Behind the Scenes—
Making Taft’s fall musical
Photography by Robert Falcetti

On Safari
Walking, wilderness, and luxury travel
with Joy Phelan-Pinto ’75
and Mark Thornton ’91
By Ned Vigdor ’95

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Actors and orchestra
på from offstage
during a performance
of Mamma Mia!
School Meeting: On Bingham, Speakers, and Community

At Commencement last May, I spoke of two classes: the Class of 1969 and the Class of 2019, and how they shared a lot in common, coming of age as they did in times of great political, social, cultural upheaval. History does not repeat itself, but it rhymes; and that had me reading Papyrus articles from 1969, looking for echoes. And one thing I found, not unlike today, was that there were a lot of really interesting outside speakers that year. Speakers on this Bingham stage have always been central to a Taft education, but knowing the history and philosophy behind the program is important.

In 1969, there were no School Meetings. The tradition then was of Vespers, the gathering of the school at 6:10 four nights a week before sit-down dinner. That’s a lot of Vespers talks in a given year, and those members of the Class of 1969 heard a remarkable range of voices at this incredibly complex moment in our history—a moment much like today. When I skimmed the Papyrus editions, it seemed that every week or two students heard from really interesting, inspiring, informative—and even controversial—voices. I’m sure some talks were better than others; but the simple, profound act of listening actively and respectfully was part of the Taft education. Sitting in the audience, you learned things, you were challenged to understand different points of view, you developed your own thinking, you were inspired into action.

“The goal is to hear from speakers with diverse views, backgrounds, and experiences who will inform, challenge, and inspire....They will inspire us by elevating our sense of power, responsibility, and possibility.”
“But we are also brought together, and strengthened as a school, when we are invited to the table of disagreement and asked to listen and speak.”

What’s the philosophy of the program? It’s a good question. I’ll suggest five principles upon which the School Meeting speaker program rests:

First, speakers in Bingham, internal and external, are viewed not as an “extra” but instead as central to educational experience. In this room, as in the classroom and indeed everywhere, we strive to educate the whole student and to help you develop the skills and habits identified in the Portrait of the Graduate. So, these speakers are a part of a whole, and these talks mark moments of powerful learning.

Second, the goal is to hear from speakers with diverse views, backgrounds, and experiences who will inform, challenge, and inspire. They will inform by educating and providing information, leading to the “Wow! I understand it a lot better” kind of experience. They will challenge by testing our assumptions, appropriately discomfiting us, confronting us with complex ideas, or asking us to take action. They will inspire us by elevating our sense of power, responsibility, and possibility.

Third, the speaker has to have credibility, expertise, and authority. It’s not hard to find people with opinions on an issue—the internet is filled with them. But if we are going to bring someone to Taft and use our time and space, they need to have what jazz musicians call “chops,” meaning real competence and ability, as in “they’ve got the chops to be in the band.” This is especially true when they are taking on an issue that is really complicated and controversial. You better have the chops. Those speakers from 1969 were taking on the most urgent topics of the day, but each of them had deep experience, and that continues today, whether the speaker has summited Mount Everest, served as director of the Environmental Protection Agency, or offered economics lectures at Oxford University.

Fourth, we invite speakers consistent with our core community values. Of course, our core values include being nice and respectful and inclusive, but also others: rigorous scrutiny of assumptions, the importance of understanding the thinking of others, the necessity of debate marked by respect, the need to include diverse voices, the mandate for accurate information, and the shared benefit of interrogating ideas.

Finally, we hope speakers enhance and strengthen the school community. This can happen when we are moved together by a concert or a speech that brings us together in joy and connection. But we are also brought together, and strengthened as a school, when we are invited to the table of disagreement and tasked to listen and asked to speak. I see students challenging a speaker during Q&A as communal. I see an audience leaning into uncomfortable questions as communal. I see talking and even arguing in the Main Hall on the way to F block as communal. The bringing together of members to listen, debate, explain, question, probe, test, challenge, qualify, and learn is exactly what makes a school better.

The moment calls for our bravest and very best self as a school. This is where you learn to wrestle with the great questions and problems of today, and this is what marks a liberating education.

When you graduate from Taft, you will join a huge family, and somewhere at some point, you will meet a stranger and figure out you both went here. You will small talk and then connect over all the things you have in common. And at some point, one of you will mention sitting in Bingham, and the other will say, “We had amazing speakers when I was there. I don’t remember all of them, but there are a few I have never forgotten.” You will realize what you share: the privilege of this school, which has this lovely room where each week we are called to listen, and where the voices we hear might inform and challenge and inspire and make us a stronger school.
**EQUITABLE COFFEE**

**IN 2005, DURING AN INTERNSHIP**

working with a nonprofit women's cooperative in Nicaragua, Rob Terenzi '01 was struck by how little individual coffee farmers were earning for growing the world's second-most traded commodity. “This was my first exposure to the coffee supply chain,” Terenzi says. “They were earning around 70 cents per pound. I was blown away by that number. I saw how hard these farmers work.”

Seventy cents per pound of coffee that would then go up the supply chain to end up costing the final consumer up to $20 per pound, a 90 percent profit margin that "bewildered" Terenzi. "It takes five to seven years to produce coffee," he says. "These women farmers who own less than one acre of land have to make their entire life planning around their one paycheck a year."

Global coffee consumption has doubled over the past two decades, with an estimated 2.25 billion cups of coffee consumed every day. Terenzi and his wife, Nooshin Ketabi, and his Boston College friend, Will DeLuca, saw an opportunity to help coffee farmers and spend the supply chain. In 2015, they formed Vega Coffee, which has been dubbed the “Etsy” of coffee production for its dedication to individual coffee farmers.

Much of the profit in coffee production goes to middlemen buyers and shippers, but roasting the beans is also profitable. Vega Coffee brings the roasting back to Nicaragua, putting more money in the hands of the farmers. Ninety percent of the coffee beans Vega buys are from women-owned farms, and all of Vega’s roasters are women. The 15,000 farmers they source from grow beans organically. Growers harvest their beans and then take them to a centralized roasting facility near Esteli, Nicaragua, where they are able to roast, grind, and package their beans. The facility, which opened five years ago, regularly hosts training days, where farmers come to learn about the process, taste coffee, and participate in roasting sessions.

Vega's farmers make an average four times the traditional method, and are also paid every two weeks, instead of a few times per year. The company’s international customers subscribe online at www.vegacoffee.com and choose how often to have their coffee delivered. It usually takes around two weeks from order to delivery, and subscribers can choose from a variety of roasts and grinds.

Terenzi and his partners are also bringing Vega Coffee to colleges and universities, where the appeal to help small coffee growers lands on fertile soil. "When we bring our company to a college or university, we really emphasize the connection with the farmers,” he says. "We know the farmers incredibly well, and showing students how much money goes back to the farmers, I think students understand that better than most.”

"We’re working on a cacao product in a bean-to-bar process,” he says. "We will do all the work in-country, including Nicaragua, Colombia, and Guatemala.”

In 2015, during an internship working with a nonprofit women’s cooperative in Nicaragua, Rob Terenzi ’01 was struck by how little individual coffee farmers were earning for growing the world’s second-most traded commodity. “This was my first exposure to the coffee supply chain,” Terenzi says. “They were earning around 70 cents per pound. I was blown away by that number. I saw how hard these farmers work.”

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Vega Coffee has contracts with a growing number of educational institutions, such as Emory University and the University of Alabama, as well as SUNY schools.

“...and his team hope to empower local growers and show that the Vega model is a sustainable way forward. By keeping more money in country, Terenzi notes the side benefits: less deforestation, less need for emigration, and more money in the pockets of the people who actually produce the world’s coffee. As for himself, Terenzi admits he doesn’t drink too much coffee himself. “One triple machiato per day,” he says with a laugh.”
Though Tea Importers has only four employees working out of its Westport headquarters, its broader impact is colossal. The company sells primarily black and green teas—leaves that are suitable for tea bags—to manufacturers in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East that combined bring 3.5 million kilos of tea to the world. Its customers include major tea packers such as Unilever (Lipton), Bigelow, Celestial Seasonings, and Starbucks. Plus, Tea Importers employs 3,500 farmers and 2,500 factory and field workers in Rwanda, bringing jobs and economic prosperity to countless Rwandans.

And the organization’s merit is not unrecognized. In 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented Tea Importers and Sorwathe with the Award for Corporate Excellence, an honor bestowed annually on just two U.S. companies. Clinton praised Tea Importers for being a good ambassador for the values America wishes to promote overseas, and for being a company that gives back to the communities where it does business.

