

BLAIR

BULLETIN

**BOGLE SCIENCE
CENTER POWERS
DYNAMIC
CURRICULUM**

P. 04

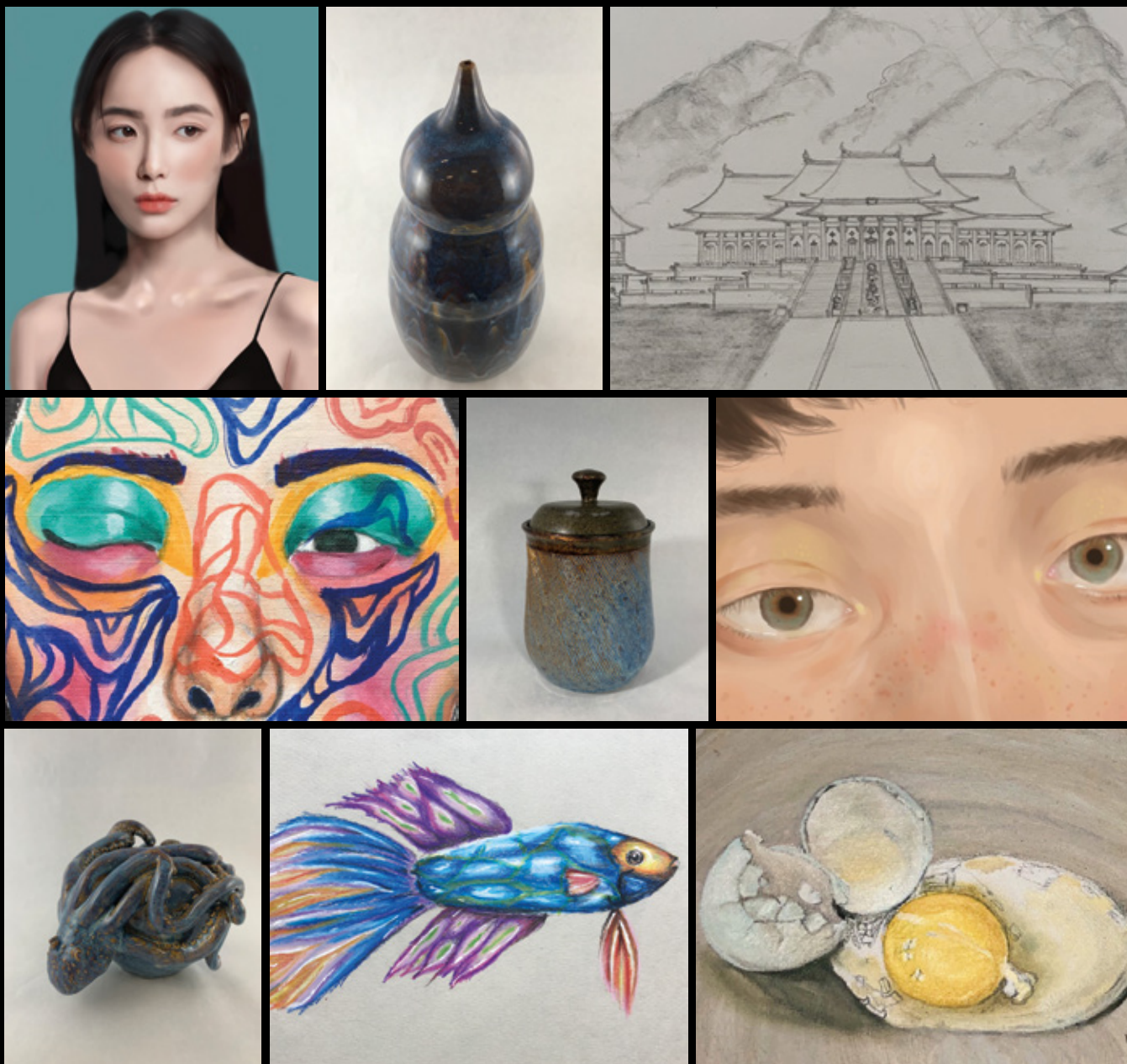
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On Exhibit



Celebrating Blair's Student Artists

From ceramics to paintings and photography to sculpture, Blair students create artwork of all mediums throughout the year. We celebrate their talent and dedication by sharing a selection of their artwork above. To learn more about Blair's fine arts program, please visit www.blair.edu/2D-art and www.blair.edu/3D-art.

On the Cover:

In September 2019, Blair opened the newly enlarged and renovated Bogle Science Center, a spacious, state-of-the-art facility that fully supports analytical and inquiry-based learning in the laboratory sciences. Upgrades include a three-story, 8,000-square-foot addition, the renovation of every classroom and laboratory, and dedicated lab space where integrated science research students can engage in sustained independent projects and collaborate with outside experts.

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Bogle Science Center: Optimally Designed for the 21st-Century Study of Science

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Blair alumni and parents gathered in New York City and Los Angeles for industry-specific networking.

45 Faculty Summer Institute Endowed

The Sigety family's gift supports this important professional development opportunity for Blair teachers.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Hallie Guyton '20

Digital photography student **Hallie Guyton '20** was inspired by the idea of daydreaming and self-reflection when she created this double exposure photo of her friend, **Avery Lehman '21**, for her final class project. The photo is meant to highlight Avery's free spirit and personality, which are not always seen by those around her. View more of Hallie's photos at www.blairacademyphoto.com.

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SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

What do you think about the stories in this issue of the *Blair Bulletin*? Let us know—your letter may be published in the next issue. Please send your comments to bulletin@blair.edu.

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All In

"I have always believed that schools do their best work, change lives and, in fact, change the world when they place courage at the heart of their values, practices and cultures." Head of School Chris Fortunato began his winter letter to alumni, parents and friends with these words, and his reflections on courage, the many ways that students and faculty model this essential value at Blair—and the colorful cards with quotes about courage that were included with each letter—resonated with alumni of all ages.

"Inspirational," "motivating," "uplifting" and "this letter could not have come at a better time" are just some of the responses Mr. Fortunato received from members of the Blair family. Several wrote that they had shared the letter with their own family members, colleagues and friends. Others noted that they had placed the quote cards where they can see and draw strength from them every day.

At a time when, as Mr. Fortunato wrote "it seems the world tasks us even more than usual to be courageous," we again share the quotes that students and faculty submitted at the start of the school year, words that define for them and inspire in them the courage to be "all in." To view additional quotes, please visit www.blair.edu/quotes. ■

TOMORROW
IS THE FIRST
BLANK PAGE
OF A 365-PAGE
BOOK. WRITE A
GOOD ONE.

BRAD PAISLEY

ALWAYS REMEMBER
YOU ARE BRAVER
THAN YOU BELIEVE
STRONGER
THAN YOU SEEM
SMARTER
THAN YOU THINK
AND LOVED
MORE THAN YOU
WILL EVER KNOW
CHRISTOPHER ROBIN TO
WINNIE THE POOH (ADAPTED)

COURAGE
IS THE MOST
IMPORTANT OF ALL
THE VIRTUES
BECAUSE WITHOUT
COURAGE, YOU
CAN'T PRACTICE
ANY OTHER VIRTUE
CONSISTENTLY.


MAYA ANGELOU

IT IS NOT THE CRITIC
WHO COUNTS...THE
CREDIT BELONGS TO THE
MAN WHO IS ACTUALLY
IN THE ARENA...WHO
STRIVES VALIANTLY...
WHO AT THE BEST
KNOWS IN THE END
THE TRIUMPH OF HIGH
ACHIEVEMENT, AND WHO
AT THE WORST, IF HE
FAILS, AT LEAST FAILS
WHILE DARING GREATLY.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

SUCCESS IS
NOT FINAL,
FAILURE IS NOT
FATAL. IT IS
THE COURAGE
TO CONTINUE
THAT COUNTS.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

The background image shows a spacious, modern science laboratory. Several students are working at large, curved lab benches. In the foreground, a group of four students (three boys and one girl) are focused on a task, with one boy wearing blue gloves and using a pipette. Other students are visible in the background, some standing and others working. The lab is equipped with advanced technology, including white robotic arms mounted on the benches. The benches are light blue with blue storage cabinets underneath. The floor is a light-colored wood-look laminate. The ceiling has exposed ductwork and modern lighting fixtures. A large teal circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image, and a smaller teal oval is behind the subtitle text.

THE BOGLE SCIENCE CENTER:

*A Powerful Platform
for the 21st-Century
Study of Science*



WHEN the doors of the expanded and renovated Bogle Science Center

opened in September, Blair students and teachers entered a state-of-the-art academic facility, optimally designed for the 21st-century study of laboratory sciences. New classroom/labs (CLABS), fully refurbished laboratories and classrooms, upgraded technology, top-of-the-line furnishings and equipment, and a host of well-thought-out details awaited—and, with the start of classes, it all came to life.

Having invested considerable time over the past few years preparing for the science center's new capabilities, Blair's science teachers were ready from day one to infuse mini-labs, demonstrations, collaborative work and hands-on experiences into their classes. "Our curriculum has become more dynamic, and teachers are finding new ways to use these amazing spaces every day," said department chair Kelly Hadden, who cited students' ability to perform experiments on their own benchtops equipped with "elephant-trunk" exhaust hoods—instead of gathering to watch a teacher do the reaction—as just one of the ways that they are getting involved in the process.

"It's all geared toward engaging students in the science behind the theories they are learning in the classroom."

Here, we welcome you inside the Bogle Science Center as we explore six intriguing electives that are among the 18 science courses offered at Blair this year. With more lab-based electives on the horizon, we hope this gives you a taste of what it is like to study science at Blair today.

—**Suzy Logan '99** & Joanne Miceli



EXPERIMENTS UNDERWAY IN INTEGRATED SCIENCE RESEARCH



The Bogle Science Center's integrated science research laboratory has been a busy place this year as eight juniors implemented research projects of their own design. The inquisitive and highly motivated students make up Blair's

first integrated science research (ISR) class, and under Mrs. Hadden's guidance, they are attempting to answer research questions sparked by their interests and replete with real-world implications.

BUILDING UP TO EXPERIMENTS

It took nearly a year for ISR students to reach the point of actually beginning their experiments, but they have learned that "it takes time to do science right," according to Mrs. Hadden. The journey began last spring in "Foundations of ISR," a semester-long elective that introduced students to the world of scientific research, connected them to scientific literature, and gave them the opportunity to investigate a topic or question of their own choosing. Having developed and successfully presented

their research proposals—on everything from using MAP gels to create an enhanced-healing cast for animals to working with non-Newtonian fluids to optimize protection in Kevlar-type vests—class members dove into their projects last summer by contacting scientists working in their areas of interest.

"Students identified potential 'mentors' through journal articles and other primary resources," Mrs. Hadden explained. "They compiled questions, and, together, we conducted conference calls with professionals all over the world. Students have received a remarkable amount of information, as scientists shared research

experience, specific guidance on methods and data that kids never would have gleaned from reading the literature alone."

Daniel Dai '21, whose project addresses the primary peanut proteins responsible for the legume's allergenicity—an experiment inspired by his brothers' allergies—

contacted several possible mentors in hope of understanding how proteins function and how enzymes and reducing agents interact with them. His conversation with University



"Working in the Bogle Science Center has been great because there is so much new equipment available to us. The ISR lab provides a space that is separate from other science labs, allowing us to be greatly immersed in our work."

—ISR student **Daniel Dai '21**



of California-Merced biochemistry professor Dr. Henry Foreman helped him choose an efficient reducing agent for his experiment, while his call with Michigan State University professor Dr. Sarah Comstock gave him insight into how to best formulate his project and procedure.

Mrs. Hadden is grateful for professional scientists' receptiveness and willingness to help ISR students and pleased that the calls have demonstrated how supportive the scientific community can be. "Students are learning that real-world science should be a collaborative effort, and that's what we're emulating in ISR," she said.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

The novice researchers gained even more real-world experience when they delved into the business side of science during the first part of the fall semester. As they compiled supply lists, researched instrumentation and priced out equipment for their very different projects, they realized that in order for the class to stay within budget, they would have to think creatively. With further research, they determined that they could share or rent equipment, visit off-campus facilities to access specific technology, or take different approaches that utilize in-house equipment and still perform valid experiments.

When supplies began arriving on campus, the benefits of working in the Bogle Science Center's brand-new ISR lab hit home. Students each have their own storage space

and a dedicated lab bench. And, having been designed for maximum flexibility, the lab can accommodate biological experiments, engineering projects and everything in between, all at the same time.

"The ISR lab was designed for exactly the work we're doing here, and it's exciting for students to grapple with their experiments, troubleshoot and get their hands dirty," Mrs. Hadden said. "There's plenty of space in the lab—it's as if each student owns a piece of the building."

DOING ACTUAL SCIENCE

ISR is unlike most Blair courses in that there are no textbooks, written tests or traditional graded assignments. Instead, throughout the year, students are required to provide various deliverables, including completed calls with professional scientists, a materials list and data sets. For their first signature assessment, they turned in project updates and next steps, and in the weeks before Thanksgiving, winter and spring breaks, they worked on plans to keep their experiments going during the extended time away from campus, especially if they involve living cells or organisms.

Daniel aimed to create a few SDS PAGE gels last fall to prepare for practice electrophoresis. "The purified proteins I am using in my experiment are relatively expensive, so Mrs. Hadden and I ordered less-expensive proteins that I can use to test my procedure and make revisions,"



he explained. As he got deeper into his experiment, he especially enjoyed the freedom ISR has afforded him to research a topic that is important to him. "I am so grateful to the Blair science department for this wonderful opportunity, and I can't wait to see how my experiment turns out!"

