MSA) as well as the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) in 1986; LAS was also granted the status of an IB school in 1991. The first boarders in Switzerland from Russia, Kazakhstan, and China were at LAS. Moreover, graduates were accepted into some of the finest institutions of higher learning in the US and around the world.



Then we received a call from a lawyer who informed us that he had an American client who wished to buy our school. Doris and I decided that we needed to talk to our children to see if there was interest in taking on leadership positions at LAS. Otherwise we would have to consider our options for the time when age would force us to give up the management of our school. Our oldest, Marc-Frédéric, then in his final year at the



University of St. Gallen, informed us, “Don’t ever talk to those people again. I intend to return to Leysin and work at LAS!” The first step of the transition to the third generation was about to begin.

The first tasks were to figure out what prerequisites Marc-Frédéric had to complete to be ready to meet the challenge of leading the school. So, after graduating with a master’s degree, he took charge of the LAS marketing office in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to grow the American market. Within one year he hired Paul Dyer as his assistant, still a colleague and now Director of Admissions for the Americas and Corporations today. After marrying Stephanie Schmalz, now the school physician, he began his doctoral studies at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, and completed his PhD. After an interim period as Assistant Head, Marc-Frédéric was appointed Head of School in 2009.

Doris and I had decided early on that LAS was not to be operated as a business with a profit motive, but rather that funds were to be reinvested into the school. Thus, while formally considered a shareholding corporation, school finance was based on not-for-profit principles. In preparing for the transition, we wished to formalize this value through the creation of a not-for-profit foundation. This approach was so revolutionary in the eyes of the Swiss authorities—why give away LAS, a valuable business?—that it took the political intervention of the mayor of Leysin and the finance minister of the Canton of Vaud to realize our plan. In 2004 Doris and I gave 70% of the LAS shares, the maximum that the government would permit, to the newly-established ‘Ott Foundation for the Advancement of International Education.’ Today, the LAS Foundation is the cornerstone of the school’s scholarship and financial aid program.

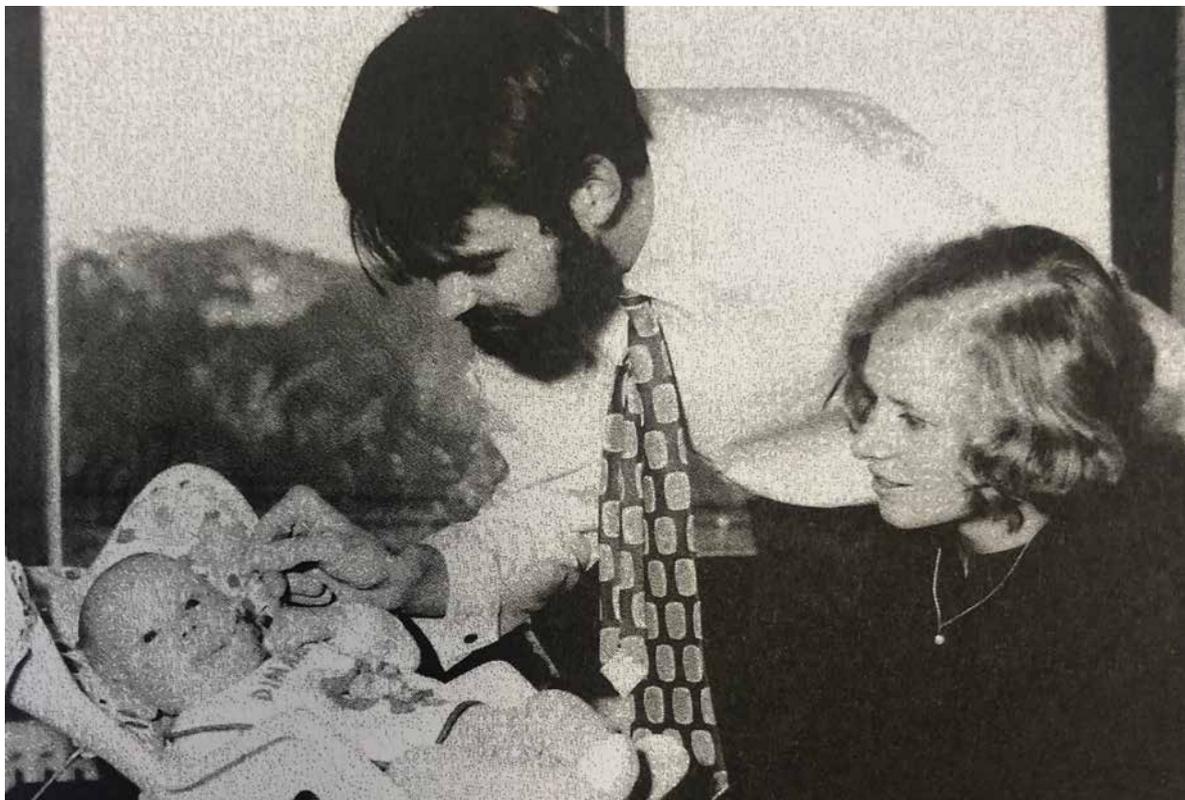
Christoph, our youngest, graduated in 2005 from the Federal Institute of Technology with a master's degree in engineering. We were convinced that he would choose to seek a position in a technologically-oriented company—but no, he informed us that he wished to join LAS: “Dad, you have a Stanford engineering education and chose LAS. Why can't I?” We told him: “You will need to earn a PhD to join LAS, since both your father and brother are ‘doctors.’” “OK” was his answer. In 2012 he was awarded a PhD from the University of Lausanne in Marketing Systems. He was well prepared to take on many of the responsibilities I had until then. As Head of Operations, Christoph is now responsible for marketing and admissions, IT, finance, as well as the non-academic service departments of the school and contributes by developing innovative programs.