“Our corporate philosophy is that our farmers and factory workers are our partners,” Wertheim explains. “We count on each other for business, and social responsibility is a huge part of who we are.”

Over the years, Tea Importers has helped the community around Sorwathe in numerous ways—by bringing in potable water, repairing and maintaining roads to the company factory, building schools and sports teams, establishing medical clinics, starting adult literacy programs, and much more.

Tea Importers and Sorwathe have also partnered with UNICEF in an important effort to facilitate access to early childhood development, as well as preprimary education for infants and young children in areas around the factory. The existence of such significant partnerships is thanks to Wertheim’s strong communication skills, to which he credits Taft. “Taft was a good socializing experience for me,” he says. “I learned to ‘play well’ with others there. I have more friends from Taft than I do from college, or any other chapter of life.”

As for the future of Tea Importers, Wertheim hopes to continue impacting lives through the production of tea. “And maybe we’ll get into some brand products of our own,” he muses. “Right now we don’t have our own line of tea, and that would be a lot of fun.”
Partnering for Clean Water

THE IDEA FOR DRINKWARE COMPANY
Powwater came about for Ellie O’Neill ’11 in the wake of a traumatic experience—her boyfriend, Jack Hartpence’s near-death car accident. O’Neill, who was working in finance in New York at the time, found herself jolted awake by the intensely contemplative conversations she and Hartpence began to have in the aftermath of his trauma. “Jack felt like he’d been given a second chance,” O’Neill recalls. “We talked extensively about what good we were doing in the world, and it ultimately became clear that we both felt our lives lacked meaning. Our careers weren’t fulfilling us. At that point, we realized there was no real reason we couldn’t take a step back and start again on a different, less-traveled path.”

From there, based on the shared view that water scarcity is one of the most pressing issues of our time, O’Neill and Hartpence cofounded Powwater, a social business selling reusable water bottles, coffee mugs, and wine tumblers that reinvests profits into sustainable clean drinking water systems across the globe. “By 2025 two-thirds of humanity will live in water-scarce regions, and that’s not just in developing countries,” O’Neill explains. “In many of these regions, women spend half their day fetching water—precious time they could spend doing something else far more productive, like getting an education.”

Social businesses give consumers the power to make an impact with every purchase. They’re designed to tackle global issues by empowering communities to solve their own problems, creating jobs and stimulating economic returns. And while social businesses like Powwater are for-profit, their profits are channeled toward social causes rather than being pocketed by investors or owners. In the words of Nobel Peace Laureate and Powwater advocate Muhammad Yunus, “A charity dollar has only one life; a social business dollar can be invested over and over again.”

When you purchase a piece of Powwater drinkware—after the company recoups its costs—the leftover profits go to the company’s partners, microentrepreneurs heading water systems in Africa. Instead of merely giving the impacted regions clean water, Powwater provides the tools and education for these communities to build and maintain water systems and lasting solutions. “It’s amazing to think about the potential of our impact as we grow,” O’Neill shares. “We’re hoping to be able to launch a water project here in the States in the near future. Not many people realize that the water crisis exists in our very own country, but it’s a real problem.”

In addition to O’Neill and Hartpence, there are two other cofounders of Powwater, and each of the four team members brings their own area of expertise. The company hopes to expand from drinkware in the future and broaden its impact by offering additional product lines. While O’Neill feels positive about Powwater’s progress so far, she acknowledges the difficulties that arise in a start-up culture. “When you build a company yourself—or with only a few people—there’s not really anyone to validate your work and your progress,” she says. “So that’s been hard. It’s a challenge I’ve never had to face in my professional life, until now.”

While O’Neill’s uncertainty is natural for anyone who starts their own business, Powwater’s numbers speak for themselves. Since launching in August, the company has already brought clean water to over 20,000 people in need. And that number only continues to grow. O’Neill attributes both her passion for making a difference and her entrepreneurial spirit to her years at Taft. “Taft was the most pivotal experience of my life,” she reflects. “To leave home at such a young age really forces you to grow up quickly. And Taft’s motto about giving back is so important and was what made me aware of my privilege. It taught me that so many others hadn’t been given what I’d been given. That knowledge became rooted in me; it has shaped my life.”

—Carola Lovering Crane ’07

Alumni SPOTLIGHT
But in 1986, Rosenberry was injured in a car accident, which left him unable to carry as much on his back as required for the sort of hiking and camping he loved. After taking in that first llama four years later, he “started to read up on them and find out what they’re capable of doing,” he says. “The pieces started coming together.”

The first llama was a bit too old to be a “packer,” but Rosenberry soon added to his herd. He also shears his animals after the winter. “I have a handful of people who love to use the wool to spin to make gloves or caps, so I just give it to them,” he says. “It’s a lot of work.”

Until recently, his time spent with the llamas was limited by his day job. Always thinking he would go into biology, Rosenberry discovered a passion for law while at Whitman, which was located not far from the state penitentiary. In those days, the prison, he says, was in “complete turmoil.” “The inmates ran the place,” Rosenberry says. “The motorcycle gangs could run their bikes around the running track. It was chaotic.”

Nonetheless, Rosenberry began volunteering and speaking with inmates, seeking to understand more about incarceration and criminal justice. It was Taft, he says, that made him want to pursue a law degree and, eventually, devote his career toward advocating for juveniles caught up on the wrong side of the justice system, which he did for 30 years. “I always loved Taft’s message of service and giving back,” Rosenberry says. “I can’t say that was central, but that message always resonated with me.”

Now he’s gone full-time from law to llamas. Rosenberry is devoting his energy these days toward helping animals in need. He recently helped rescue a llama that had been abandoned by its owner, earning the animal’s trust in order to capture it and bring it to an adoption agency. “It’s the spice of life,” Rosenberry says. “You never know how things are going to shake out. I love what I’m doing.”

—Zach Schonbrun ’05

From Law to Llamas

CHARLEY ROSENBERY ’77 still couldn’t tell you why he said yes to the llama. Best he can recall, he simply acted on impulse that day in 1990 when a friend arrived at his home on Vashon Island, outside Seattle, and, gesturing toward Rosenberry’s expansive pastureland, asked if he’d be interested in caring for an old llama. Rosenberry had never owned one and didn’t know what it would entail. He agreed anyway.

Nearly 30 years later, he owns six of them, and his initial fascination with the docile creatures has turned into a full-time avocation. Rosenberry, who retired from his law career in 2017, now spends his days organizing pack trips into the Cascade Mountains helping to resupply trail crews working for weeks in the forest. Each carrying 70 to 80 pounds of gear, the llamas are surprisingly nimble on slick and treacherous terrain other pack animals like horses or mules couldn’t handle. “They’re very sure-footed, similar to an elk or a mountain goat,” Rosenberry says. “They’re also very low maintenance. They don’t require that much water. We don’t even have to take additional food for them.”

Besides putting the llamas to work for the trail crews, Rosenberry developed a relationship with veterans through several local organizations and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Wounded Warrior Project five years ago. He now leads weeklong hikes for veterans who have recently returned from combat. The llamas serve partly as valets, helping those veterans who are no longer able to carry much weight with their tents and belongings, and also as a form of therapy. “The vets really become attached to them,” Rosenberry says. “It’s a very meaningful experience for them.”

Rosenberry can relate. The Colorado native was always an avid outdoorsman, and after spending four years in relatively flat Litchfield County, Connecticut, to attend Taft, he longed to return to the backcountry after graduating. So he headed back west to Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, where he could more easily hike, fish, and continue his lacrosse career, his favorite sport.

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Sea Change

IN NOVEMBER, SCIENTISTS BASED at the Caribbean Research and Management of Biodiversity (CARMABI) station in Curacao spent five days broadcasting interactive live lessons directly into classrooms in 29 different countries.

Reaching nearly 23,000 students, the series was just one of many engaging programs produced by Irina Prentice ’94 and the team at Encounter Edu, a London-based education agency using innovative teaching methods to help students learn about pressing environmental issues through the use of tech in the classroom.

Raised in Paris as the child of two American artists, Prentice developed a global mindset early on. “Going to bilingual schools, my siblings and I became bicultural,” she recalls. “I read an English literature class with a bilingual mentor. He not only understood my American roots, but also my biculturalism,” she says. “The school allowed me to embark on a more individual way of learning. For example, I was able do an independent study project, developing an English literature class with a reading list focused on the journey of identity through travel and exploration.”

Chile with the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) the following year. After such impactful educational experiences, it’s no surprise that, 20 years later, Prentice would join an organization seeking to make the lives of our students more engaging and relevant—for everyone!”