Meanwhile, **Lucy Clayton '21**, who is studying the effect of different dyes on the efficiency of a solar cell made out of concrete, created the semiconductor or the photoanode as the first step of her project last fall. "I made little concrete disks that have a certain blending of material in the mixture to enhance the conductivity of the concrete," she said. "These are the bases of my project, and I added the other parts of the solar cell around the concrete."



"The atmosphere of the renovated Bogle Science Center is invigorating, and its aesthetic matches the core qualities of science. The building is open and flows nicely, like the different fields of science. Its newness blends seamlessly into the old red brick, which matches the idea that science takes old ideas and turns them into innovations. I am really excited to work in the ISR lab this year and see what new ideas we can come up with in the new space."

—ISR student **Lucy Clayton '21**

For Lucy, the best part of ISR is the fact that she is applying the ideas she has learned in class to challenging, real-life lab work. "ISR isn't just reading from a textbook and doing a prearranged lab with known results," she said. "We are doing actual science, and the

likelihood that our experiments will not be successful is extremely high. It makes science seem more real and concrete."

Mrs. Hadden has continued to support her ISR students as the year has progressed, guiding them to sources of information, helping them communicate effectively and asking questions they might not have considered. "It has been great to see all the growth that has happened as students have experienced the realities of science and gotten results in the lab,"

she said. "It's an honor for me to work with students who share a passion for science—I love teaching this class."

ASTRONOMY: UNDERSTANDING THE COSMOS



Did you ever stop to contemplate how Earth became a planet? Or how a cosmic event that occurred eons ago impacts what is happening in the present day? These are just some of the questions 14 juniors and seniors are considering this year in astronomy, an elective that gives students an understanding of the cosmos beyond that of a standard earth science or physics course.

"My number one goal is to give students a sense of perspective about the universe," said science teacher Michael Ryerson, who developed the course eight years ago and has since expanded it from a half-year to a full-year elective. "The scale of time and space we are talking about is almost more than we can comprehend, but I want students to realize that in a science that is, literally and figuratively, so far away, we can use the same tools that we use in other sciences to understand natural phenomena. The universe is knowable."

The course begins with an overview of topics like gravity, light and waves, particle physics and the work of early astronomers. Then, students look to the skies to study the moon, our solar system, the Milky Way galaxy and beyond. Along the way, they learn about everything from planets, the life cycle of stars and rocketry to black holes, the Big Bang theory and relativity, the latter being topics that students have been most excited to investigate over the years.

In the Bogle Science Center, astronomy now has a dedicated classroom, allowing Mr. Ryerson to permanently display a variety of diagrams and charts and house the School's large telescope where students can access it every class period. The classroom's capacity for total darkness makes for especially realistic simulations of

moon phases, the sun's ability to illuminate the solar system as a single point of light and other concepts that are harder to visualize when light is coming from all directions.

"Taking this class in the new Bogle Science Center helps us to learn more productively because it provides the materials and spaces that challenge us to not just learn the what, but also the how and why," observed **Chloe Rayer '20**,

who is taking astronomy to feed her interest in the sky, the solar system and the Earth. "I've realized how small we actually are compared to the enormous solar systems and universes, and how much goes unnoticed on the daily."

Observation of the skies is key to the study of astronomy, and students head to Blair's athletic fields for monthly nighttime telescopic viewing. In the spring, they take to the same

fields to launch rockets they have built from kits and, for their final signature assessment, launch rockets they have designed and built from scratch.

Reflecting on the importance of studying astronomy, Mr. Ryerson noted that when students tackle any area of science, they begin to develop a scientist's mindset and vital skills such as critical thinking and data assessment. "Beyond that, astronomy gives students an appreciation of the forces that shaped planet Earth," he said. "It spurs them to really think about something most people take for granted."

"Taking this class in the new Bogle Science Center helps us to learn more productively because it provides the materials and spaces that challenge us to not just learn the what, but also the how and why. I've realized how small we actually are compared to enormous solar systems and universes, and how much goes unnoticed on the daily."
—astronomy student **Chloe Rayer '20**





STUDENTS DIVE INTO OCEAN ECOSYSTEMS IN MARINE SCIENCE



Despite Blair Academy's landlocked location, juniors and seniors have the opportunity to explore the depths of the ocean from the Bogle Science Center when they enroll in marine science, a yearlong elective that fosters awareness of society's connection to the sea. Science teacher Rod Gerdson developed the course in 2005 in response to student interest, and it has been a popular offering in Blair's science curriculum ever since.

The lecture-based course meets in Cowan Auditorium, a space that Mr. Gerdson says is "brighter and more comfortable" thanks to the Bogle Science Center's renovation. Topics covered include water chemistry, ocean geology, and the biology of ecosystems and the living organisms that populate them.



"Between lectures in Cowan Auditorium and lab days in the newly renovated biology labs, marine science is a great way to prepare for college classes. My favorite thing about the course definitely is dissecting the animals we're learning about."

—marine science student **Robert Rucki '20**

Readings, discussion and research projects are all part of the class.

In recent years, Mr. Gerdson has incorporated a virtual-reality ocean dive into the marine science curriculum as well. Utilizing VIVE technology, students don virtual-reality goggles and the STEAM platform places them 80 feet underwater with fish swimming around them.

There, they explore deep-sea hydrothermal vents occupied by giant tubeworms, eyeless shrimp and 800-degree acidic water.

Outside of the lecture hall (for real), marine science students have a number of hands-on opportunities to learn about marine life. On dissection days, the class heads to one of

the Bogle Science Center's spacious biology labs, where there is plenty of room to spread out and lots of natural light to examine spiny dogfish, sea stars and hagfish. A few years ago, Mr. Gerdson gave his



students an up-close look at a larger-than-usual specimen when he dissected a blue shark—that demonstration took place on the plaza in front of the building to accommodate both the size of the shark and the crowd that gathered to observe.

Trips to beachfront locales bring classroom concepts and discussions to life for marine science students, too.

The annual winter long weekend sojourn in the Cayman Islands gave hundreds of students over the past 14 years the opportunity to swim with stingrays and work with green sea turtles. Closer to home, trips to aquariums and the Jersey Shore afford students a closer look at exotic and not-so-exotic marine life.

Mr. Gerdson is proud that a couple of marine science alumni have gone on to fascinating careers in the field, but his main goal in

teaching the class is to help students appreciate the world's oceans—which, he notes, cover nearly three-quarters of the Earth—and their impact on human society.

"Roughly 70 percent of the planet's oxygen is produced by algae and phytoplankton, so the ocean's survival is key to our survival," he said. "In addition, a wealth of information and natural resources that have the

potential to make our lives better are waiting to be discovered, and I want my students to be aware of this no matter where life takes them."

And, when life takes them to the shore on family vacations, Mr. Gerdson's students often send him photos of what they find on the beach.

"They are proud to let me know that no one in their family could identify that shark egg sac that washed ashore—but they could!"



"I grew up hearing about how much fun marine science is from my dad and former students, and I am excited to finally take the class in the newly renovated Bogle Science Center. It's not only one of my favorite classes at Blair, but I also love my dad's teaching style, and I'm very grateful to have him my senior year."

—marine science student Kate Gerdson '20

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE EXPLORES FOOD, ENERGY & WATER



The study of environmental science has long been a Blair tradition: Generations of Bucs fondly remember former science teacher Rob “Merf” Merrifield’s passion for the subject as he brought them out of the classroom to landfills and local farms to see firsthand humans’ impact on the planet. The fact that the hands-on and inquiry-based elective has evolved in recent years to include more off-campus excursions and some “unconventional” aspects of environmental science has made it popular among Blair juniors and seniors as they learn about food, energy and water.

For the last two years, science teacher

Caroline Chamberlain has delved into these topics, underscoring how they are “vitally important to human existence, yet require the use of diminishing natural resources.” A typical class will involve Ms. Chamberlain briefly introducing a subject through a lab activity or a video and then asking students to analyze it by generating data, conducting experiments or, in one case of a “water taste test,” assessing the difference between tap and bottled water.

Ms. Chamberlain and her 14 students agree that some of the course’s most interesting units have incorporated forensic concepts that make their studies more engaging and applicable to real-world problems. For example, they have used the integrated science research lab to test genetically modified organisms in food to better understand modern

agriculture’s effects on what humans eat and to study blood spatter and fingerprint analysis as they relate such work to extinction events. Climate change has also been a critical topic of discussion as the class reads studies and articles about Earth’s changing temperature and its potentially devastating impact on all species.

“My favorite part of Ms. Chamberlain’s class is that we explore unconventional aspects of environmental science, and we directly interact with nature and the environment during labs,” said **Chloe Park ’20**. “There are endless fascinating things to discover about the Earth if you take a moment to look around.”



“The best part of the new Bogle Science Center is the new technology and equipment in the labs. The updated facilities allow students to conduct labs not possible in the past, paving the way to many interesting experiments.”

—environmental science student **Chloe Park ’20**

The fact that the Bogle Science Center has thousands of additional square feet and new technology has also been a sky’s-the-limit game-changer for the class, which recorded podcasts as part of its fall semester signature assessment. Ms. Chamberlain, who also teaches biology and biology honors, marvels at the fact

that her other classes can be set up in a lab to do complex experiments such as gene testing without impacting the hands-on work environmental science students are doing. “There is so much open space for the kids to study whatever interests them, and our glass-walled classrooms and labs encourage people walking by to engage,” she said. “Our upgraded facility has the technology and budget to support high school students in doing graduate-level work.”

Ms. Chamberlain has also been pleased to see her environmental science students learn how to approach

problems more scientifically, quantify data and “understand the why behind the how.” “In this day and age, you simply can’t accept what’s said at face value,” she said. “Being able to look at something, ask yourself if it is a fact and then assess all of the available information to make your own determination is a critical skill, especially for this generation that could change the impact humans have on the environment.”





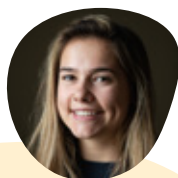
AP PSYCHOLOGY DELVES INTO THE HUMAN BRAIN & BEHAVIOR



With 45 seniors enrolled this year alone, Blair's most popular science elective is Advanced Placement (AP) psychology, taught for the last three years by science teacher Shelly Mantegna. Although the class follows the AP curriculum

with the goal of every student taking the AP exam in May, Mrs. Mantegna tries to infuse every class meeting with creative ways to deliver material that introduces students to the systematic and scientific study of human beings' mental processes and behavior.

Given that understanding psychology requires a certain degree of self-reflection and human connection, it is not surprising that a typical class starts with a "bell ringer" question on the board, followed by five minutes of journaling, and then a "turn-and-talk" with classmates about interesting or challenging aspects of



"It has been so interesting to learn about perception and how often we twist what is right in front of us into something easier for us to comprehend. Having my mom as a teacher has been so much fun; it is amazing to see her in her element, doing what she loves. I feel lucky to be part of that."

—AP psychology student Lula Mantegna '20

recent coursework and assignments. Because the material lends itself to active learning, Mrs. Mantegna lectures very rarely, instead asking students to participate in surveys, demonstrations and activities that illustrate the points she wants to make during that class block.

"For example, this fall, when we were learning about the power of memory reconstruction, we played a variation on the

game of 'telephone,' and everyone saw firsthand how garbled a message could become and how, as humans, we tend to fill in the blanks because our brains have a natural desire to fill in missing information in order to make things flow nicely," said Mrs. Mantegna. Her classes have also taken

part in demonstrations that

highlight why eyewitness testimony can be faulty because people's memories and understanding of the world can be incorrectly shaped by the stories their brains create.



With the AP test on the horizon at the end of the school year, students have been hard at work studying facts, principles and phenomena associated with each of psychology's subfields, as well as the ethics and methods psychologists use in their science and practice. Specific topics covered to date include brain biology, cognition, research methods and statistics, states of consciousness, learning, sensation and perception, and developmental psychology.

Understanding deeper reasons behind the many things people do every day has been **Thomas Santiago '20's** favorite part of the class. "AP psychology is a class where you want to do the homework and learn more about your brain because of how interesting it is," he said. "There is a deeper psychological reason to almost everything that you do."

Equally impressed about how applicable AP psych is to her life, **Camille Williams '20** calls taking the course

in the new Bogle Science Center "inspiring." In particular, she loves that the building's open aesthetic allows many opportunities to display AP psychology students' work and that its cutting-edge resources are front and center in the "really cool" videos and slideshows of Blair students doing experiments displayed on the lobby's video wall.

As Mrs. Mantegna and her science department colleagues settle into the

Bogle Science Center's state-of-the-art spaces and look to the academic years ahead, she hopes to introduce the physical study of brain samples and lab dissection into her classes.

"Everyone should want to know more about how their brain works,"

Mrs. Mantegna concluded.

"The brain is the most complex part in the human body, changing with each new experience; it is no wonder why our students so enjoy this class."



"Bogle Science Center's desks and tables lend themselves much more to conversing with your teachers and classmates. With furniture that can be configured and reconfigured individually or in groups, I can more comfortably engage with the material on a more personal level."

—AP psychology student **Elizabeth Montfort '20**

ANALYTICAL CHEMISTRY: MASTERING THE SCIENTIFIC PROCESS



Almost 40 years after he earned his PhD in physical chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dr. Michael "Doc" Sayers is one of Blair's most experienced science teachers and extremely familiar with every step of the

scientific process: asking the right questions, determining if and how they can be answered, creating and executing experiments, gathering data, writing a formal laboratory report and preparing a scientific poster to share with colleagues interested in your findings.