Stefanie, our middle child, had chosen to study finance at the University of Geneva, then worked for Deloitte for fourteen years in Boston, London, and Zurich, prior to moving into the risk management department of Swiss Re, a Zurich-based reinsurance company. She became more involved with LAS when her oldest daughter, Nadine, enrolled as a grade 10 student in 2015. When she expressed interest in LAS, she first joined the board of the foundation and then that of LAS. Doris and I were convinced that she could contribute significantly to the development of the school as a non-executive chair by bringing

her corporate experience to the table. As chair of the board, she is now Marc-Frédéric and Christoph's ‘boss,’ which contributes to the building of a unity of purpose within the organization.

The challenges to the third generation of the Ott family will be very different from those that faced the founders and us. LAS graduates will confront a world with rapidly-accelerating climate change, growing nuclear threats, artificial intelligence, robotic hazards to jobs and social stability, and the growth of nationalism as communities divide into elite and the ‘have-nots.’ Education will be a major key to resolving these issues and LAS students, coming from successful families, will need to contribute significantly. Thus, the school will need to change and evolve in outlook and education, while maintaining its original vision succinctly stated in the mission statement—developing innovative, compassionate and responsible citizens of the world.

P.S. What about the 4th generation of the Ott family? Earlier this year, Christoph and Gosia's son, Jonas, ten years old, had a secret meeting with Emma, daughter of the LAS Academic Dean, also ten, together with Anna Claire, Marc-Frédéric and Stephanie's daughter, nine years old. After considerable parental pressure, they admitted that they had a plan—Emma and Jonas will get married and together with Anna Claire take over the school. So, the tradition will continue...



*Steven and Doris Ott with their firstborn, Marc-Frédéric Ott, 1972*

## SAVE THE DATE

# Leysin American School 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

We are going to be having a very special celebration very soon! During the 2020/21 academic year we will be celebrating our 60th year as a school all around the globe.

From June 17-20, 2021, the 60th will culminate in our biggest party at LAS yet and we want ALL of you to be there! Keep an eye out for our plans!

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**Return to the Mountains and Remember the Magic**

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**60 YEARS OF  
LEYSIN AMERICAN  
SCHOOL**

June 17-20,  
2021

**MORE DETAILS  
TO COME IN**

Spring  
2020

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If you'd like to be part of a committee to help organize a reunion and celebration of this size and stature then please contact C. Ryan Joyce, Director of Advancement, at [cjoyce@las.ch](mailto:cjoyce@las.ch) or simply call +41 24 493 4888.



LEYSIN AMERICAN SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

Chemin de la Source 3  
Leysin, Switzerland 1854

#### PARENTS OF LAS ALUMNI

If this magazine is addressed to your son or daughter who no longer maintains a permanent address at your home, please notify the LAS Advancement Office at [advancement@las.ch](mailto:advancement@las.ch). Thank you!



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