At Taft, Prentice applied this broad worldview to her studies and worked with faculty members to develop her own programs of study. “Lance Olden, headmaster at the time, was an extraordinary mentor. He not only understood my American roots, but also my biculturalism,” she says. “The school allowed me to embark on a more individual way of learning. For example, I was able to do an independent study project, developing an English literature class with a reading list focused on the journey of identity through travel and exploration.”

At Encounter Edu, Prentice and the team are guided by the unofficial motto “Our planet is 70 percent ocean, but our education system focuses predominantly on the terrestrial world,” Prentice notes. “By omitting the oceans, we’re giving students only a partial understanding of our planet and the vital connections among all the ecosystems.”

One of the most exciting programs that Encounter Edu curates is a series of Live Lessons—live video links with the world’s leading scientists, some of whom are a part of active scientific explorations. “We’ve been able to connect students directly with researchers working in the field,” Prentice explains, “whether to those studying microplastics in the Arctic, coral reef adaptation and restoration in the Caribbean, or exploring the deep ocean on board a submarine expedition in the Indian Ocean. And they can ask questions in real time.”

In addition to running communications, partnerships, and outreach for Encounter Edu, Prentice works closely with the home office team in London to ensure that each Live Lesson goes off without a hitch. “We have teams in two locations— one in London and one in the field,” she says. “I oversee and support the London team, working with the teachers to pass on student questions to the field team, to troubleshoot technical problems teachers might have. I also monitor the quality of the broadcasts, coordinating with the production side if problems arise. Ultimately, our goal is to make the Live Lessons as smooth and as engaging as possible for everyone involved, no matter how remote the live link is.”

The results of this innovative approach speak for themselves. Already, Encounter Edu has reached more than 9.8 million students in more than 4,000 schools across 96 countries. Prentice is incredibly optimistic not only for the future of her organization but also for the future of education as a whole. “This is the way that education is going,” she says. “Applying what these students are learning against current case studies makes the education process much more engaging and more relevant—for everyone!”

Above: Irina Prentice ’94, who works with Encounter Edu to provide educational live-stream learning in classrooms around the world.

Left and below: Arctic Live streaming sessions from the U.K. Arctic Research Stations in Ny-Alesund, Svalbard, connected students around the world to a microplastics and ocean acidification field research team.
In 1924, Josephine is the proud owner of a thriving farm. As a child, she channeled otherworldly power to free herself from slavery. Now a revered neighbor, a wise woman named Charlotte seeks her company, and an uneasy friendship grows between them. But Charlotte has fought to overcome a life of hardship and struggle, a relationship that jeopardizes Josephine's family. Near the 100-years later, Josephine's descendant, Ava, is a single woman who has just lost her job. She moves in with her white grandmother, Martha, a wealthy but lonely woman who pays Ava to be her companion. But Martha's behavior soon becomes erratic, then threatening, and Ava must escape before her story and Josephine's converge. A national bestseller and A Kind of Freedom, WINTER 2020, was long-listed for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former. Her work has also appeared as a guest on The Dr. Oz Show. Death Comes to Machu Picchu, IN PRINT / THE TAFT BULLETIN / WINTER 2020, followed her passion for food to Le Cordon Bleu Paris, receiving her culinary diploma in 2011. Since then, she has put her culinary skills to work as a private chef, food writer, recipe developer, and blogger. She is currently a food contributor for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the former for ELLE.com and a member of SELF magazine's SelfMade Collective, as well as the 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THIS IS THE THIRD YEAR THAT SENIORS ALEX ROBERTSON (LEFT) AND PETER YU (RIGHT) HAVE PERFORMED TOGETHER FOR THE ANNUAL MULTICULTURAL ARTS CELEBRATION HELD AS PART OF TAFT’S MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY.

Alex, who was raised in Las Vegas, and Peter, who is from Beijing, met as lower mids and discovered their shared love of classical piano. By mid year, they were roommates, with Alex performing with Taft’s Jazz Band and Peter with Chamber Ensemble. During the fall of mid year, the duo decided they’d try performing a four-hands piece for MLK Day. That year they played Brahms’ Hungarian Dance No. 1 in G Minor. The piece was a hit, and they performed again the following year, choosing a faster piece—Sabre Dance by Khachaturian. With the goal of topping their past performances, this school year Peter suggested they play a two-piano arrangement of Flight of the Bumblebee by Rimsky-Korsakov. “Peter is one of my best friends,” says Alex, “and I love that our relationship has been forged not only through our shared passion for academics and athletics as students, but music and specifically the piano, even though we come from completely different backgrounds and cultures.”
IN THE HEAT OF THE SUMMER, when most people were thinking about how to keep themselves cool, Sinéad Connolly ‘21 started thinking about how to keep others warm. “Every Wednesday evening last summer I went to the soup kitchen at the St. Vincent DePaul Mission in Waterbury to help serve meals,” Sinéad explains. During her time at St. Vincent DePaul, Sinéad thought a lot about the people the mission serves and the many challenges they face. She thought about how difficult the winter months can be for those with no permanent place to call home. “I wanted to find ways to continue helping, once I returned to school, so I asked the director of the shelter what their greatest needs were during the winter months,” says Sinéad. “He said there was always a need for blankets and hats for their clients.” And with that, Warm Thoughts, Helping Hands was born, founded as a goal-driven, mission-specific service organization designed to bring communities together to support those in need. “My first goal was to deliver 150 hats to St. Vincent DePaul by November 1,” Sinéad says, “then to follow that up with a donation of 25 blankets.” Her church helped answer the call on hats—Sinéad’s website includes a link to a tutorial showing how to make a simple fleece hat—and both the Taft community and Waterbury’s Kennedy High School have made blankets for the drive. Sinéad will collect new and gently used blankets throughout the school year; collection boxes are in each dormitory common area at Taft. “Students at Kennedy also made blankets for the drive,” Sinéad says. “There is a link on my website to blanket-making kits. There is no sewing involved; you just tie them. It was a great project for the students—they seemed to really enjoy it.” As an official club at Taft, Warm Thoughts, Helping Hands holds regular meetings on campus, which has allowed Sinéad to expand her work to include new initiatives. Alicia Maag ’21 helps manage the club. During the meetings, students are invited to write letters to soldiers and first responders, or to create cards for hospitalized children. “My goal is to collect 150 letters and 150 cards before the end of the school year. In just the first few months of school we have already collected 50 letters and 25 cards, so we’re off to a very good start. I’ve been grateful for how many people have come to the meetings and gotten involved,” says Sinéad. Sinéad will deliver the letters to Operation Gratitude, a nonprofit organization seeking to support members of the active military and their families, veterans, wounded heroes and their caregivers, and first responders. The cards will be sent to Cards for Hospitalized Kids, an internationally recognized charitable organization that spreads “hugs, joy, and magic” to hospitalized kids across America through uplifting, handmade cards. “We’re all very busy here at Taft, so it may be difficult for people to make all of the meetings. Having projects like these means that people can still contribute even if they can’t come to a meeting. Anyone can write a letter or make a card on their own time,” says Sinéad. “Those simple gestures can really go a long way in making a difference in someone’s life.” To learn more about Warm Thoughts, Helping Hands, visit www.warmthoughtshelpinhands.wixsite.com/volunteer.
Community Service Day 2019

THE FULL TAFT COMMUNITY set aside the daily routine of classes, meetings, and academic obligations on Monday, October 21, to embrace the school motto, Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret; Not to be served but to serve. Established in 1995, Community Service Day is a hallmark of service learning at Taft. This year, students, faculty, and staff visited 50 sites across the greater Watertown region, dedicating their time, energy, and talents to engaging in meaningful projects that support or advance the important work being done by area nonprofit organizations, schools, churches, nature centers, and more. Taft students also hosted local students on the campus, engaging them through activities like sports clinics, science sessions, arts and crafts projects, dance and movement explorations, computer fun, and story hours. “The day is an embodiment of our motto, ‘Not to be served but to serve,’” says Taft Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78. “Service happens at Taft in countless ways and every week, and we should remember that, but a public day—where we stop our normal business of academics—provides a different kind of affirmation of what we believe in as a school.”

Science Students Compete at Yale

EIGHT TAFT STUDENTS traveled to Yale University in October to compete in the 21st annual Yale Physics Olympics, an all-day physics competition for Connecticut and surrounding area high school students. Forty teams of four students completed a pentathlon of physics-themed events developed by Yale science faculty. “It was a fun day for all of us,” says Science Teacher Jim Mooney. “Some events involved performing measurements in as precise a manner as possible where the best technique had to be discovered by the students, while others involved building an apparatus that would perform a given task.”