In analytical chemistry, Doc is sharing his expertise in all of these steps as he teaches sophomores, juniors and seniors about the practical applications of wet chemistry and complex instrumentation. The class is in the lab more often than not, with Doc framing specific projects and

then guiding students in assessments that underscore the importance of general problem-solving techniques, how to separate what you are studying into discrete and "studyable" things, and practicing classic analytical chemistry skills such as separating mixtures, isolating chemical compounds, and analyzing the quantity of those compounds.

"I work with students to help them master the art of solving problems," said Doc, who noted that some of the course's more popular projects include extracting caffeine in drinks, determining specific amounts of known agents in certain kinds of food and analyzing the metals comprising the U.S. coinage system. "I introduce a topic, explain why it is of interest to us, why we care, give some background information, and then we talk about how we'll apply our ideas before we go back to the lab to do some design work collectively."

After a couple of days in the lab, students reconvene in the classroom and talk about their results, ultimately writing up lab reports to ensure they understand the need for comprehensiveness and a certain style of writing. "The question we are really

answering is 'how do I walk into something I know nothing about and become knowledgeable?'" Doc continued. The year concludes with an independent project where students pursue an analytical question of their choosing, write a formal lab report and create a scientific poster to communicate their findings.

Thanks to the Bogle Science Center's enhanced spaces and equipment, analytical chemistry students are able to conduct experiments that would not have been possible previously. For example, **Peyton Barksdale '20** loved the process of

figuring out how big a mole of gas is by using a single replacement reaction to generate hydrogen gas—something that would be dangerous without Bogle's new "elephant-trunk" system of ventilation. Having a fume hood at individual lab workstations means analytical

chemistry students can do a wide range of experiments that would be too dangerous to conduct in the open and too crowded with a single hood. The fact that the new building also boasts a chemical preparation area overseen by lab technician Robert Crowther, PhD, is an added bonus.

In addition to benefiting from Bogle's roomy CLABS that allow them to leave experiments out for an extended time frame, students can conduct experiments that require an absence of light in Bogle's new dedicated astronomy classroom. In the coming year, Doc hopes the expanded space will allow him and his colleagues to find a permanent home for Blair's liquid chromatograph, a large research-grade machine used for separating very complicated mixtures, which would open up a world of possibilities to Blair science students.



"The best and most helpful thing I learned in analytical chemistry is how to plan and conduct a detailed and methodical lab that continues over the span of a few days. The Bogle Science Center gives us the space to do that."
—analytical chemistry student **Ryan Gomez '20**



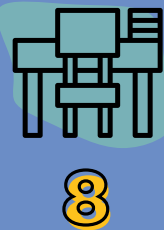
THE BOGLE SCIENCE CENTER BY THE NUMBERS



Wireless optical spectrometers



Elephant-trunk hoods



Renovated classrooms

2

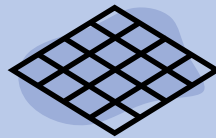
D7 conferencing platforms

24

Physics smart carts



Science students who go through the BSC every day



Square footage of Bogle addition



Bluetooth microscope cameras

12' x 6.5'

Dimensions of atrium's video wall



Science courses offered at Blair

6

CLABS

1

Science department office



Microscopes

Ann Williams



Step into Timken Library's serene and welcoming space, and meet Ann Williams, director of Timken Library for the past 12 years. You may see her manning the circulation desk, but, just as likely, she will be co-teaching a class, instructing students on the use one of the library's many digital resources for research and inquiry, or heading downstairs to the archives to track down a piece of Blair's history.

You actually may not find Ann in Timken Library at all, though, since her duties as freshman monitor, coach of JV girls' soccer and softball, advisor and more take her all over campus on any given day. That's just fine with Ann—as much as she loves reading and being surrounded by books, she loves working with Blair students even more.

Ann's career as a librarian began when she came to Blair in 2007, having completed her master's degree in library and information science (MLIS) at Rutgers University the year before. Earlier in her professional life, when she was fresh out of the University of Delaware with an English degree, she had worked in the insurance industry and then for several years as a risk manager, a challenging and lucrative job that proved a great source of satisfaction.

Motherhood became Ann's full-time occupation when her children, **Robbie '12** and **Kelly '15**, were youngsters. Once

they started school, she greatly enjoyed volunteering and working part time as a personal care aide at Blairstown Elementary School. Her role as a dedicated library volunteer was the catalyst for Ann to begin her graduate work, and, as luck would have it, the position as director of Timken Library opened up shortly after she finished her MLIS. "It just seemed perfect," was how she summed up the start to her Blair tenure.

Since then, Ann has brought energy, enthusiasm and a "let's get this done" attitude to everything she has undertaken in Timken Library and throughout the School community—and, over the years, that has included teaching English, history and Blair LEADS, co-chaperoning community service trips, co-advising Blair's student research fellows and even serving as co-commissioner of the Headmasters' Societies Games. Read on to get to know Ann inside the library and "outside the classroom."



Ann works with a student in Timken Library.

Q. You mentioned that one of your favorite parts of your job is being the “embedded librarian” when you work with classes across Blair’s curriculum. Tell us more about that.

A. I love it when teachers bring their classes to the library for independent or guided research. I have never thought of school as a place of isolated silos of “science,” “English,” “math” and “history,” but rather as an interconnected whole that helps students learn how this amazing universe works and how they might find their meaningful place in it. So, when students come to the library to research a topic, it is always exciting to hear their questions and help them find some compelling piece of information. They may come in thinking they just want to cross off an assignment, but my hope is they leave thinking, “Wow, that really was worth finding out about!” I also see students across disciplines, so when a history

class has been learning about the early days of the Industrial Revolution and then the same kids come in to find out about Charles Dickens’ England, I know that they will make some great connections since they already know more than they may realize! There is no subject of study that is not interesting and worthwhile to me.

Q. Why is it important to you that Timken Library be both a quiet place to study and a welcoming social space? What do you do to achieve that balance?

A. Research shows that students want a quiet, traditional library where they can buckle down and concentrate, and Blair students tell me that is what they prize during study hall. Yes, the glitzy screens and gadgets are great, but students need to think and work with their brain when push comes to shove. Throughout the day, many students (and some teachers!) come

to Timken Library during their free blocks and find their favorite spot to get some work done. The beautiful building ensures that doing so never becomes drudgery. There are groups that wander in for some social time or a visit with the mesmerizing fish tank. I don’t really have to do much beyond occasionally remind people that this is where others come for quiet. We love to promote the library as a place on campus to escape from the “Blair bubble” when that need arises. I hate the term “safe space,” but I love when students find whatever kind of haven they might need by taking some alone time or sharing a small conversation in the library, away from the bustle and drama of the day.

Q. What are some of the most significant changes that have taken place in Timken Library during your tenure? What are some things that haven’t changed?

A. Obviously, reading print books for academic work has changed. While some history classes still show students how to do that (and it is still just as effective as ever!), many students stick to electronic resources. There is a treasure trove of fascinating things to access, and it gets easier and easier to find them. My librarian job has shifted more from how to find resources to how to make sense of the many things easily found and how to uncover the *best* resources for the task at hand.

Q. Which artifacts in the Blair archives do you find most fascinating?

A. The old scrapbooks are my favorite. They take you right back to the days



Ann has served as director of Timken Library for the last 12 years.



Ann coaches girls' JV soccer in the fall.

and make the lives of those students vivid and real.

Q. What kind of books did you gravitate to when you were a student and why?

A. As a young student, I read every horse book possible from every library I could access. In high school, I loved reading all fiction and was vocal about my love of *Crime and Punishment*, which annoyed my classmates to no end. In college, I fell in love with Irish literature and organic chemistry in equal measure. They were both inscrutable puzzles that took a lot of effort to solve. Cracking the code felt like such an accomplishment in both those arenas.

Q. When you read a book now, do prefer a printed or digital edition?

A. I prefer a printed book, but I seem to do more reading on my Kindle as a convenience. Wherever I go, I stop in the local bookstore and buy a print book (or two or three).

Q. Together with history teacher Martin Miller, PhD, you serve as co-editor of the *Blair Review*, a biannual (more or less) compendium of essays by members of the Blair community on a chosen theme. What has been your favorite issue of this publication and why?

A. The tribute to the "Blair boys," as they were called, of World War II is my favorite issue. It was inspired by my work in the archives, where I found a trove of letters written back and forth among the Blair students serving in the war, their families and members of the Blair faculty. It tells a fascinating story of sacrifice, honor, love, loss and loyalty. I met the families of some veterans and two of our own who have since passed away. For someone who never served in the military, it was an honor to help these people tell a bit of their story. The exploits and contributions of the "Blair boys" still amaze and inspire me each year as I teach modern European history. I try to make sure my current students can still feel that history.

Q. As advisor to Blair's student book club and a member of a book club outside of Blair, what advice would you share with someone looking to start a really great book club?

A. Reading literature stretches a person in social and personal ways. When you have a thoughtful and mixed group, the conversations can



Arriving at book club in style!



(left to right) Ann and her children, **Robbie '12** and **Kelly '15**.



In addition to serving as director of Timken Library, Ann is also a member of Blair's history faculty.

add so much to the experience of reading. If you have someone who can bake really well, you have hit it out of the park.

Q. What brings you joy?

A. My kids are my greatest source of joy! First come Robbie and Kelly, then my advisees, and then all the Blair teenagers that feel like my kids while they are here and beyond. I have loved running for 30 years, but knee surgery sidelined me a couple of years ago. I really miss that connection with nature, exercise, mental toughness and relaxation that comes only from running six, 10 or 13.1 miles, and I am still looking for a replacement for that joy. I am currently best friends with

the first elliptical machine in the Blair fitness center.

Q. What are your hopes for Blair students?

A. I hope our students' curiosity never wanes. I hope they are optimistic and energetic as they become the adults they could be with careful, practical tending. I hope they keep their minds and hearts open and do not forget to appreciate the astounding natural beauty that surrounds us here at Blair. Growing up is hard AND life is full of beauty.

Q. What book would you like to read that hasn't been written yet and who would you choose to author it?

A. I would like to read anything that would convince every last person about the importance of saving the Earth before it is too late. Scientists and fiction writers have already written such books in which they have imagined the ruined future and proposed some practical solutions, but these works have not done the trick. Some completely new genre might be needed. I am not smart enough to figure out what that might look like, but perhaps Neil Gaiman or John Green could accomplish that. ■

Table Feet

Leading & Serving the Blair Family, One Dinner at a Time



by
Joanne Miceli

When the Blair community gathers for family-style dinner, traditions come alive in the Romano Dining Hall. Students dress in formal attire. A teacher or student offers a blessing before the meal. Everyone sits at an assigned table, and a faculty member presides at its head. And, paired with the table head is a table foot, a student leader who helps put the “family” in family-style dinner.



proper table manners—right down to the requirement of keeping your napkin on your lap. “That’s not central to our philosophy today,” he said, “but family-style dinners do give kids an opportunity to practice good dinner-table etiquette, and that will serve them well after their Blair graduations, too.”

With its traditional elements firmly in place, family-style dinner has taken on some new twists over the past several years, all aimed at deepening the community experience. For example, students and teachers from a variety of faiths and cultures offer the pre-dinner blessing.

Table feet have been a Blair institution for nearly 60 years, harkening back to a time when every meal was a formal requirement (see sidebar on opposite page). Due to the School’s modern-day, jam-packed schedule, table feet now spring into action for just two family-style dinners per week in the fall and one per week in the spring, but their service to the Blair community is no less important today than it was decades ago.

Building Community

“Family-style dinner is an event that builds community within our community,” said Associate Head of School **Ryan Pagotto ‘97**, explaining the contemporary philosophy behind the custom that remains an essential part of the School’s weekly schedule. Especially early in the year, family-style dinners help students get to know one another, meet people whom they might not encounter otherwise and enjoy meals without worrying about where they will sit in the dining hall. “The experience also teaches kids how to converse with people they don’t know,” Mr. Pagotto added. “That’s an increasingly vital skill and one that is of great value beyond Blair.”

Dean of Students Carmelo Mazza, who oversees the table foot program, noted that, in decades past, “formal” dinner (as it was known) was also a time to provide instruction on

Student groups often work with the dining hall staff to plan themed dinners around different cuisines and holidays, and recent celebrations of German and Indian foods, Rosh Hashanah and Chinese New Year have joined the much-loved annual festivities for Halloween, Peddie Week, Thanksgiving, winter holidays and Headmasters’ Societies Games. And, once each month, a birthday cake—and a rousing chorus of “Happy Birthday”—at the conclusion of family-style dinner unites the community in celebration of all the teachers and students born that month.

A Time-Honored Role

Something that has not changed much over the years is the part that table feet play in family-style dinner. A table foot’s responsibilities include arriving 15 minutes early to set the table, carrying trays of food from the kitchen and serving it to their tablemates, and clearing the table after the meal. A table foot’s most important job, however, is helping his or her table head set a convivial tone in which everyone—from the quietest to the most outspoken student—feels welcomed, valued and appreciated throughout lively dinner discussions.

Just how a table foot accomplishes this depends on the individual. Some bring games or topics of conversation that encourage the involvement of all their tablemates. Others focus on tabletop décor that creates a special



Blair's 2019-2020 table feet.

and welcoming ambiance. Still others bring their own hobbies and interests into the mix and engage everyone in, say, a craft project or a display of a hidden (or not-so-hidden) talent.

While the term “table foot” seems an unlikely name for a leadership position, the seniors who excel in this time-honored role truly are leaders with a diverse set of skills. They are kind and compassionate, creative and well-organized, and terrific conversation starters with a knack for setting others at ease. They can think on their feet, take charge when needed, and serve others with grace and good cheer.

Whether a senior volunteers to serve as a table foot or a table head taps a student for the role, the efforts of table feet to make family-style dinner a positive experience for all are certainly appreciated by Blair’s faculty. Former Assistant Headmaster Dave Low, who—along with former English teacher and dining room coordinator Charlie Underwood—oversaw the table feet during his Blair tenure, reflected that shared time at assigned tables sustained many wonderful faculty/senior relationships. “Of course, back in the day when breakfast, lunch and dinner were required sit-down meals, the constancy of that relationship was magnified,” he said. “In retrospect, those dedicated seniors no doubt had a good deal to do with keeping us faculty sane and helping their fellow students enjoy mealtimes.”

Helping their fellow students enjoy mealtime is no small feat, but Blair’s table feet accomplish this every time the community gathers for family-style dinner.

Prior to 1960, students who received “concessions” (financial aid) were responsible for a certain amount of work, and waiting on tables was a common assignment. By 1960, concessions were renamed scholarships or grants-in-aid, and waiting on tables became a task shared by all students.

At about this time, the practice of having a “foot” at each table in the dining room was established. “This was a student selected for maturity and judgment who sat at the table end and whose function it was to help preserve some measure of decorum and manners with younger students, also as possible, to give suggestion and advice in other matters.”

—from *Blair Academy: A Sesquicentennial History*
by Arthur Hamlin '29

Table Talk: Heads & Feet on Family-Style Dinner

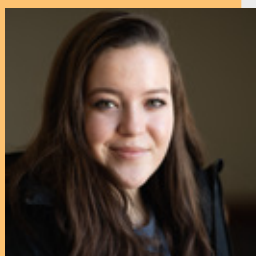
We asked faculty members and table feet to share thoughts on their time together at family-style dinner. Here's what they said about the experience.



English department chair James Moore

"The prospect of suiting up for a formal, seated meal at the end of a long day is sometimes daunting, but when I arrive in the dining room to find my table foot,

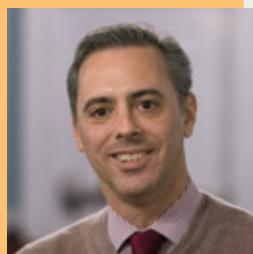
Lydia Richardson '20, setting the table and coordinating the delivery of food, my energy and enthusiasm return. She is clearly in charge and, once everyone is seated the meal has begun, she is great company."



Lydia Richardson '20

"My favorite thing about being a table foot is getting to know underclassmen who I'd never otherwise have a chance to spend time with. Mr. Moore and I always bring up something interesting

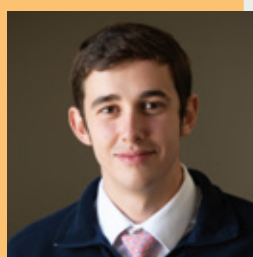
to talk about; whether it be sports, history, spy novels or local restaurants, we always have a topic of conversation at our table."



Dean of Students Carm Mazza

"**Aidan Smarth '20**, my current foot, is always positive, happy and willing to do anything. He makes an effort to speak to everyone, isn't afraid to get his hands

dirty and makes sure to ask those around him—including me—"How was your day?" Plus, he sets the bar high regarding formal dress for all of us!"



Aidan Smarth '20

"It's always fun to see the expression on a tablemate's face when I ask him or her to carry the plates up to the kitchen—that's the heaviest tray! All kidding aside, though, I've realized that Blair

is one big family when we come together for family-style dinner. This experience has taught me to put the other students at my table first and serve them."

Table feet in 2019-2020:

37

Family-style dinner held on:

Tuesday & Thursday

Table foot program established:

Around 1960

Trays of food carried by each table foot:

4



English & theatre teacher Craig Evans & English teacher Kaye Evans

"We've had some amazing table feet, but **Evan Paquette '02** was perhaps the most memorable. He was (and

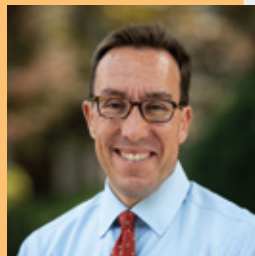
still is) a magician! Our table—and neighboring tables—would hurry to finish dinner and clear the plates for the nightly floorshow of amazing feats of magic. One night in particular, Evan was clearing the table when one of the utensils flew up and stuck to his sleeve, giving away that he had magnets hidden there for the upcoming trick!"



Evan Paquette '02

"I remember the butterflies in my stomach and nervous excitement I felt before sharing a magic trick I was working on with my peers. My experience as a Blair table foot taught me the importance

of giving students, especially those who are introverted and less outspoken, opportunities to take risks and step into their leadership. Craig and Kaye Evans are great at creating a space where it's comfortable—even cool—to try on new roles (onstage and off!). Now, when I lead or facilitate a group, I intentionally look for ways to bring out the best in everyone."



Associate Head of School Ryan Pagotto '97

"**Ceci Fralick '19** embraced the family-style dinner experience. Her characteristic warmth and kindness made others feel so comfortable and at ease. This was her great

gift. She told me how much being a table foot meant to her at our final dinner—I had no idea. This is one of those shared experiences at Blair that will always connect us as faculty member and alumna."



Ceci Fralick '19

"Being a table foot taught me, among other things, how to be comfortable meeting new people. I've always felt awkward making conversation with strangers, but, through the weeks, Mr. Pagotto helped

me appreciate the opportunity to spend time with and get to know people I otherwise would not have met. We'd often play the 'utensil game' that (spoiler alert!) was a complete trick, but it united everyone around the table in a state of confusion with lots of laughter and jokes. Mr. Pagotto's devious face always added to the fun!"

Family-Style Dinner at Blair

Students per table:

10 to 14

Most-popular entrée:

Chicken Parm

Sparkling cider consumed at winter holiday dinner:

148 bottles

Candy distributed at Halloween dinner:

40–60 pounds

8 DECADES OF DEDICATION

Blair's Two Longest-Serving Teachers to Retire in June

MATH AND THEATRE TEACHER WAYNE RASMUSSEN, AKA "RAZZ," AND HISTORY TEACHER MARTIN MILLER, PHD, ARRIVED ON CAMPUS IN 1976 AND 1980, RESPECTIVELY, to begin their Blair teaching careers. This June, the School will bid farewell to these two iconic faculty members—who have a combined 83 years of experience teaching, coaching, mentoring, advising, and caring for Blair students and colleagues—when Mr. Rasmussen and Dr. Miller retire and begin the next chapters of their lives.

"Razz and Marty have impacted the lives of countless students and fellow

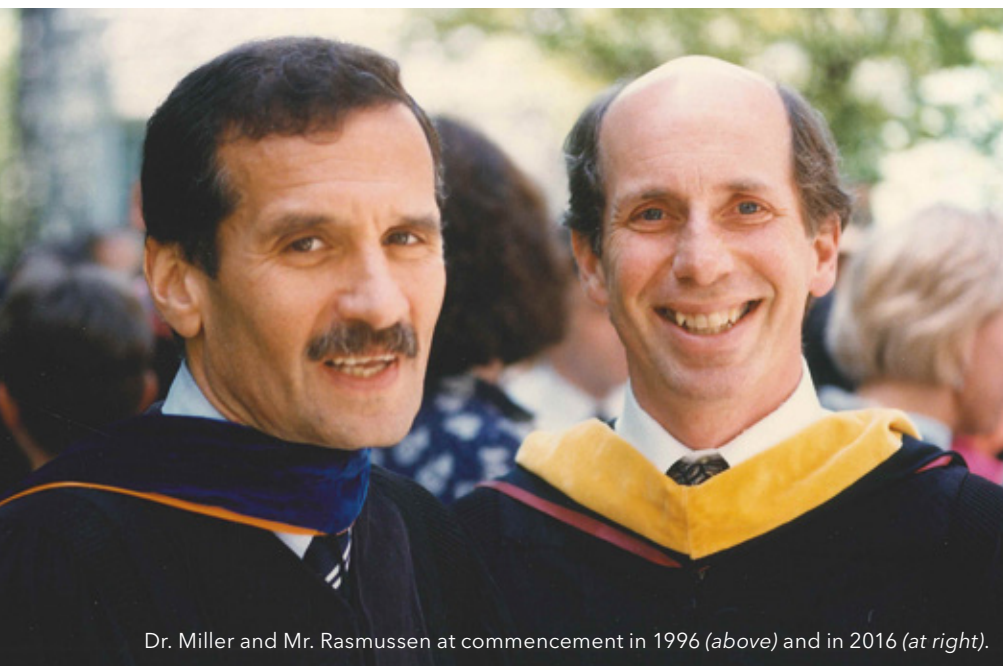
faculty members during their storied Blair tenures," said Head of School Chris Fortunato. "Both men leave a legacy of utmost dedication to their craft and to the meaningful relationships they have built with students across the generations. In addition, Razz leaves an indelible imprint upon Blair's theatre program, as does Marty upon the Society of Skeptics. They will be long remembered for their many accomplishments, as well as their kindness and care for every member of the community, and we are excited to keep them closely tethered to Blair in the coming years."

Hired by former Headmaster James Howard, Mr. Rasmussen came to Blair following his graduation from Bates College with a bachelor's degree in chemistry. He was unsure at the time that a teaching career was what he wanted, but becoming Blair's sole chemistry teacher was a good opportunity. In 1979, Mr. Rasmussen left the School for a job with Essex Chemical Corporation in Sayreville, New Jersey. A year later, he was back to stay, having realized that life as a teacher suited him better than life in the corporate world.

Variety has been the spice of life for Mr. Rasmussen at Blair. Over the

years, he has taught chemistry and math, coached football, served as technical director for Blair's theatre program, filmed football games and coordinated every detail of Blair's annual British golf exchange. Outside of school, Mr. Rasmussen's life has been even more





Dr. Miller and Mr. Rasmussen at commencement in 1996 (above) and in 2016 (at right).



interesting as he has built houses, studied stagecraft, restored vintage cars and ridden his motorcycle cross-country multiple times.

Dr. Miller, a 1966 graduate of Syracuse University who earned his doctorate in comparative politics from the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center in 1982, was a seasoned teacher when he joined Blair's history faculty. He taught at Stockton State College and CUNY in the 1970s but came to Blair because he sought a close-knit community where academic work and athletics/coaching could be pursued seriously. A graduate school friend and Groton alumnus had urged Dr. Miller to consider boarding education, and when he saw its small classes and how sports were integrated into the rhythm of daily life, he was hooked.

During his Blair tenure, Dr. Miller has taught courses at every level of Blair's history program, served as history department chair, run the Model United Nations program,

coached cross country continually for 40 years and served as editor of the *Blair Review*. The crown jewel of his Blair achievements, of course, is his directorship of the Society of Skeptics, the School's renowned Tuesday evening lecture program that has become synonymous with Dr. Miller's name. *(Please see story on page 30 for Dr. Miller's reflections on the program.)*

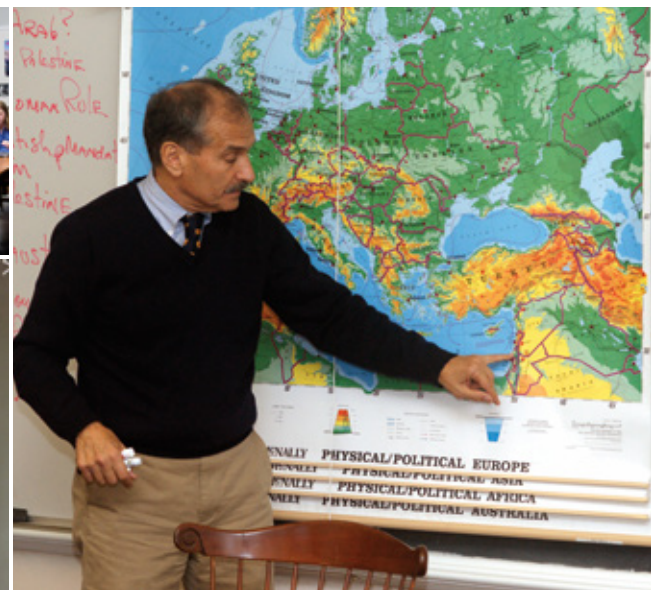
Here, Mr. Rasmussen and Dr. Miller share some perspective on their Blair careers and plans for their well-deserved retirements. As they go "out to the great unknown!" as Mr. Rasmussen put it, all of us at Blair wish them good health and happiness for many years ahead!

Q What are your plans for retirement?

MR. RASMUSSEN: Eight years ago, my wife, Linda, and I bought a house in Maine. We renovated it during the summers, then sold it and recently

bought a place in Blairstown, where we will live to be close to friends, family and church. The house needs work—it was a foreclosure—so it will be an ongoing project. I may also do some work at Blair, things like filming football or driving a bus. We'll see how that plays out. I'll likely pick up repair jobs (and my motto will be, "If I can't fix it, I'll fix it so no one can!" borrowed one of the forums I follow), and I may frame houses with a local framer whom I have helped in the past. Finally, I'll continue to work on cars, trucks and my Airstream trailer. These are projects I haven't had time for with so many other balls in the air. One thing is for sure: I'll make my own choices about how I spend my time. As a retired friend of mine says, "I'll have six Saturdays and one Sunday every week!"

DR. MILLER: My vision of retirement includes a life of relatively unscheduled days, a time of reading and reflection and continued connection to Blair (filling in for history teachers here and there,



attending selected Society of Skeptics presentations and athletic events, lending a hand in the advancement office). I also hope to travel extensively, spend more time with family and friends, and get lots of exercise in the great outdoors. Is this an unrealistic laundry list? Will the rhythm of my "golden years" be somewhat limited and slothful? We shall see. Just as we face parenthood largely unprepared, retirement is unknown terrain. My wife, Micheline, and I took the first halting steps toward retirement by purchasing a home in Blairstown, so I commute to work these days—a "townie" at last! Far more intelligent about such matters than I could ever be, she felt this was the proper moment to make a move before old age and decrepitude set in!