Four of the five events vary from year to year; the Fermi quiz is a perennial constant. This year, Taft’s team Human Error won the Fermi challenge, which required them to combine clever quantitative guesses to produce a good final estimate of some unknown number. Congratulations to Human Error team members Ernest Protas ’20, Stefan Kim ’20, Andrii Torchylo ’21, and Ben Le ’21, who also finished the overall competition in fifth place. Peter Yu ’20, Harry Wang ’21, Felicia Wang ’21, and Christine Li ’21 competed as Team Non-Local Interaction; they finished the Fermi challenge in third place and ended the day 10th overall.

Non ut Sibi

Teamwork is the name of the game at the Yale Physics Olympics, and Taft’s Team Non-Local Interaction (from left—Peter Yu ’20, Harry Wang ’21, Christine Li ’21, and Felicia Wang ’21) made it look easy.

Around THE POND
Bringing the World to Taft

Twice each week, Tafties gather in Bingham Auditorium for Morning Meeting, where speakers from across the globe share their unique experiences and perspectives with the Taft community. One of Taft’s most important and meaningful traditions, the Morning Meeting program, effectively reflects the school’s commitment to preparing students to engage with a broad range of social, moral, artistic, cultural, and political issues in an open, informed, and thoughtful manner. In addition to very powerful talks by faculty members Lindsay Leal, Colin Farrar, and Andrew Prince, Taft students heard from the following notable speakers last fall:

**Author Eisa Ulen**

EISA NEFERTARI ULEN IS THE AUTHOR of Crystelle Mourning, a novel described by The Washington Post as “a call for healing in the African American community from generations of hurt and neglect.” Ulen is the recipient of a Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center Fellowship for Young African American Fiction Writers, a Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center Fellowship, and a National Association of Black Journalists Award.

“All of you matter, too. You matter, because you can do something. You…you young people are leading the way already for all of us.”

**Artist Christine Mauersberger**

2019 ROCKWELL VISITING ARTIST

Christine Mauersberger produces complex mark-making narratives in multiple media—paintings, embroidery, and installation works—which were on display in Potter Gallery throughout the fall.

“You can get anywhere you can see. I truly believe this for me, and I believe it for you. If you can see it—if you can think about it—it can happen.”

**Environmental Leader Gina McCarthy**

GINA MCCARTHY IS PROFESSOR OF the practice of public health in the Department of Environmental Health and director of The Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health (Harvard C-CHANGE). She served under President Barack Obama as the 13th administrator of the EPA from 2013 to 2017, where she led EPA initiatives that cut air pollution, protected water resources, reduced greenhouse gases, and strengthened chemical safety to better protect more Americans.

“I want to make sure that in a school like this with students from across the world that you understand that the United States of America is the United States of America. We care about one another, we care about our health, we care about our safety, and we are going to do our part on climate change. Period.”

**Charlotte Clymer**

CHARLOTTE CLYMER IS AN AMERICAN activist and writer, she is also a U.S. Army veteran and transgender woman. As the press secretary for rapid response at the Human Rights Campaign (the largest LGBTQ civil rights advocacy group in the U.S.), Clymer is an outspoken activist on issues including LGBTQ rights, feminism, and veterans’ affairs.

“I would rather be working toward something far more pressing to a reasonable society—eradicating cancer or building a more equitable financial society for everybody. We shouldn’t have to worry about who people love, who they are, or what kind of families they have.”
Lt. Col. H. James Greene

AFTER GRADUATING FROM YALE IN 1955, Lt. Col. H. James Greene joined the United States Air Force and became a fighter pilot. He was assigned to the Third Bomb Wing, Japan, and was a certified nuclear weapons delivery pilot targeting sites in North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union. During the early phase of the Vietnam War, he flew more than 100 combat missions in B-57 bombers. His last assignment in the Air Force was as a commander, flying C-5 transports in worldwide operations.

“Is war inevitable? It has always been with us, but if we look at why we have gotten into wars throughout history, maybe we can change that situation. Maybe we can find a way to avoid having more veterans.”

Father Gregory Boyle

IN 1986, FATHER GREGORY BOYLE was appointed pastor of Dolores Mission Church, a Jesuit parish in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of East Los Angeles. At the time, the church sat between two large public housing projects and amid the territories of local gangs. Boyle began working to create meaningful opportunities for the gang members and the community and, in 1988, established Homeboy Industries. Today, Homeboy Industries is the largest gang intervention, rehabilitation, and reentry program in the United States, offering an “exit ramp” for those stuck in a cycle of violence and incarceration.

“What Martin Luther King says about church could well be said about your time here at Taft: It’s not the place you’ve come to, it’s the place you go from….The hope is that you will go from here to imagine a circle of compassion, then imagine nobody standing outside that circle. You go from here to dismantle the barriers that exclude.”

Sarah Burns

SARAH BURNS IS THE AUTHOR OF The Central Park Five: A Chronicle of a City Wilding. She is also the coproducer and director for the documentary film The Central Park Five, which she created with her husband, David McMahon, and her father, renowned filmmaker Ken Burns. Burns visited Taft in November as this year’s Paley Lecturer.

“As a storyteller, I can inform; try to set the record straight. But I also think that storytelling can help to create more empathy—to open people’s eyes to see those who are different from them as less different.”

Three Amigos

WHEN A REGIONAL MEDICAL organization acquired a heritage version of the St. John’s Bible, it sent one volume to Waterbury, Connecticut. That volume was the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, and the foundational text for all three monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Local religious leaders Rabbi Eric Polokoff, Imam Aga Guz, and Monsignor Joseph Donnelly were invited to a ceremony in Waterbury to welcome that text. The conversation among the three was so energetic and enlightening that the trio believed they should expand their conversations, open it to the public, and take it on the road. They brought it to Taft in November.

“We all can be neighbors. We all can be prophets in order to spread the good news—the good news that there is hope, there is brotherhood, there are people who will try always for the betterment of the community and the betterment of humankind.”

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Economist Martin Cox

ECONOMIST MARTIN COX IS THE director of The John Locke Institute, an educational organization providing short courses in the U.K., France, Italy, Australia, and the United States for students between 13 and 19 years old. It promotes excellence and innovation in education, and seeks to foster academic ambition, clear thinking, and love of learning.

“At your age many of you are ambitious to change the world and make it better, and I hope that you hang on to that ambition. But I want you to have not just soft hearts, but hard heads. You need to employ all the intelligence and all the advantages of the great education you’re getting here to use that compassion in a way that actually makes life better for other people.”
Celebrating Excellence

SIXTEEN STUDENTS WERE INDUCTED INTO THE CUM LAUDE SOCIETY in October, based on their academic records for both their mid and upper middle years. Founded in 1908, the Cum Laude Society is the secondary school national scholarship society. It parallels the Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi societies at the collegiate level. A maximum of 20 percent of the senior class may be elected into membership in the Cum Laude Society; this group represents 9.7 percent of their class.

Back row, from left: Nicholas Baird, Zach Tonelli, Elly MacKay, Carson Larcherren, Ewan Prentis, Stefan Kim, Peter Yu, Tony Liu
Front row, from left: Hallie Wagner, Kira McInerney, Meredith King, Magnus Spangenberg, Olivia Gasser, Tetsiana Toule, Michelle Lian, Cierra Guelfetti

In Fashion

MAGGIE CU’21 WOVED THE JUDGES WITH HER MERMAID/FISHTAIL high-fashion creation, taking top honors in this year’s Trashion Show. Sponsored by Taft’s EcoMons, the annual Trashion Show invites students to make wearable fashion out of recycled or sustainable materials.

Fan-tastic

TAFT’S FAN BUS BROUGHT TONS OF RHINO SPIRIT TO LAKEVILLE, Connecticut, in November for Taft-Hotchkiss Day. Preceded by Friday night’s annual Red Rally, Taft-Hotchkiss Day was once again a day of great sportsmanship, friendly rivalry, and rowdy, rowdy Rhinos.

By Design

ARTIST SUSIE TARNOWICZ ’03 returned to Taft in December to work with students in Loueta Chickadaunce’s Drawing and Design classes. She led a series of workshops guiding students through the process of creating and binding handmade journals.
Fond Farewell

IF YOU’VE BEEN TO AN EVENT OF any kind at Taft, you know that hospitality is one of our strong suits. What you might not know is that the seamless delivery of everything from morning donuts and coffee in a tent on a field to a five-course meal with elegant linens in Prentice has been touched with pride, dedication, and genuine caring by Catering Manager Lauralee Hurley. It only seems fitting that Lauralee’s last Taft event before her retirement would be Headmaster Willy and Pam MacMullen’s annual Halloween party for faculty and staff children. It was Lauralee’s favorite day of the year; she goes out on a high note and with deep gratitude not just from the MacMullens but from the entire community—students, faculty, staff, parents, grandparents, friends, and alumni—all of whom have enjoyed events and celebrations made better by Lauralee’s exceptional touch.