Q What will you miss most about Blair? What will you miss least?

MR. RASMUSSEN: I'll certainly miss Blair students. I've met some of the nicest kids in the world here, and some of the nicest parents, too. I still get together with some of these families, years after the kids have graduated. I'll miss being part

of a community and my faculty friends. Living in Blairstown, I will still see them, but I won't be one of them; I won't have my finger on the pulse. I don't know how that will feel. Linda and I will miss Marcial House, where we've lived for so many years, our faculty neighbors and Blair Lake. Linda loves the waterfall and watching the birds that swoop over it. I'll miss seeing the faculty kids walk by on their way to Blairstown Elementary School, laughing and playing as they go. Finally, I'll miss having lunch with the Blair maintenance staff every day and seeing all the nice folks in the business office, whom I've gotten to know well since I spend money on the theatre program! There are two things that I absolutely will not miss: paperwork and deadlines. I'm only going to have one more deadline, if you don't mind a bit of gallows humor!

DR. MILLER: I'll sorely miss the close relationships with students and the camaraderie and purposeful energy of the history department and the faculty, in general. Some of the rituals and deadlines that punctuate the academic calendar allowed me to feel part of a

productive academic community. Also, there's the redemptive opportunity to start from scratch each September with a new group of willing students.

Likewise, I'll surely regret, to some degree, not having Skeptics to mobilize each week and a cross country team to train every fall, whether the runners were championship caliber or beginners. Most of all, I will no longer be a teacher, which, along with husband and father, is perhaps the most important role of my life—an unsettling thought. What a privilege to be part of the Blair Academy community for the last 40 years! And how strange that number sounds!

But some things are best left behind. The vibrancy and excitement of the boarding school whirl can be overwhelming. You feel like an aging baseball player who has trouble hitting the curve with authority or sprinting around the bases like a rookie.

Papers are increasingly difficult to grade, students' names become elusive, evening tasks can be a drag, the noise level of the dining room grates, and stress is no longer managed with aplomb. It's time to move on. Of course,

I may sing a different tune on a Monday morning in the fall when there's not a student or faculty member in sight, not a class to teach or team to coach. Well, I'm not the first guy of a certain age to dwell on such life changes.

Q What aspect of your work with Blair students over the years has been most rewarding? Why?

MR. RASMUSSEN: I have truly enjoyed working with small groups of kids when they have come for extra help, whether that was in chemistry years ago or in math. Students and I have gotten to know one another better during these sessions, and I've seen the light in their eyes when they finally understand a concept. That "aha" moment is like catnip for a teacher! It's why fellow math teacher Latta Browse teaches the way he does and why I teach the way I do. It's just so cool to see a student finally understand a problem.

I've also found working with kids on the theatre tech crew especially rewarding. These kids are committed to backstage work, with no thought of recognition. Some showed up out of nowhere—they were students I never expected to be interested in tech—and simply lit up the whole place. They made me look forward to working on so many shows.

In recent years, I've sometimes felt that students are in a different place in their lives than where I am. I've appreciated the kids who are willing to meet me on my ground, and I'm thankful for the relationships that have developed from that.

DR. MILLER: Of course, the students who enter your classroom, join your team/activity or seek advice are the ones

who create the most vivid memories, especially when in a nanosecond they graduate and return to campus as solid citizens with kids in tow. To be involved in their development, even peripherally, is an extraordinarily rewarding experience, far more than I could have imagined in 1980. One spends a lifetime immersed in books and athletics and then gets to share this experience with the next (and the next) generation—not a bad gig! In retrospect, I couldn't be more pleased with my career choice. Some images come to mind: a student lingers after class to ask about this or that issue or idea; a runner in late October solves the riddle of pacing and floats through a workout exhilarated; an alumna's postcard is found in your mailbox postmarked in a distant city, a political hotspot discussed in class years ago (she WAS listening!); a youngster conjures up a viable idea for Skeptics and struts out of my office pleased with himself. All of this and more are enduring gifts that won't be easily forgotten.

And then there are my friends. One enters a history office alive with banter about recent political events, sports, the day's schedule, visitors to Blair and campus gossip, which makes for a welcoming cocoon. I depend on it and perhaps even take it for granted. Teachers from other departments drift in and out—the jokes and serious comments are of one piece. I feel at home! The same goes for the staff. We know each other, more or less, and I've taught many of their children; on the other hand, they've shoveled my driveway, lined the cross country course, issued reminders galore, and churned out the requisite forms for all types of trips and activities. I will miss their cheerful greetings and the refrain "no problem" when they are asked for the inevitable favor. Ah, if only the rest of society worked like that!


Q As you look back on your years at Blair, what advice would you like to share with teachers and with students?

MR. RASMUSSEN: Take time to enjoy the beauty of the School. Blair has the most beautiful campus of any I've seen during my career. I'd also advise disconnecting from people and technology when you walk between classes. I just like to look at the trees. One fall at Peddie Day, I looked across the field and realized the leaves were gone. I'd never even noticed they had changed! I decided to never miss fall again. We only have so many falls, after all.

DR. MILLER: In general, our students appreciate Blair's supportive community, small classes, close relationships and all the rest. I imagine the trick now is to leave the insularity of Warren County and pursue rewarding careers, create meaningful relationships and become decent citizens. Along the way, though, they shouldn't forget about ole' Blair—return often or at least keep in touch and remember lessons learned at this school may be applied to the wider world. A nurturing community can take many forms. They've certainly been provided with a road map to find the version that best suits them. Lots of searching and failing are part of the deal. Stick with it!

My message to young teachers (but how to listen at a tender age?): Have patience and a thick skin; continue to read, travel and learn decade after decade; and remember to "smell the roses" along the way. This fantastic journey called a teaching career races by quickly. Savor every minute of it, warts and all. It does end. ■





Dr. Miller Celebrates 40 Years At Blair

THE SOCIETY OF SKEPTICS DIRECTOR RECALLS MEMORABLE SPEAKERS SINCE 1985

Since joining Blair's history department in 1980, Martin Miller, PhD, Hon. '81, has become known to generations of Bucs for many things: his extraordinarily nuanced perspective of European history and economics, the many students he has guided in the art of diplomacy and international relations as director of Blair's Model UN, his deft editorial hand as founder and co-editor of the *Blair Review*, his ability to inspire runners of all levels of talent as a veteran cross country coach, and his deep institutional knowledge of where Blair has been and where it is going as one of the School's longest-serving faculty members.

But it has been his work to shape the Society of Skeptics into a weekly campus event eagerly anticipated by students and teachers alike that Dr. Miller feels may be a long-standing legacy at Blair. As he celebrates decades of coordinating and ultimately transforming the program into a Blair institution, Dr. Miller is traveling up and down the East Coast to connect with alumni and parents at a series of events focused on

Dr. Miller Celebrates 40 Years At Blair

summing up Skeptics' richness and diversity during his tenure as director of the program.

Characteristically humble as ever, Dr. Miller is quick to note that he has no secret sauce or magic recipe to explain why Skeptics has remained so popular and endured more than four decades after former history department chair Elliott Trommald, PhD, Hon. '65, established it as a regular forum for student discussion and debate.

A PROGRAM THAT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

Since January, Dr. Miller has delivered his "Skeptics on the Road" presentation in Boston and Washington, D.C., presenting his 20 favorite Skeptics speakers in an interactive format that includes a question-and-answer session with the audience. As the *Bulletin* went to press, he was scheduled to deliver a fourth presentation on campus during Alumni Weekend. Although Dr. Miller will retire in the weeks that follow those festivities, he is making tentative plans to continue the "Skeptics on the Road" series next fall in three cities on the West Coast.

"I have purposefully tried not to look back or sum up my role in shaping this program—usually I only look to the next Tuesday and keep my eye on the forthcoming presentation," explained Dr. Miller, who reshaped Skeptics into a weekly lecture series in 1985. "But my 40th year at Blair seemed like a good moment in my life to take a walk down memory lane. It is special to take the time to slow down and reflect on what transpired."

Dr. Miller's goal all of these years has been to bring a wide variety of interesting, accomplished and sometimes

controversial people to Blair to speak and engage with students and teachers. "If you find interesting people, the program speaks for itself," he continued. "My motivation was not to prove a point or explicitly teach a lesson but to introduce the community to a wide range of ideas. The selection of topics usually mirrored my general interests, or a particular speaker simply fell into my lap as a recommendation provided by a student, colleague, parent, fellow teacher or alumnus/alumna. There are lots of dates to fill during the academic year!"

And students and faculty responded to "the totality of it," week after week, year after year, as the program impacted many Blair students over the span of four decades. Dismissing the idea that he could narrow his favorite presenters down to one "best Skeptics speaker ever," Dr. Miller always found the most joy in competing voices and conflicting points of view that broadened the community's view of the world. "As long as people leave Skeptics wanting to learn more, I am always happy," he said. "Perhaps a relevant measure of 'success' is the number of students who remain after a presentation ends to continue a dialogue."

'SUMMING UP WHAT I'VE DONE'

Adding that his 20 "favorites" are not chosen using objective criteria and are not necessarily the best speakers or the ones students and teachers loved the most, Dr. Miller highlighted those presenters who were most memorable to him personally. "It is certainly not an exhaustive list—I could have flagged 100 who resonated with me for different reasons," he said. "My choices have more to do with important moments in my teaching career,

A SOCIETY OF SKEPTICS TIMELINE

1937

The International Society is founded, with Blair language teacher Eugene Hogenauer as the faculty advisor.

1977

Dr. Trommald begins leading Skeptics as a current events discussion group in classrooms & faculty members' living rooms across campus.

1980

Dr. Miller joins Dr. Trommald as an informal assistant & learns from the master.

1985

Dr. Miller takes over & changes the Skeptics' format to a weekly lecture series, promoting it with the help of fellow faculty member Wayne Rasmussen at every Monday School Meeting.

the way a certain group of students responded, or the fact that it was a quiet Tuesday night on campus and a lively speaker showed up and changed the dynamic.”

The fact that countless Skeptics speakers have joined Dr. Miller at family-style dinner and stayed overnight at his house on the evening of their presentations also had an impact on his recollections of favorite past events. “Over the years, my kids grew up eating breakfast with notable politicians, business executives, athletes, scientists and academics,” he said. “They became a part of the household and part of our weekly routine. And I thank my wife, Micheline, for being a gracious host.”

The fact that many in the “Skeptics on the Road” audiences in Massachusetts, New York and Washington engaged firsthand with Dr. Miller’s “top 20” during their time as students made his presentation and the receptions that followed especially meaningful. Dr. Miller was also excited to welcome a handful of past Skeptics speakers to all three events and hoped to reconnect with others at the June program during Alumni Weekend. One of those past presenters in attendance at the March 2020 Washington, D.C., event was Ambassador **Steve Steiner ’58**, who spoke to Blair students at the Society of Skeptics and in Blair history classes about foreign policy and national security at Dr. Miller’s invitation in the early 2010s. “It was great to see students engaged about foreign policy and national security issues, and Marty helped us form an informal national security group of Blair alumni working in those areas,” said Ambassador Steiner, who arranged for the second “Skeptics on the Road” presentation to take place at the U.S. Institute of Peace, where he worked as a gender advisor from 2011-2018. “Marty was our key link and our guru, and he keeps us tied to Blair. He is really a great pleasure to know and work with!”

REFLECTING ON A BLAIR INSTITUTION

Dr. Miller realized early on that carving out time in the busy boarding school schedule was essential if the Society of Skeptics were to survive as a viable weekly forum (the program was an outgrowth of the Blair International Society, begun in 1937).

“The only reason I made it an every-week event is because time is limited in the prep school schedule, and someone else will quickly take your spot with something like an Ultimate Frisbee tournament if you aren’t consistent,” he explained. “Well, that was my strongly held belief or perhaps a dash of paranoia.”

Dr. Miller loves that some attend every week, while others only plug in when something interests them. “We see teachers from all different disciplines, some parents and a few curious folks from the local community attending, which has a positive impact on students. Listening to speakers answering a broad range of questions in this atmosphere has become a familiar routine, and I’d like to think it moves youngsters in the direction of seeking such intellectual fare after graduation.”

But what has made Dr. Miller happiest over the years is seeing how students are comfortable in getting up and asking intelligent, nuanced questions, something that’s become the Blair way. “Without the high levels of confidence students are developing in the classrooms, School Meetings and various extracurricular activities, they could be intellectually curious but too afraid to ask questions,” he said. “It really does take a community-wide effort. Frankly, it’s a minor miracle that students engage meaningfully with speakers in the evening after a full day of class, required sport and family-style dinner.”

For decades, Skeptics has demarcated Dr. Miller’s week, providing a “certain framework” for his life and keeping him

1989 2017

When Bogle Hall opens, Skeptics finds a home for many years in Timken Auditorium (later renamed Cowan Auditorium in 1998 when Memorial Hall became Timken Library).

The Chiang-Elghanayan Center for Innovation and Collaboration opens; Skeptics relocates to the state-of-the-art facility that can fit audiences of all sizes. History department chair Jason Beck takes over technical management of Tuesday-night presentations.