Leading the Way

SIX TAFT STUDENTS TRAVELED TO SEATTLE, Washington, in early December to attend the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC). SDLC is a multiracial, multicultural gathering of 1,600 high school student leaders from across the globe with a focus on self-reflecting, forming allies, and building community. Participants develop cross-cultural communication skills, design effective strategies for social justice practice through dialogue and the arts, and learn the foundations of allyship and networking principles. This year’s program was built around the theme “1954. With All Deliberate Speed. 2019. Integrating Schools, Minds, and Hearts with the Fierce Urgency of Now.” It ran concurrently with the NAIS 2019 People of Color Conference, also attended by a large contingent from Taft.

Student participants from Taft were, from left: Rachel Peverly ’20, Austin Omala ’21, Sinthy Guaman ’21, Muffin Prakittiphoom ’21, Kaitlyn Talafaro ’22, and Linh Vu ’21. Photo courtesy Andrew Prince.

Teachers Teaching Teachers

TAFT FACULTY STEPPED AWAY FROM THEIR TRADITIONAL TEACHING ROLES FOR ONE HOUR IN EARLY DECEMBER to engage in a bit of “homegrown professional development,” says Dean of Faculty Edie Traina, “developed for the community, by the community.” The Winter Workshop program was conceptualized by Taft’s Professional Education and Growth (PEG) Committee eight years ago and invites faculty members to develop and lead educational seminars or to attend sessions delivered by their peers. This year’s sessions explored a wide range of topics, from classroom design, he-she-they pronouns, and turning your classroom into an escape room, to college counseling, making the most of a maker space, and guided meditation, to name a few.

The 84th Annual Services of Lessons and Carols marked the end of the fall term and the beginning of Winter Break. In a newer Taft tradition, the services were followed by a reception in Woodword Chapel Undercroft, featuring music by Taft’s Jazz Ensemble.
Mamma Mia!

THE FALL MUSICAL WAS A MÉLANGE OF COLOR AND CREATIVITY, inspired acting and choreography, the best kind of earworm tunes, and, for good measure, perhaps the coolest retro costumes to grace the Bingham stage. It took more than 60 Taft students to mount this spectacular performance—see the feature article beginning on page 42 in this magazine for a behind-the-scenes look at how it all came together.

In Tandem

DANCE TEACHER SARAH SURBER (center) performed on stage in Bingham as part of Taft’s Music for a While performance series. She joined Tandem—the resident dance company at Moving Arts Exchange (MAX), a nonprofit dance organization based in Great Barrington, Massachusetts—for the show. “After taking a hiatus from performing, I am thrilled to return to the stage with such a fantastic group,” says Surber. “Performing is such a rewarding and fulfilling experience, and I am grateful to be able to bring that experience back to Taft to share with my students.”

Dance

THIRTY-FIVE STUDENTS choreographed and performed 11 numbers during the Winter Dance Showcase in December. The program also featured a large group dance in Kathak style, a classical dance style of India, choreographed by guest teacher and local Kathak artist Rachna Agrawal.
Twenty-One Years After the First Ever Olympic Women’s Ice Hockey Game was Played, a Gold Medal Winner

were inducted into the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Hall of Fame. On November 1, 2019, members of the 1998 U.S. Olympic Women’s Ice Hockey Team took the stage in Colorado Springs, Colorado, to receive their honor. Taft math teacher, hockey coach, and admissions officer Gretchen Ulman Silverman was among them. (Teammate, fellow inductee, and Taft alums AJ Micelco Groswold ’93 was unable to attend the ceremony.)

“We were in ’98, none of us put ourselves in the context of ‘the world’s greatest athletes,’” says Silverman. “We were just playing for the purest of reasons: we loved the sport and we wanted to represent our country. Then, being at the induction ceremony and hearing from athletes like Lisa Leslie, Misty May-Treanor, and [Paralympic swimmer] Erin Popovich, that context suddenly changed; I realized that this was a very big deal—that the world was watching.”

“I don’t think the history of the moment hit any of us until much later, when we got home and had some time to reflect,” recalls Silverman. “It was a preview—a first look—and the games were 4-1 Canada early in the third period.

“The first game against Canada in the preliminary round was ‘meaningless’ to everyone but the athletes on the ice,” says Micelco. “Every time we ever played Canada it meant something and always brought out the best in both sides. Coach Smith called a timeout when we were down 4-1 with under 12 minutes left to play. He was incredibly relaxed and told us that winning that game plus a dollar would get us a donut—he always had a unique way of getting his point across! But it calmed us down, and we rallied.”

“Just started shooting away, one goal, then another,” Silverman adds. “We won the game 7-4. It was a big statement. We had the grit and determination and the teamwork to come back and dig ourselves out of the hole. Because of our history with Canada, we always had this seed of doubt in our minds. Now we knew we could beat them. We took that mindset into the gold medal game.”

Two nights later Team USA and Team Canada took the ice for the first women’s gold medal ice hockey game in history. Two minutes and 38 seconds into the second period, Silverman scored the first goal of the game.

“I shot it, but it was a team goal,” says Silverman. “That goal happened because we practiced for hours and hours and hours. It didn’t matter who put the puck in the net; we had systems in place and when Coach Smith drew up plays, we executed them.”

Team USA scored two more goals in their victory over Team Canada. It was a moment, Silverman says, of sheer elation.

“When the U.S. Women’s Ice Hockey team arrived in Nagano, Japan, for the 1998 Olympics, the program was still in its infancy. The first Women’s World Championship game had only been played eight years earlier, then in alternating years. The United States and Canada advanced to the gold medal round in each of the four World Championship matches preceding the sport’s Olympic debut. Canada’s four gold medals were the clear favorites in Nagano.

On paper, Canada was really the favored team. They had the big names—the star power,” says Silverman. “But when it came down to it, we were the team that really played together.”

By the time the teams met for the first time in Nagano during round robin play, they already knew that they’d face each other in the gold medal game. But it was a preview—a first look—and the teams were 4-1 Canada early in the third period.

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“We just started shooting away, one goal, then another,” Silverman adds. “We won the game 7-4. It was a big statement. We had the grit and determination and the teamwork to come back and dig ourselves out of the
Boys’ Soccer 16–2–1
FOUNDERS LEAGUE CHAMPIONS, NEW ENGLAND CLASS A SEMIFINALISTS

It was another incredible season for the boys’ varsity soccer team, arguably the best in the program’s history. The Rhinos posted an impressive final record of 16–2–1 and emerged as the undefeated Founders League Champions (7–0)! For the fifth year in a row, Taft earned a spot in the Class A New England Tournament, and for the fourth consecutive year, the team reached the semifinals, falling to the eventual champion. The program has maintained national attention, being ranked as one of the top five prep school soccer teams in the country. Taft began the season with seven consecutive wins, highlighted by victories over top programs like Avon Old Farms (3–0), Deerfield (1–0), and Andover (2–0). After dropping a tight game to Berkshire, Taft produced another seven-game win streak, marked by wins against Kent (3–0), Choute (5–2), and a thrilling 1–0 victory over Loomis to clinch the Founders League title. The Rhinos closed out the regular season by defeating rival Hotchkiss (3–1). In the New England quarterfinal, Taft knocked off defending champion Berkshire (1–0), avenging the loss from earlier in the season, before falling to eventual New England champion Worcester Academy (1–2) in the semifinals. Taft’s offense was certainly entertaining this season, scoring 63 goals in 19 matches and led by a trio of outstanding central midfielders: Sammed Bawa ’20 (21 goals, 5 assists), KK Baffour ’22 (7 goals, 11 assists), and James Donaldson ’20 (7 goals, 4 assists). Benas Babenskas ’21 (5 goals, 1 assist), Nur Adikarie ’21 (4 goals, 2 assists), Cole Torino ’20 (2 goals, 3 assists), and Charlie Shanks ’20 (2 goals, 3 assists) added to this dynamic attack. A talented group of defenders—Jayce Fraser ’21, Sebastian Mañon ’22, Jordan Miller ’20, and Ethan Hindle ’20—were excellent all season. Their efforts, combined with those of goalkeepers Chris Murphy ’21 and Brooks Reed ’21, limited opponents to only 13 goals for the entire season, less than a goal per game on average. There are plenty of young players eager to build upon this success next year, and the graduating seniors, especially captains Sammed Bawa and Ethan Hindle, will leave an incredible legacy.