Dr. Miller Celebrates 40 Years At Blair

on schedule. “As I get older, the Tuesday nights come more quickly,” he laughed. “But I love that Skeptics keeps me in touch with alumni and parents and makes them feel closer to the School. If you want a rich life, you have to stay busy. Skeptics keeps me on my toes. And it is only as good as the last presentation. Then you have to start all over again.”

FROM A CLASSROOM TO THE COLLABORATION FORUM

As Dr. Miller approaches retirement, he hopes that whoever takes over the Society of Skeptics program will shape it the way they want to, just as he did when he changed Dr. Trommald’s model to a lecture series that he felt more comfortable with. “I began by bringing one person here on a Tuesday night, whose name I forget,” he said. “I remember waiting at the bottom of the hill at the front gate for him because he had never been to the wilds of Warren County.”

In the years since, Skeptics kind of “crept up” on him and just “grew from there.” With a regular Tuesday-night slot, generous

budget, high levels of interest from parents and alumni in returning to campus to speak, and a state-of-the-art venue in the Chiang-Elghanayan Center, Dr. Miller calls the support system for today’s Skeptics “an embarrassment of riches.” Over the years, the program has flourished, thanks to financial support from many generous Blair families and alumni, including the class of 1968, which has raised more than \$100,000 for the program in celebration of its 50th reunion.

“Consider that Elliott Trommald held weekly meetings in a classroom and I did the same after succeeding him,” he said. “The new director will have a lot to work with that we didn’t have in 1980.”

As Skeptics wrapped up for the 2019-2020 school year with a presentation by violinist and Syrian refugee Mariela Shaker in late April, the program continued to serve as an engaging forum for students and faculty to discuss and debate important global issues—even if Dr. Miller no longer has to wait for speakers at the bottom of the hill. “I find that they usually get here, one way or another,” he concluded with a smile. ■



Retirement is Simply a Word for Former Faculty Member Huntley Harrison

Former Blair math and science teacher Huntley Harrison was profiled in a *Cape Cod Chronicle* feature detailing his journey following the formal close of his career as an educator. Writer Elizabeth Van Wye highlighted Mr. Harrison's dedicated work for many organizations in his Chatham, Massachusetts, community, such as Pleasant Bay Community Boating, the cable advisory committee and the airport commission.

Mr. Harrison's love of technology began during his time at Hobart College. A significant memory included taking his first computer course, where the mathematics major recalled learning the computer language Fortran on an IBM 1130 computer.

Immediately after graduating from Hobart in 1969, Mr. Harrison began his career at Blair, where he taught math and developed a computer curriculum for the School. During his 29-plus year tenure, Mr. Harrison chaired the computer science department, as well as the School's technology committee. "He saw computer use at the school go from a single donated DEC PDP-8S computer with 4K of memory to a completely networked campus with fully equipped computer labs," writes Ms. Van Wye.

After buying a vacation house in Chatham in 1987, Mr. Harrison and his family moved there full time in 1999, and he retired from teaching at Chatham High School in 2013. "Like many active seniors, Harrison's retirement didn't mean the end of his activities," the article continues. "I'm not a person to do nothing," he said with a smile.

Since retirement, Mr. Harrison has kept busy. This includes serving as treasurer for Pleasant Bay Community Boating, where he was also hired as property manager in 2014. In 2019, he added the title of human resources director to his job description.



Former Blair faculty member Huntley Harrison (photo courtesy of Elizabeth Van Wye of the *Cape Cod Chronicle*).

Mr. Harrison has also been a licensed pilot since 1974, but, the article reports, he had stopped flying until recently. "In 2012, I started getting re-acclimated so I went to the local airport and got to know the people and the activities," he said. When a vacancy on the airport commission came up, Harrison was appointed.

It is clear Mr. Harrison still has no plans to slow down in his retirement. He told Ms. Van Wye, "I'm in good physical condition and I keep active refereeing lacrosse and participating in the Cape Cod Ski Club." He embraces his philosophy of "moderation in everything." ■

Read the *Cape Code Chronicle* article:

@ www.blair.edu/huntley-harrison

"He saw computer use at the school go from a single donated DEC PDP-8S computer with 4K of memory to a completely networked campus with fully equipped computer labs."

—Elizabeth Van Wye, *Cape Cod Chronicle*



Blair Connects & Engages Alumni on Both Coasts at Industry-Specific **NETWORKING EVENTS**

No matter what year you graduated from Blair, the most valuable aspect of a Blair education has always been the strong and meaningful relationships forged, first as students on campus and later as part of Blair's large extended family around the globe. The opportunity to connect to and engage with fellow alumni, current and past parents, and faculty members of all backgrounds and experiences can literally be life changing, which is

why Blair has invested deeply in creating more programs and events that bring people together and foster those relationships well after graduation.

This year, the School hosted two industry-specific gatherings, in New York and California, designed to do just that. More than 100 Blair students, alumni, parents and teachers spent a cold January evening focused on finance, entrepreneurship and social impact at the second-annual Finance Summit, held at the Harvard Club in Midtown.



There was standing room only as Head of School Chris Fortunato welcomed an audience of more than 100 to the second-annual Finance Summit in Manhattan. *From left to right: Mr. Fortunato, Deborah Winshel P'21, Samir Desai P'23, **Ashley Thompson '08**, Doug Kimmelman P'12 '13 '15 '22, **Carina Davidson '86**, **Marcos Alvarado '99** and **William Bao Bean '91, P'23**.*

The program kicked off with a welcome from Board Chairman Douglas Kimmelman P'12 '13 '15 '22, founder of Energy Capital Partners, followed by a discussion and Q & A with six panelists: **William Bao Bean '91, P'23**, general partner at SOSventures and managing director of Chinaaccelerator and MOX; **Marcos Alvarado '99**, president and chief investment officer at iStar; **Ashley Thompson '08**, founder and CEO of MUSH Overnight Oats; Deborah Winshel P'21, managing director and global head of social impact at BlackRock; Samir Desai P'23, managing director and head of New York investment banking at Needham & Company; and **Carina Davidson '86**, president of the global strategic communications firm Abernathy MacGregor. The formal presentation was followed by a cocktail reception at which attendees had the opportunity to informally mix and mingle with presenters, Blair Trustees and other participants.

"Building relationships and expanding horizons are at the heart of everything Blair Academy does, and this is most certainly true of this particular event, which once again



"Building relationships and expanding horizons are at the heart of everything Blair Academy does, and this is most certainly true of this particular event, which once again served as an excellent venue for forging new connections, sharing ideas and learning from one another."

**—Blair Board of Trustees Chairman
Doug Kimmelman P'12 '13 '15 '22,**
founder of Energy Capital Partners

served as an excellent venue for forging new connections, sharing ideas and learning from one another," said Mr. Kimmelman, whose firm, Energy Capital Partners, is one of the largest owners of power plant and pipeline assets in the United States.



About six weeks later, Blair's alumni office hosted its first-ever networking event at Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, California. The program, designed for those interested in the fields of media, technology, entertainment, marketing and public relations, was coordinated by founder and CEO of Dynamo Events **Chrissy (Devenny) Thompson '08**, whose company serves a wide range of tech brands. The evening began with a keynote address from **Blair Kohan '85**, partner and motion picture agent at United Talent Agency. A panel

discussion with experts followed, and moderator **Derek Peachey '93** offered his perspective as managing partner at Floodlight Digital as he steered the conversation and engaged with the audience.

Panelists included **Charisse Manzi '98**, senior producer at Trailer Park; **Will Neff '08**, screenwriter and digital influencer; **Jaya Vadlamudi '95**, vice president of marketing and communications at Make-A-Wish Greater Los Angeles; **Tim Peacock '08**, product manager, Google Cloud; and



"Don't let fear of what you haven't studied or don't know hold you back. You can usually figure it out. Fear is very exciting and a huge motivator, so don't build artificial barriers. What's the worst thing that can happen? You fail."

—**William Bao Bean '91, P'23**,
General Partner at SOSventures &
Managing Director of Chinaaccelerator & MOX
(pictured at right, on right)



"Think about your strengths and how you can apply them to interesting opportunities, rather than feeling like you need to check every box. Assess your skills and figure out how to communicate them in a way that makes it clear that you have the building blocks. It is more important to find something that you are excited about and apply with confidence."

—**Deborah Winshel P'21**,
Managing Director & Global Head of
Social Impact at BlackRock
(pictured at right)



"As a 22-year-old, I thought my entire career depended on my making certain decisions and working at certain firms. Now, I realize that didn't matter at all. My advice is to always think about where you are learning and growing. As long as you're challenged and enthralled by what you do, you'll find success."

—**Marcos Alvarado '99**,
President & Chief Investment Officer at iStar
(pictured at right, on left)





"Once I mustered up the courage, I accepted that my passion was not in finance but in changing the world by addressing poor nutrition in the United States. I wanted to make an impact, not to just transact. The road is winding, but my biggest piece of advice is to follow your passion. Everything is 'figureoutable,' and there is a solution to every problem."

—**Ashley Thompson '08**,
 Founder & CEO of MUSH Overnight Oats
 (pictured at left, on left)



"At the end of the day, you have to think about where you are happy, where you are building connections, where you are challenged. It is unusual to be at an investment banking firm for 19 years, but working at Needham & Company has allowed me to build a lot of personal relationships. Sometimes, people think the grass will be greener by going to another organization, but there can be a lot of costs associated with that."

—**Samir Desai P'23**,
 Managing Director & Head of New York
 Investment Banking at Needham & Company
 (pictured at left, center)



"My career hasn't been a straight path, but with each experience, I carried through an important lesson: You apply every connection and experience to your next job. I've been at Abernathy MacGregor for 23 years because I enjoy the culture our founder built. Knowing the culture of an organization is as important as the actual sector you're passionate about. You want to know you'll have good people in the trenches with you."

—**Carina Davidson '86**,
 President of Abernathy MacGregor
 (pictured at left, on right)



Attendees at Blair's Media & Technology Forum enjoyed a fascinating look at the industry thanks to this expert panel (left to right): **Derek Peachey '93**, **Jaya Vadlamudi '95**, **Tim Peacock '08**, **Will Neff '08**, **Blair Kohan '85**, **Dan McClung '99** and **Charisse Manzi '98**.

Dan McClung '99, co-founder and chief operating officer at Pureplay Entertainment.

"The impressive standing of our alumni and parents in law, finance, government and other industry verticals is well documented, but I am not sure that many in our community are aware of their outstanding accomplishments in e-commerce, production, entertainment, artificial intelligence and other areas," Mr. Peachey said. "Our panel discussion not only highlighted the fascinating work being done in these fields, but also generated excitement about how Blair is developing leaders in this innovative segment of our economy."

The program's more than 25 attendees not only had the chance to network with one another at an evening reception following the formal part of the program, but they also enjoyed an hourlong walking tour of Sony Pictures Studios—a definite highlight of the evening.

Presenters and participants alike would like to see both events continue annually, and Blair's advancement office is exploring other industries that could be the focus of similar events in the years ahead. ■



"I've been at UTA 23 years now, representing writers, actors and directors across movies and television. The ever-changing environment is what has kept me hooked in and interested. There's never a day that doesn't surprise me."

—Blair Kohan '85,

Partner & Motion Picture Agent at United Talent Agency
(pictured at right)





"Our panel discussion not only highlighted the fascinating work being done in these [media and technology] fields, but also generated excitement about how Blair is developing leaders in this innovative segment of our economy."

—**Derek Peachey '93**,
Managing Partner at Floodlight Digital
(pictured at right)



"We all need to be really thoughtful about the content we consume and share...As young, educated, intelligent people, do what you can to not be victims [of misleading content] and talk to family members about the information they consume. There's no cavalry coming over the hill to save us, so take the time to talk to people."

—**Tim Peacock '08**,
Product Manager, Google Cloud
(pictured at right)



"If you want to get into film, don't go to film school—just make stuff, make 2,000 projects. You never know what's going to explode on TikTok, become a trend and just break you. Once you have that project that goes viral, pump out 2,000 of them. That's the best model and the best way to learn."

—**Will Neff '08**,
Screenwriter & Digital Influencer
(pictured at right, on right)





"Telling a great story is so important. It's not just about making content—everybody is making content. The question is, how are you going to compete? Find the things that inspire you and that you have a voice in. Tell the stories that matter to you."

—**Charisse Manzi '98**,
Senior Producer at Trailer Park
(pictured at left)



"It's an amazing time to be in media right now...The need for ancillary content is so high, and it's only going to keep growing. What I do is like a weapon for companies to create across-the-board content."

—**Dan McClung '99**,
Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer at
Pureplay Entertainment
(pictured at left, center)



"It's important to put the dollars we raise toward wishes, so we look at partnering with media and tech companies to help us create content. What's in it for them? Being able to align with a great, trusted brand like Make-a-Wish."

—**Jaya Vadlamudi '95**,
Vice President of Marketing & Communications at
Make-A-Wish Greater Los Angeles
(pictured at left, second from left)

Brothers Co-Name Blair's

Chiang-Elghanayan Center for Innovation & Collaboration

Thanks to the exceptional support of loyal alumni **K. Thomas Elghanayan '62** and **Frederick Elghanayan '66**, Blair's dynamic academic hub is newly co-named the Chiang-Elghanayan Center for Innovation and Collaboration. The brothers' generous gift funds the remaining co-naming opportunity for the building and reflects the innovative spirit Tom and Fred have embraced throughout their successful entrepreneurial careers in real estate development, as well as their gratitude to the School that gave them their start.

"The generosity of the Elghanayan brothers and the Chiang family will profoundly impact generations of Blair students," said Head of School Chris Fortunato. "Our entire community looks forward to the exciting opportunities, achievements and connections that will be built in the Chiang-Elghanayan Center now and in the future. We are deeply grateful to both families for their vision, support and love for Blair."