Girls’ Soccer 7–6–4

2019 was a good year for the program—the JV squad went undefeated at 13–0–4, while the varsity posted a winning 7–6–4 record. Led by its seniors, Taft was able to put forth great effort in every match despite numerous injuries that kept the starting lineup in flux. The team rebounded well after dropping three of four in the middle of the season to go unbeaten in their next five matches heading into the final game against rival Hotchkiss. Taking on a talented Hotchkiss squad, Taft played their...
absolute best game and were unlucky to fall 2–1 in the final three minutes of the match after holding a 1–0 lead and push- ing the opponent’s net for long stretches in the second half. Other highlights were a 5–3 victory over Westminster, domi- nant wins against Kent and Williston, and an exciting 2–2 tie with Loomis under the lights. Taft will miss the presence of co-captains Kayla Thomas ’20 and Elly MacKay ’20, and the entire Class of 2020 that set such a healthy and competitive atmosphere, but several leading scorers return in the fall of 2020. Patience Kum ’21 led the team in goals for the third straight year, and Paton Roberts ’21 took over as the overall point scorer with 6 goals and 12 assists. Both players earned New England honors and will be part of a very strong senior class looking to get Taft Soccer back into the playoffs in 2020.

Varsity Field Hockey 11–7
NEW ENGLAND CLASS A QUARTERFINALISTS
The varisty field hockey team, led by co- captains Abigail Hans ’20 and Olivia King ’20, welcomed nine new players to the roster this fall, but this group of 20 individuals was determined to work together. Disappointed with their first test, a road loss against Milton Academy and another against a very strong Sacred Heart Greenwich team, Taft would not let this start set them back. The Rhinos went on to win seven of their next eight games, marked with a victory over Loomis Chaffee (2–1–2) under the lights and an exciting overtime win in the rain against Williston Northampton (2–1). Senior Day was highlighted by a 7–2 victory over visiting Northfield Mount Hermon with six of the goals coming from the senior class—Olivia King (3), Abigail Hans (1), Hartley Messer (1), and Eliza Travelstead (1). A defensive battle on Taft-Hotchkiss Day put Taft on the losing end, but this would not be the final game of their season. The Rhinos landed the eighth seed in the NEPSAC Class A tournament. For the second year in a row, they would travel to the top seed in hopes of an upset. Unfortunately, Sacred Heart Greenwich was too much for Taft to handle, and their championship run would come to an end in the quarterfinals. Abigail Hans and Libby Dolan ’21 were named Western New England All-Stars. Emma Hentemann ’21 and Dolan were named Founders All-League. Hans and Jenna Guglielmi ’22 were named NEPSAC All-League, and Chloe Agopian ’23 and Olivia King were awarded honorable mentions. Captains-elect are Libby Dolan and Emma Hentemann.

Football 5–3
Coming off a 2018 Erickson League and NEPSAC Bowl championship, Taft started the season with high expectations and three consecutive wins against Phillips Exeter Academy (38–28), Salisbury School (22–6), and Williston Northampton (55–28), an especially memorable night game with a huge Taft crowd. The team then produced a poor result against a tough Trinity-Pawling team, followed by two more losses against Brunswick and Avon Old Farms, who proved to be the top two teams in the league. The team’s confidence did not waver; the squad showed their resiliency and fought for a big win against Kent on Family Weekend (49–34) and a Taft-Hotchkiss Day victory (25–20), culminating a great season for the seniors, when the whole Taft crowd rushed the field in celebration. The Rhinos were led offensively by some of the finest athletes in New England. University of Iowa-bound WR Diante Vines ’20 had an exceptional season: 49 receptions for 552 yards and 8 TDs in seven games, while often being the focal point of our opponents’ defensive efforts. Skyler Bell ’21 (36 catches for 549 yards and 7 TDs), captain Michael Yamin ’20, Jacob Rosko ’21, and M.J. Dilos ’21 rounded out what was arguably the best receiving core in the NEPSAC. Captain Mashed Harriott ’20 battled through injuries and carried the ground game, while Nick Broom ’23 adequately led the team from his quarterback position as a lower mid (1,048 yards passing and 22 TD). Defensive coordinator Tim Cary’s defense was led by our fearsome defensive line—Michael Spencer ’20 (10 sacks), Stanley Dennis ’20 (10 tackles for loss), and Osirus Rhodes ’20 who put together two of the best seasons for defensive linemen in recent memory. Captain Jack Bryant ’20 led the team in tackles, while Zach Derah ’20 provided leadership and consistently strong performance throughout the year. Jacob Rosko was tasked with shutting down the opponents’ best receiving threat, and he excelled in that role. The 2019 season was a successful one, and the returning players are eager to get back to bowl contention in 2020.

Volleyball 10–8
With numerous position changes, injuries, and lineup adjustments, the 2019 season proved to be one rife with possibility and growth. Doing what was best for the team—Michael Spencer ’20 (10 sacks), Stanley Dennis ’20 (10 tackles for loss), and Osirus Rhodes ’20 who put together two of the best seasons for defensive linemen in recent memory. Captain Jack Bryant ’20 led the team in tackles, while Zach Derah ’20 provided leadership and consistently strong performance throughout the year. Jacob Rosko was tasked with shutting down the opponents’ best receiving threat, and he excelled in that role. The 2019 season was a successful one, and the returning players are eager to get back to bowl contention in 2020.
and their teammates, players tackled the unfamiliarity of a new defensive scheme, new positions, and new techniques. As a result, practices remained productive and focused, and the Rhinos earned hard-fought victories against strong Class A opponents Choate, Sacred Heart, and Miss Porter’s, ultimately coming together as a cohesive unit. This was made most evident on Taft-choices: the team that learned how to fight relent-
lessly, how to support each other between matches, and how to make themselves more efficient, varied attackers. Heading into next year, Taft looks to build upon the lessons learned and the successes earned. The team will returnkill leader Mason Delafield ’21, who earned over a dozen blocks this season. Senior captain Addie Delafield ’20 received the Volleyball Award and an All-NEPSAC Award. The All-Founders awards were given to Melissa Kayal ’21 and Zoe Kemper ’20. The team will be led next year by Finley Delafield ’21 and Sarah Katz ’21.

Boys’ Cross Country 4–3

The 2019 season was marked by endurance, grit, and continued growth, all leading to strong wins against Choate Rosemary Hall (22–37), Trinity–Pawling (19–42), Westtown Northampton (25–30), and Kent (21–36) on Family Day, in which the home course record was broken. Taft finished third at the Founders League Championships, improving two places from the 2018 sea-
son, and then placed eighth at the NEPSAC Division I Championships at Northfield Mount Hermon in the final race. Individual accomplishments for the season included five runners breaking into the top 30 per-
fors by Taft runners on the home course, including Yak Sium Chan ’21, Nate Dexter ’22, Mark Naguib ’20, Josef Zard ’20, and Ian Staines ’20, whose 16:10 bested the previous home course record set last year by an incredible 16 seconds. Staines and Zard were recognized as Founders League All-Stars (finishing third and 12th in that race), and Staines, placing 10th overall at New Englands, qualified for an All-Stars race, in which he placed fifth among the best run-
ners in the NEPSAC. All-Founders League recipients were Joe Zarif and Stefan Kim ’20 for their great leadership, while Staines was the recipient of the John B. Small Award for his outstanding season. Next year’s team will be captained by Mason Cento ’21, Joey Nihill ’21, and Andree Tschylko ’21.

Girls’ Cross Country 2–6

This young but talented team was deter-
mined to build from the early weeks to be at their best for the major races in November. The first race in 90-degree heat at Avon showed that the Rhinos had a lot of work to do, but with each week the team stepped up their training and came together. That unity and steady work paid off late in the season, especially the resounding win against Kent (17–44) on Family Weekend. In near-perfect conditions on a day when every Taft team would win at home, the girls went hard from the start, with nearly every one of Taft’s 22 runners setting a personal record on the home course. Taft’s varsity top seven (Stella Oldakowski ’22, Charlie Brounhead ’23, Mare Gandarela ’21, Annabel Pick ’22, Katie Brotto ’20, Michelle Liam ’20, and Annie Woodward ’23) put up some very fast times, and carried this momentum into the final two weeks where the Rhinos placed fifth at the Founders League Championship, led by Oldakowski (12th, 21:13), Brounhead (16th, 21:39), and Gandarela (18th, 21:49) in a field of nine teams and 63 runners; and then 11th place at the New England Division I championships in the season’s final race. For the second straight year, captains and four-year varsity letter win-
ers Bootsma and Lian earned the Girls’ Cross Country Award for their leadership, dedication, and spirit. A very strong return-
ing core of young runners, including a JV squad that went 7–1 on the season, will be led by co-captains Gandarela and Sinéad Connolly ’21, and lead runner Oldakowski.

ATHLETIC AWARDS

FALL

Boys’ Varsity Soccer Livingston Carroll Soccer Award Ethan Holy ’20
Samuel Bawa ’20
Girls’ Varsity Soccer 1976 Girls’ Soccer Award Kayla Thomas ’20
Elly MacKay ’20
Girls’ Varsity Field Hockey Field Hockey Award Abigail Hines ’20
Olivia King ’20
Football Black Award Dianne Vines ’20
Harry K. Cross Football Award Michael Fanin ’20
Mashod Harrison ’20
Girls’ Cross Country Girls’ Cross Country Award Katie Brotto ’20
Michelle Liam ’20
Boys’ Cross Country John B. Small Award Ian Staines ’20
Girls’ Varsity Volleyball Volleyball Award Adelaide Delafield ’20

SEAN PADGETT
BEHIND THE SCENES

Photography by Robert Falcetti
WATCHING THE STUDENTS RISE TO THE CHALLENGES OF CARPENTRY, SCENIC PAINTING, LIGHTING, AND FINALLY CONTROLLING AND OPERATING THE TECHNICAL ELEMENTS THROUGHOUT THE PERFORMANCES WAS REWARDING.

—David Kievit, set and light design
SEEING HOW PROUD EACH OF THE KIDS WERE ABOUT THE PRODUCTION AS THEY GOT FURTHER AND FURTHER INTO THE RUN WAS GREAT.

—T.J. Thompson, musical director

WE DECIDED TO HAVE SINGERS IN THE ORCHESTRA PIT, SO THEY COULD BE NEAR T.J. AND HE COULD DIRECT THEM. SO DEPENDING ON WHO WAS NEEDED ON STAGE AND WHO HAD A COSTUME CHANGE, THE GROUP OF SINGERS WAS DIFFERENT FOR EACH NUMBER, AND KIDS WERE RUNNING BACK AND FORTH FROM THE STAGE TO THE ORCHESTRA PIT (WHICH IS NOT THAT BIG AND WAS ALREADY CRAMMED WITH KEYBOARDS AND DRUMMERS). IT TOOK A TON OF ORGANIZATION AND MONITORING.

—Helena Fifer, director

Singer in orchestra pit with cast performing on stage.
THE MOST REWARDING PART OF THIS PRODUCTION WAS SEEING THE LARGE GROUP NUMBERS COME TOGETHER. ORCHESTRATING 38 CAST MEMBERS ON ONE STAGE IS A CHALLENGE, BUT SEEING THEM ALL MOVE IN UNISON AND IN AND OUT OF FORMATIONS WAS REALLY WONDERFUL.

—Sarah Surber, choreography
ANYONE CAN BE A PART OF THE FALL MUSICAL, WHICH MEANS THAT THERE IS A RANGE OF TALENT TO WORK WITH. IT IS ALWAYS REWARDING TO SEE KIDS WITH VERY LITTLE PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE EMBRACE THE CHALLENGE AND TRANSFORM INTO DANCERS AND SINGERS.

—Helena Fifer, director
—STAGECRAFT—

CLASS

Aidan Chan ’22
Aidan Foley ’23
Eli Frank ’22
Betsy Good ’21
Leo Kaplan ’22
Brandon Kekedjian ’21
Jack Kreisberg ’22
Anna-Lee Lynch ’23
Babi Marques Jones ’22
Adam Pomerantz ’22

MAMMA MIA!

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
BENNY ANDERSSON
BJORN ULVAEUS
AND SOME SONGS WITH STIG ANDERSON

BOOK BY
CATHERINE JOHNSON

ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED BY
JUDY CRAYMER

Mamma Mia! is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI, 423 West 55th Street, New York, NY 10019

Tel: (212) 541-4684
Fax: (212) 397-4684
www.MTIShows.com

—CAST—

Jackson Almasian ’23
Lauren Anderson ’22
Nick Bade ’20
Davina Braghis ’22
Sam Che ’21
Henry Comish ’20
Lily D’Autorio ’22
Sasa Darwin ’23
Audrey Dharmanto ’22
Grace Deng ’21
Erich Elmer ’20
Beckett Fine ’20
Lillian Grubbs ’22
James Hegewisch ’21
Kristine Johnson ’20
Leo Kaplan ’22
Grace Kersey ’22
Jake Machliss ’22
Babi Marques Jones ’22
Sheila Patrick ’20
Kendall Peters ’21
Ashleigh Pavone ’23
Clare Roberts ’23
Meghan Spe damping ’20
Viva Grace ’21
Michelle Teo ’20
Anna Todorov ’21
Yahir Trechakshin ’21
Natalie Ungaro ’20
Benjamin White ’20
Sarah Wearner ’20
Walter Wehman ’20
Annabelle Wynne ’20
Mike Xiao ’21
Paon York ’20
Caroline Yoo ’22
Hy Zhan ’21

—ORCHESTRA—

Edvin Tran Hao ’20
Emilio Justo ’22
Stephen Magee ’22
Omi Oliver ’23
Anna Serbina ’21
Julie Salmendinger ’23
Harry Wang ’21
Henry Yuan ’20
James Allen
Paul Blowers
Fred King
Bob Noble
T.J. Thompson

—PRODUCTION—

CREW

SET CONSTRUCTION, LIGHTING,
AND STAGE MANAGEMENT
Poli Chubarova ’22
Conner Colucci ’22
Ana Coyanda-Parkzes ’23
Lily Darwin ’20
Jada Dawkins ’22
Elena Echavarria ’21
Beckett Fine ’20
Cory Gan ’22
Olivia Graham ’23
Angela Han ’20
Kayli Henderson ’23
Nyasha Marquis-Green ’23
Sofia Pan ’22
Zoe Pickett ’22
Luca Rott ’23
Kaitlyn Talabere ’23
Angela You ’23
Madelyn Year ’20
Henry Yuan ’22
Nicolette Yuan ’23
Laney Alvaro-Beaton
Amber Cameron
Cindy Fabian
Bruce Ford
Evelina Filer
Daniele Hove
Yuna Hou
David Kriner
Clara McAuliffe
Dawn Minta
Sarah Tucker

—STAGECRAFT—

CLASS

Adam Chan ’22
Adam Dao ’20
Bill Dragon ’22
Betsy Gold ’21
Leo Kaplan ’22
Brandon Kekedjian ’21
Jack Kreisberg ’22
Babi Marques Jones ’22
Adam Pomerantz ’22

MAAMIA MIA!

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Cast doing makeup in a dressing room.

Carefully labeled costume rack backstage.

Tags ID costumes for each song.
Walking, wilderness, and luxury travel with Joy Phelan-Pinto ’75 and Mark Thornton ’91
LOST AND FOUND IN AFRICA

Mark Thornton ’91

By Neil Vigdor ’95

There are no roads or lodges to speak of in the “bush,” where wildlife sightings include zebras, leopards, giraffes, and the fringe-eared oryx—a type of antelope.

TO DISCOVER MARK THORNTON’S AFRICA, YOU MUST FIRST ALLOW YOURSELF TO GET LOST.

Put away your smartphone. Leave the creature comforts of the SUV.

Thornton’s adopted continent of 25 years is best experienced on foot, from the cacophony of its wildlife and vast terrain to the rhythms of nature and the warmth of its people.

His company, Mark Thornton Safaris, specializes in walking and wilderness camping expeditions in the Serengeti, Tarangire, and Ruaha national parks, as well as the Maasai Steppe in northeastern Tanzania. One of the guiding principles of his business is “We go where no one goes.”

Encountering a lion or an elephant on a walking safari—all from a safe distance—is unlike anything else. “When you’re on foot everything’s different,” Thornton says. “It’s real.”
Thornton says there is a fundamental respect for the boundaries of the animals’ natural habitat that comes from years of experience possessed by him and his three fellow guides, who are like family members. “It’s not about, let’s see how close we can get and push the envelope,” he says. “When you’re out there walking, there is an anticipation and excitement.”

Thornton first visited Africa as part of a semester abroad program during his senior year at the University of Richmond, where he studied wildlife ecology and conservation. After college, he returned to work as an operations manager for a safari company.

“I got exposed to walking safaris,” he says. “Then that changed everything. It really kind of clicked with what a real safari is like.”