Tom and Fred have fond memories of their Blair days, including living in East Hall, the dorm in whose footprint the Chiang-Elghanayan Center now stands. Rigorous academics, inspirational teachers, and the camaraderie of friends and teammates were important parts of their Blair experiences, and Fred, who captained the soccer team as a senior, reflected that the lessons he learned through sports and being part of a team proved very helpful in his business career.

Throughout their nearly 50 years of partnership in the real estate industry, the Elghanayans have been builders and innovators. Today, Tom and Fred are chairman and president, respectively, of TF Cornerstone, the premier real estate acquisition, development and management company they founded in 2010. Through their work, they have established a reputation for quality, integrity and vision, and created communities in New York City and Washington, D.C., that foster new opportunities for all who live and work in them.

As part of a Blair legacy that was nurtured by their beloved parents and includes seven alumni, Tom and Fred are happy



K. Thomas Elghanayan '62 (standing) and **Frederick Elghanayan '66** are pictured in front of a Persian rug that bears a portrait of their father, Nourollah Elghanayan.

to see their family name on the Chiang-Elghanayan Center for Innovation and Collaboration. Their gift to co-name the home of Blair's technology and fine arts departments embodies their hope that students will be inspired by the academic classes and myriad activities they experience within the building's glass-walled classrooms and soaring spaces to become the next generations of innovators.

"I truly believe in innovation," Tom said. "It is vital to our business and to the future of every aspect of modern society. I am pleased to support the facility where students develop their savvy in technology and creative fields, as these skills will always be important to Blair alumni as they live, work and better their communities worldwide."

"I received so much from my education and experience at Blair," Fred added. "I hope the Chiang-Elghanayan Center will always be a place that expands the viewpoints, possibilities and life experiences of Blair's students and teachers." ■



Katharine Sigety is the mother and grandmother of 11 Buccaneers: (Front row, left to right) **Katie Sigety '16**, Katharine Sigety, **Nina Sigety '19** and **Elise Sigety '20**; (back row, left to right) **Griffin Marcus '14**, **Ned Sigety '16**, **Brad Sigety '18**, **Rob Sigety '75**, **Neal Sigety '76**, **Will Sigety '18**, **Palmer Marcus '19** and **George Sigety '21**.

Since 2017, the Faculty Summer Institute has been an invaluable professional development resource for Blair teachers, bringing a total of more than 50 participants together for weeklong, on-campus programs focused on making Blair's classrooms the best they can be. The Sigety family, already among the School's most loyal benefactors, has ensured that this unique opportunity will continue to enrich Blair's faculty for years to come with a generous gift to endow the program.

“*Our family is pleased To support the ongoing development of faculty members at Blair because great teachers are at the heart of a great education.*”

—Trustee **Neal Sigety '76**

Sigety family members' belief in the importance of education inspired their support of the newly named Sigety Faculty Summer Institute. Trustee **Rob Sigety '75**, father of **Katie '16**, **Will '18**, **Elise '20** and **George '21**, and Trustee **Neal Sigety '76**, and his wife, Virginia, parents of **Ned '16**, **Brad '18** and **Nina '19**, credit Rob and Neal's mother, Katharine (Kit), and late father, Charles, with instilling that value in their five children. "Dad and Mom gave us the gift of education, and we are giving that same gift to our children," Neal said, noting that his sister and brother-in-law, Liz and Jerry Marcus, are also proud parents of two Blair alumni, **Griffin '14** and **Palmer '19**. "Our family is pleased to support the ongoing development of faculty members at Blair because great teachers are at the heart of a great education."

Rob and Neal are thankful for the outstanding faculty who shaped their Blair experience in the 1970s, including English teachers Henry Cowan and Charlie Underwood and history teacher Paul White. In recent

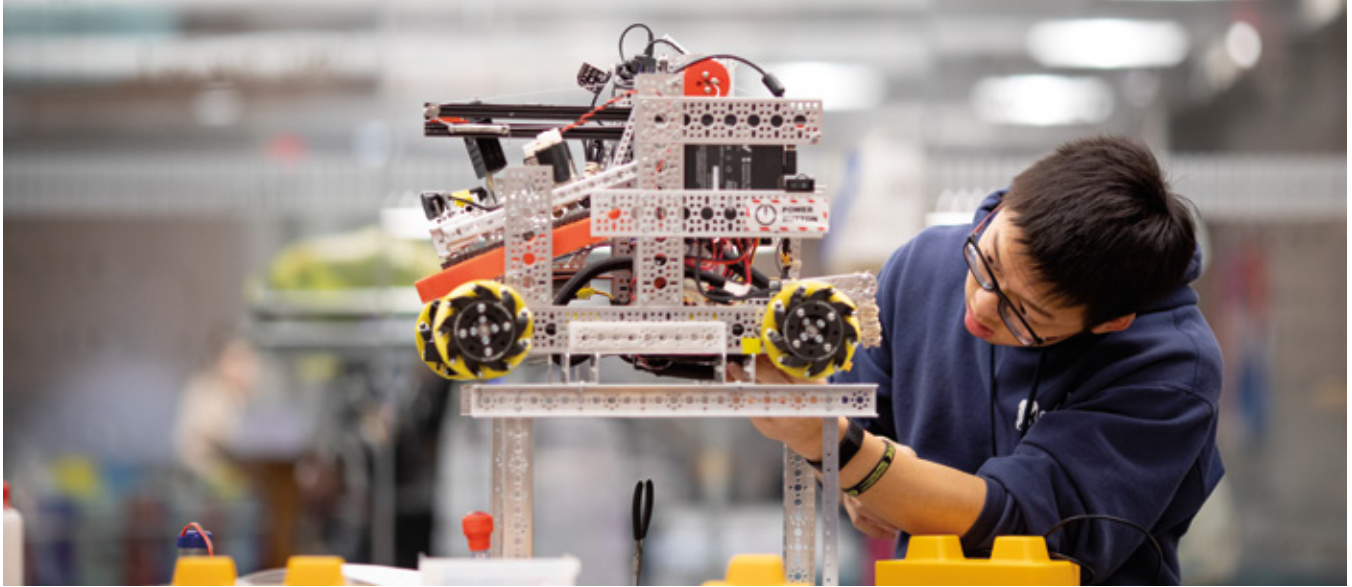
years, Neal notes that the Sigetys have "seen the School in action" in their roles as enthusiastic volunteers, former Chairs of the Parent Fund Group (Neal and Virginia), ex-officio Trustee (Virginia), Chair of the Advancement Committee (Neal) and Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee (Rob). "We've gotten to know Blair's current faculty members as excellent teachers and great people," he said. "The Sigety Faculty Summer Institute facilitates their professional development within the Blair curriculum, which is important for them and for the School."

The Sigety family's gift dovetails with a key strategic initiative of Blair's 2018-2025 Strategic Plan, *All In*, calling for a comprehensive array of faculty training opportunities, a critical need for the School as it seeks to hire and retain teachers who will best serve Blair students. The cost-effective, on-campus Sigety Faculty Summer Institute is particularly advantageous because it gives teachers a distinctive opportunity to focus on skills and curriculum that will both immediately impact their work in the classroom and

have long-term significance for the School and its students.

Over the years, the Sigety family's remarkable philanthropy has benefited Blair teachers and students in countless ways by generously supporting capital projects, the Blair Fund, scholarship aid and other initiatives. This latest gift to endow the Sigety Faculty Summer Institute embodies the Sigetys' continuing love for the School. "With so many family members who have come to Blair, our shared experience will undoubtedly be a point of connection throughout our lives," Neal said. "We are proud of all our School has become—it is certainly a special place to get an education."

As mother and grandmother of 11 Buccaneers, Kit noted that Blair provided her children and grandchildren with a solid foundation for higher education. "One of life's greatest accomplishments is to achieve and use your achievements to better the world," she said. "This gift will help provide that same educational foundation to so many more students." ■



Evening Lab Exposes Students to *Real-World Applications of Commercial Robots*

Teaching and learning at Blair have always extended far beyond the academic day, and the School continues to amplify its support of educational opportunities outside of the classroom across its campus and curriculum. A weekly evening robotics lab is one of Blair's newest programs designed to inspire creativity, promote innovative thinking and collaborative learning, and connect academic study to real-world challenges.

A Course, Sport & Lab

Having already created a curriculum for a robotics class that meets one of the School's science requirements and an after-school competitive robotics club activity that fulfills one season's athletic requirement, computer science teacher Michael Garrant was excited to add a more casual evening lab to the mix this year that would expose students to new technologies and hands-on experience with commercial robots.

Whereas students in his class build and program small robots, and the club is focused on solving problems as part of the local and national FIRST Tech Challenge, the lab is much less formal and structured and invites students of every class year to participate for an hour once a week. Those interested in earning academic credit for their efforts can attend every week for 24 weeks, completing and presenting to the Blair community the results of a real-world robotics project of their choice. But for those who just want to see how robots function, that level of commitment is by no means required.

Every Wednesday from 7 to 8 p.m., Mr. Garrant encourages students of all levels of interest in and experience with technology to drop by the Chiang-Elghanayan Center for Innovation and Collaboration's robotics classroom or maker space to watch others work or to tackle their own projects using 17 collaborative, commercially available robots. The

"Usually, when people think of robots, they think of industrial devices such as those used by car manufacturers behind protective cages, but the trend of robotic devices that interact very personally with humans is growing exponentially."

—Michael Garrant, computer science teacher



Blair students show off a few of the School's 17 collaborative, commercially available robots.

devices include Temi (a “virtual presence” that interacts with humans using advanced artificial intelligence), Loomo (a personal “sidekick” that recognizes its companion’s body and voice to follow you and activate certain commands), personal transporters made by Segway, Appbot Riley (a robot with mobile cameras), and iRobot’s Roomba (robot vacuum cleaner) and hackable Roombas (that serve as a platform to create any type of robot, such as an autonomous air quality monitor).

“I want our students to look at these robots from the purchaser and user experience perspective,” said Mr. Garratt, who notes he is always on hand to support students as they control the robots using mobile apps but encourages them to come up with their own ideas about real-world robotic applications. “We aren’t spending most of our time programming, but instead thinking about how this cutting-edge technology—which kids will see more and more of in the future—will apply to them and impact their lives.”

Real-World Connections

Weekly lab attendance has ranged from three to 10 students, but *Lucy Clayton '21* has committed to attending every week as she tackles a for-credit project to create a contraption that will enable Loomo to carry a tray at Blair’s family-style dinner

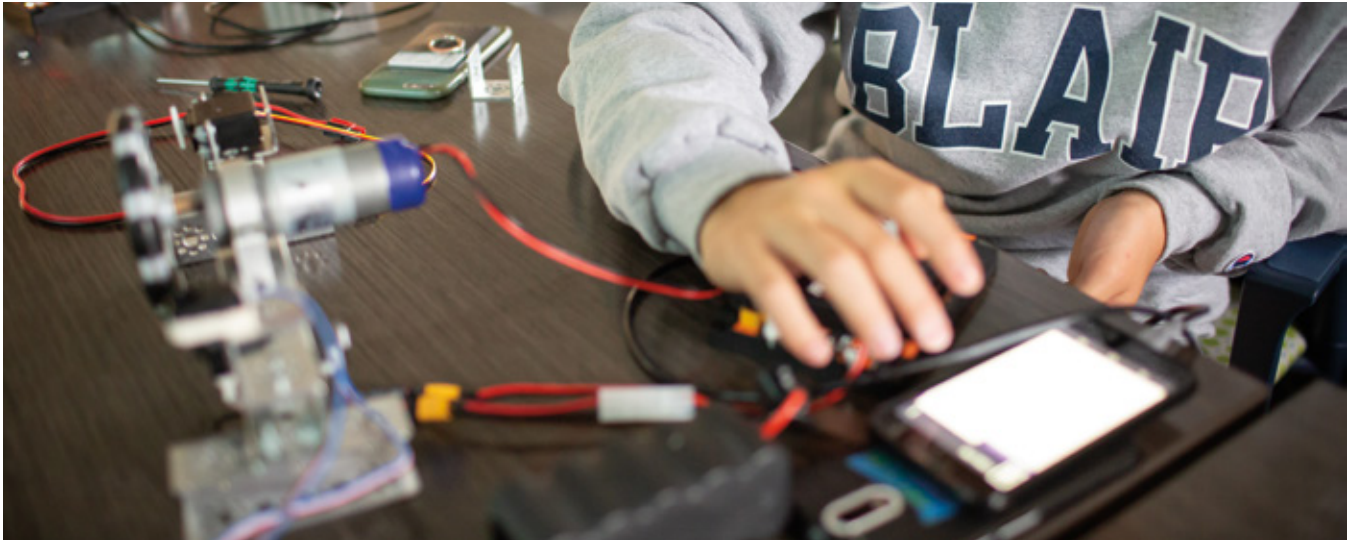
by the end of the school year. Other students, including *Emma Abbott '20* and *Montana Carson '20*, are working with Mr. Garratt on writing a training manual for riding Segways.

What appeals to students about Mr. Garratt’s lab is that it allows them to use new technology in interesting ways. “Much of the work I have been doing in science at Blair has involved a lot of preparation, thinking and understanding,” Lucy explained. “This lab allows me to really use the technology instead of just understand how it works.”

Lucy chose her family-style dinner tray project because of its application to her own life on campus, and because Loomo—which Segway describes as an “advanced personal robot, mobile artificial intelligence sidekick and smart self-balancing electric transporter”—can carry many different objects at once. “It is really interesting to work with different robots,” Lucy concluded. “I see firsthand what the technology can do and what needs to be improved.”