Like many other popular tourist destinations, Africa has its share of “run-of-the-mill” safari outfits, according to Thornton, who started his own guide company about 20 years ago. The company creates custom itineraries for its clients based on their preferences, physical abilities, budget, and timetable. The starting price point for a safari package, detailed on thorntonsafaris.com, is about $800 a day per person.

Thornton also offers offer non-walking trips. “There could be a really great person who says, ‘My knees are shot. I can’t really walk a lot.’ Or ‘My wife’s not going to stay in that adventure tent,’” he says.

The vast majority of Thornton’s clients are from the United States and Canada. There are first-timers. Young and old. Families who want more creature comforts. And then there are those who just can’t get enough of Africa.

“I’ve had clients who have come back every year for eight years,” Thornton says. “It’s really nice because they become friends.”

Thornton’s safari business is based in the city of Arusha in northern Tanzania, which is a popular jumping-off point for visitors to the Serengeti and Mount Kilimanjaro. Many of them are drawn to the Serengeti for the great wildebeest migration, an annual caravan of two million grazers that crosses northern Tanzania and southern Kenya.

About one third of the national park is generally off-limits to tourism, but Thornton’s company has been granted access to some of those untouched areas because its walking safaris have a much lower impact on the ecosystem. It would be like having a swath of Yellowstone National Park all to yourself, Thornton says.

“So it’s kind of the purist, leave-no-trace, sustainable safari,” he says. “There’s been a lot of encounters over the past 25 years, whether it’s walking into lions or having those amazing experiences with elephants where you’re close and looking at each other. What really moves us the most is still being able to camp in areas that are not compromised, areas that are pure wilderness. That’s the thing that makes us the happiest.”

There are no roads or lodges to speak of in the “bush,” where wildlife sightings include zebras, leopards, giraffes and the fringe-eared oryx, which is a type of antelope. The Serengeti is also known for termite mounds, which are made of mud and held together by termites’ saliva. Forget about Wi-Fi.

“You get some high-powered people who are on call 24 hours a day, and Day 7 they come up and say, ‘Mark, you know what? I haven’t been on the device in seven days.’

Thornton and his fellow guides are permitted to carry

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“You get some high-powered people who are on call 24 hours a day, and Day 7 they come up and say, ‘Mark, you know what? I haven’t been on the device in seven days.’

Thornton and his fellow guides are permitted to carry
heavy rifles, though they are a last resort for safety. Each has years of training. “You’re not just going to walk off into the Serengeti unless you have a good crew,” he says.

Thornton’s adopted home served as inspiration for his novel, Kid Moses, which is about a boy who wanders the East African wilderness. Thornton lives with his wife and two young daughters in the forest outside Arusha. Every summer for one month, the family returns to New York City for vacation and to reconnect with family and friends stateside. “You’re gonna laugh. They want to go ride the subway,” he says of his daughters.

Thornton serves on the board of the Dorobo Fund, a nonprofit conservation group dedicated to protecting the cultures, people, landscapes, and biodiversity of Tanzania. His clients often leave the country with a newfound appreciation for the people.

“I think that people are coming here thinking about wildlife and they leave thinking about how warm and friendly Tanzanians are. Without sounding corny or clichéd,” Thornton says, “you’re out there in the bush together.”

—Neil Vigdor ’95 is a reporter for The New York Times

To learn more about Thornton Safaris visit www.thorntonsafaris.com, www.greatserengetitraverse.com

“There’s been a lot of encounters... whether it’s walking into lions or having those amazing experiences with elephants where you’re close and looking at each other.”
MOST PEOPLE LIVE TO TRAVEL, BUT TRAVELING IS A WAY OF LIFE FOR JOY PHELAN-PINTO ’75.

She’s visited 120 countries and territories, an odyssey befitting a member of a diplomatic corps.

No place has the sheer magnetism like Africa for the Connecticut-raised Phelan-Pinto, who is the executive director of Micato Safaris, a family-run enterprise started by her in-laws, Felix and Jane Pinto.

“You really do feel like you’re in the presence of God,” Phelan-Pinto says of Africa.

The business evolved from a taxi service bought by her father-in-law, a well known farmer, and got its name, Micato, from the first initials of what was known as the Mini Cabs & Tours Co. Felix Pinto had raised champion pigs, and Jane Pinto is a former Kenyan table tennis champion who has been honored by the International Olympic Committee. They raised their family on a farm outside Nairobi.

“You really do feel like you’re in the presence of God,” Phelan-Pinto says of Africa.

Sunset drive through Kenya’s Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.
Since Micato’s founding in 1966, it has thrived, dominating Travel & Leisure’s Best Tour Operator award category and earning acclaim from The New York Times, Forbes, and Condé Nast Traveler for its painstakingly planned safaris, personalized service, and best-in-class accommodations. The company has employees on three continents and also organizes excursions to India. “There’s something for everybody,” Phelan-Pinto says.

Micato offers 12 “Classic Safaris” programs, plus customized trips, including a 14-day Hemingway Wing sojourn of Kenya and Tanzania during which guests can walk in the “bush” with Maasai warriors, go horseback riding on a coffee estate, and catch a glimpse of unique species such as Grévy’s zebra, the Somali ostrich, gerenuk, beisa oryx, and reticulated giraffe.

Micato’s clients are encouraged to spend at least one morning or afternoon on foot, after which they will often find a breakfast spread or sunset cocktails awaiting them. “Certain people absolutely fall in love, and they come back over and over and over,” Phelan-Pinto says.

In Africa, “the sky is the highway,” with air travel enabling Micato’s clients to cover much more of the continent. It gives them more time to explore, whether it’s the sand dunes of Namibia, Rwanda’s volcanic national park with its gorillas, or the ancient rock art near Lake Turkana in northern Kenya.
Micato offers a Hemingway Wing package, a 14-day sojourn of Kenya and Tanzania during which guests can walk in the “bush” with Maasai warriors, go horseback riding on a coffee estate, and catch a glimpse of unique species.

Phelan-Pinto is in charge of Micato’s branding, from the carefully curated editorial and photo content of its website, micato.com, to its impressive brochures. Its Africa brochure is 174 pages long. “We look at it more as a coffee table type of book,” she says. “We don’t want it to be something that you roll up and sweat flies with.”

Micato treats its guests like family members, says Phelan-Pinto. They are invited to have dinner with Felix and Jane in Kenya or family friends in Cape Town or in Johannesburg; if their travels take them to South Africa. “Being a family company, we’re kind of barely a company in that sense,” she says.

Phelan-Pinto began her career in the travel industry as a cruise director for small academically oriented cruises. One of the charters went to East Africa. It was there that she met her husband, Dennis Pinto, who was a ground operator for tour groups in Kenya. They had spoken on the phone for a year before they finally met.

“I remember thinking, he has a nice voice,” Phelan-Pinto says of her husband, who is Micato’s managing director. The couple has two children, Sasha, who goes to Brown University (Phelan-Pinto’s alma mater), and Tristan, who goes to Yale University. The family splits its time between Africa and the U.S.

Phelan-Pinto’s mother-in-law, Jane, spearheaded Micato’s philanthropic activities after working with Mother Teresa. Micato-AmericaShare, the business’s nonprofit arm that was founded more than 25 years ago, helps children and women in need in Nairobi who have been affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Once they have been in Africa for a week or two, visitors get to see firsthand those helped by Micato and those in need. “People come to Africa to see the wildlife,” Phelan-Pinto says, “but they leave in love with the people.”

East Africa has made significant strides since Phelan-Pinto first visited. “Everything was very basic,” she says. “You brought your own light bulb. You brought your own toilet paper.” She would often bring things to her in-laws. “If you lost your luggage 20 years ago, you were kind of stuck,” she says. Now there are gourmet restaurants and shopping malls.

“We laugh—there’s better cell phone service in Nairobi than there is in parts of Connecticut,” she says.

—Neil Vigdor ’95 is a reporter for The New York Times.

Learn more about Micato’s safaris at www.micato.com.
If you are considering downsizing but need income from your property, please consider a gift of real estate to Taft. Whether you make a charitable gift of your marketable, mortgage-free residence, vacation home, or investment realty, you can use strategies to:

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- Avoid real estate’s major obstacle and surprise—the liquidity crunch

Take this example of a recent gift of real estate to Taft: an alumnus gifted a summer home on the Connecticut shore to Taft. Taxes and operating costs for the house had exceeded $30,000 per year, and the house had become financially burdensome. By gifting the property to Taft, the donor and his spouse received a 6% lifetime remainder trust income stream. The remainder ultimately provided a full boarding scholarship named in the donors’ honor, as well as ensuring perpetual remembrance of the donor and his spouse.

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Gifting Real Estate to Taft can enhance your income, provide tax benefits, and protect your family.