Smoothing Out ‘Rough’ Edges

Noting that even cutting-edge technologies can have “lots of rough edges” and that he spends a fair amount of time on the phone with technical support, Mr. Garratt says that coping with the frequent failure of complex technology is also an important



lesson as students learn to confidently navigate such speed bumps in their project work.

“Usually, when people think of robots, they think of industrial devices such as those used by car manufacturers behind protective cages, but the trend of robotic devices that interact very personally with humans is growing exponentially,” said Mr. Garrant. “I want students to be aware of this phenomenon so they understand it as the industry continues to grow by leaps and bounds.”

Vital 21st-Century Skills

As students learn to use robots in creative ways and become more comfortable with the technology—both when it works *and* when it doesn’t—they are also practicing a suite of 21st-century skills, he added, underscoring the ways in which his lab participants are learning a great deal about project management, collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking.

Emma, who attends the robotics lab every week and sometimes will stay later than 8 p.m. if she gets caught up in a project, has been surprised by how much she has enjoyed working with robots. “In movies, robots are often portrayed as a threat to humanity when, realistically, they are just computers that can be programmed in an infinite number of ways,” she said.

Never having considered herself someone who is interested in robotics, Emma decided to “just go” to the Chiang-Elghanayan Center one night to see what it was like. There, she found “a really cool” opportunity to study robots and find ways of programming them to help people in the School community

and beyond. In particular, Emma has followed Lucy’s progress as she experiments with Loomo as part of her efforts to make family-style dinner more efficient.

Fostering Collaboration & Creativity

Looking ahead, Mr. Garrant hopes to emphasize the collaborative and creative applications of robots and artificial intelligence. Possible next purchases for Blair’s fleet of robots include dynamic robotic arms that students could program to assist in all kinds of work. “You don’t have to be a scientist or engineer to use or program them, and they are designed to be safe for interaction with humans,” explained Mr. Garrant, who also hopes to take his lab students on a tour of a New Jersey Amazon.com warehouse that uses robots and drones to automate almost every part of the inventory, packing and shipping processes. ■



Weekly Seminar Explores Feelings of *Community, Belonging & Inclusion at Blair*

Every Friday night, 13 Blair students and three Blair faculty members gather in the Chiang-Elghanayan Center for Innovation and Collaboration over pizza and snacks to examine what it feels like to belong, both in the Blair community and beyond, and what students can do to promote that feeling among others.

With the goal of fostering important conversations about inclusion, diversity, equity and social justice, the seminar explores different definitions of these concepts, as well as the joy and pressures associated with being one's authentic self in today's "call-out" culture, where so many share their unsolicited opinions in person and online.

Led by Blair's scholar-in-residence Timothy Patrick McCarthy, PhD, Associate Dean of Students Andee Ryerson and language teacher Sharon Merrifield, the seminar was taken for credit by participants who opted to collaborate with a faculty member to plan a Martin Luther King Jr. seminar during the third week in January. The design and execution of these sessions on diversity and inclusion served as the seminar's capstone, a particularly meaningful exercise in light of the fact that the entire student body must take part in at least two MLK seminars.

"Belonging at Blair' seeks to give students a space to explore the vital issues of diversity and inclusion as they relate to our collective efforts to build community out of the many identities and experiences represented at Blair,"

said Dr. McCarthy, who is a lecturer on history and literature, public policy and education at Harvard Kennedy School, a core faculty member at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, and visiting professor of public service and social justice at the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service.

"In a world that is increasingly fractured and polarized, where attempts to find common ground are too often undermined by political divisions and personal misunderstandings, we hope this seminar will serve as an antidote," he added. "Together, Andee, Sharon and I are committed to finding a productive way to work with students to create a school culture where everyone feels like they truly belong."

It's All About Perspective

The very different perspectives of the seminar's leaders have been one of its biggest draws. While Dr. McCarthy brings years of experience as a seasoned college and graduate school professor, communications expert and social justice advocate who can talk more broadly about the human experience in settings outside of boarding school, Mrs. Ryerson knows firsthand how important it is for Blair students to have these conversations in the School's close-knit community—which has never before so explicitly addressed such issues.

"I hope kids take away a greater understanding of their own experience and the experience of those around



Mrs. Ryerson, Dr. McCarthy and Ms. Merrifield with seminar participants.

them, with a new appreciation for the courage it takes to have uncomfortable conversations," said Mrs. Ryerson. Exiting comfort zones has been one of the seminar's biggest takeaways, with participants discussing a wide range of topics, including the messages delivered by all-school speaker and Athlete Ally founder **Hudson Taylor '05**, and podcasts and academic articles examining identity, politically correct culture, social pressures and censorship.

Of course, given the ubiquity of technology and the increasingly rapid pace of life and change in society, all of this is made even more meaningful by the fact that today's adolescents face a unique blend of social/emotional pressures and moral challenges, something that Blair is addressing by making student health and well-being a top priority in its 2018-2025 Strategic

Plan, *All In*. With that in mind, Mrs. Merrifield brings a unique lens to the seminar as the only Blair teacher who is working toward certification in mindfulness meditation, a practice that aims to increase self-awareness of one's thoughts and emotions in a way not meant to control or change them, but to simply notice and give pause, as opposed to reacting or judging too quickly.

"In the age of social media and smartphones, our students are increasingly pulled in many different directions and, while these devices and platforms are meant to connect us, there is also research showing that they cause an equal amount of isolation and anxiety," said Ms. Merrifield, who will finish a yearlong Mindful Schools certification course for teachers, counselors and social workers this summer. "As a result, it can be hard to be in the moment and be present, with both ourselves and others, which is important for the types of discussions we have in this seminar."

The Art of Mindful Meditation

This year, the class has practiced simple breathing and meditation exercises to help students get emotionally grounded and "in the right headspace" before discussions.

Given the research that shows mindful meditation not only helps students be more focused, but also helps with impulse control and self-awareness, Ms. Merrifield has incorporated aspects of the practice into all of her classes, especially Blair LEADS. "Our seminar focuses on belonging, and you can't truly explore that concept without being fully present

and aware of what you are bringing to the table," she added. "You have to be present to build relationships. And, with time and practice, you become more familiar with the landscape of your own mind and acceptance of yourself and others, which is incredibly helpful in examining topics such as diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice."

Curiosity & Open Mindedness

The evening seminar brings together students of all levels of interest in inclusion and diversity. *Ellie Walker '23* had heard from several classmates who had taken Blair's human rights seminar last year that Dr. McCarthy offered fascinating perspectives and facilitated "amazing" conversations, so she went to the first session curious and with an open mind. What has impressed Ellie most in the weeks since is how passionate she and her fellow classmates are about the topics they discuss, and how comfortable and supported she feels with her teachers and peers. "We have really strong, productive and profound conversations, which I love to engage in," she said. "Everyone takes the seminar seriously; they come ready to discuss deep subjects and willing to engage in meaningful dialogue. It's hard to choose a favorite part because the seminar is so amazing, and I look forward to every Friday night because of it."

And the experience of working with Dr. McCarthy, as well as Mrs. Ryerson and Mrs. Merrifield, has lived up to every expectation Ellie had going into the experience. "All three teachers are incredible, and working with them has been really eye-opening," she explained. "In helping us explore the

answers to complex questions, they offer captivating perspective...and Mrs. Ryerson brings food!"

For *Avery Lehman '21*, the pizza served at the group's first meeting was a big draw, as was the thought-provoking announcement that Mrs. Ryerson and Mrs. Merrifield made at School Meeting about the seminar. "They asked everyone to close their eyes and imagine the perfect Blair student, and then to ask ourselves why we thought of the person we did," Avery said. "This was a really intriguing exercise, and I wanted to know more."

Over the course of the fall and winter months, Avery has enjoyed hearing her classmates' interesting perspectives during "complex and exciting" conversations driven in part by "provocative and interesting questions" posed by Dr. McCarthy, Mrs. Merrifield and Mrs. Ryerson. Avery credits the seminar's teachers with keeping discussions on track as people go off on tangents and reminding everyone to be respectful of one another.

And, while in the fall, the discussion was limited to the seminar's 13 participants, the Blair community at large enjoyed the fruits of their labor during the week of January 20, when Blair's MLK seminars began. "The fact that every Blair student engages in this program makes it incredibly impactful," concluded Mrs. Ryerson. "Having been so impressed by how these students can dissect ideas and talk about how they are interrelated in our Friday night discussions, we were extremely proud of the courageous conversations they fostered in January." ■



Accomplished Panelists Returned to Campus for Young Alumni Skeptics

Blair's annual Young Alumni Skeptics is always one of the year's most-anticipated presentations, and the 2019-2020 panel gave attendees four unique experiences to consider. On November 5, history teacher and longtime Skeptics coordinator Martin Miller, PhD, welcomed filmmaker **Vanessa Black '06**, cancer researcher **Marissa Mattar '08**, Navy Lieutenant **Craig Stocker '08** and U.S. House of Representatives legislative assistant **Patrick Maillet '10** to the Chiang-Elghanayan Center

for Innovation and Collaboration. The four young professionals discussed their years as college students and their careers to date, then answered questions from a very appreciative audience of students and teachers.

Here, we invite you to get to know Young Alumni Skeptics panelists. To view the presentation, visit www.blair.edu/young-alumni-skeptics-2019.



Young Alumni Skeptics panelists (left to right) **Craig Stocker '08**, **Marissa Mattar '08**, **Patrick Maillet '10** and **Vanessa Black '06**.



Vanessa Black '06

"I doubt I would be a filmmaker if it weren't for Blair," said Vanessa, executive producer and director at BLKFLM, the production company she founded in 2014. After taking her first video class with former director of video studies Judith

Kampmann at Blair, film became the medium through which she—a shy student—expressed herself. "Judith taught me all the basics of filmmaking, and we established an after-school program where we created weekly videos for Friday School Meeting. I became obsessed with film as a way to express ideas and break down barriers, and that all started at Blair."

Vanessa matriculated at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts, where internships with industry heavy-hitters, including The Kennedy/Marshall Company and MGM Studios, gave her a taste of "real-world"

filmmaking—and she loved it. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in production in 2010 and worked in smaller roles on large Hollywood projects before moving to New York City in 2012 to focus on the commercial world.

A stint in director sales at RadicalMedia was the impetus for Vanessa to break out on her own and build a directing reel. "My first directing project was about the youth behind the headlines of the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution," she said of the work that also marked her first foray into a political hotbed. "I was interested in how young people were using the Internet to create real revolutions, from their screens to the streets." #UkraineRising launched her into branded impact filmmaking, where she has since crafted powerful projects on climate change, supply chains, women's issues and much more, and created campaigns for a host of brands, including Google, Vogue, Gap, Cadillac and Under Armour.

In her current role, Vanessa specializes in impact advertising for large brands, foundations and nonprofits. On any given day, she could be meeting with production companies, writing scripts, presenting treatments alongside budgets, editing film or shooting on location with her film crew. "It is a really fun job," she said. "I am always on my toes and growing on a daily basis."

Vanessa acknowledged that her passion for world issues stems from her days in Dr. Miller's history class and her leadership of Blair's Multicultural Student Union. "I love that I went to school with kids from around the globe," she reflected. "We all had unique relationships to current affairs. Blair's multinational student body really shaped the way I see the world."



Marissa Mattar '08

Marissa's lifelong interest in science developed from her innate drive to "figure out why things are the way they are." Today, she is doing just that on the front lines of cancer research at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, where she is a research

coordinator in the Antitumor Assessment Core Facility.

In this role, Marissa has helped lead the effort to develop an academic Patient Derived Xenograft (PDX) program that is now the largest such program in the world. As part of this research, scientists implant human tumor samples in immunocompromised mice. The resulting tumor models retain the histologic and genetic features of the human donor tumors. The models are then used to test the efficacy of novel treatments or treatment combinations, especially targeted therapies. Marissa was hired as a research assistant in 2014 to work on the then-fledgling PDX program, and, as she put it, "The program has grown with me."

Currently, she works with a team of four research assistants and several lab technicians in Sloan Kettering's PDX program, which, in the past five years, has generated more than 1,600 tumor models from over 159 unique subtypes and created a preclinical database that has become an institution-wide resource. Her responsibilities include assisting with experimental design to test treatments, managing data acquisition and analysis, serving as a liaison between the clinic and the lab to ensure both parties understand goals and processes, and helping to write publications and grants.

Driven by the knowledge that she and her team are helping people in a direct way and that their work "contributes to a greater good," Marissa thrives on the constant challenge and

learning that are part of her job. Her undergraduate days at The George Washington University were not unlike her professional life: She completed a challenging biology major and psychology minor and took on several volunteer roles that focused on helping others, including as a healthcare intern at the Arlington Free Clinic and as a family advocate with Health Leads.

Marissa credits her four years at Blair, where she served as a prefect and member of the Blue and White Key Society, with helping her develop her work ethic, time management skills and a network of friends with whom she regularly keeps in touch. "Blair impacted my life tremendously. The person I am today is largely attributed to my time at Blair. The Blair community is truly something special. It's been easy to connect with other Blair alumni since I graduated," she said, adding that fellow Bucs remain among her closest friends.



Craig Stocker '08

A 2012 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) with a bachelor's degree in oceanography, Craig's career as a Navy surface warfare officer has taken him around the globe over the past seven years. He began with back-to-back tours aboard the guided-missile destroyer

USS Stockdale (DDG 106), serving as first division officer and then as the ship's navigator. Craig spent nearly 25 months at sea conducting operations or training during his four years with the Stockdale and visited ports worldwide.

Beginning a shore tour in 2016, Craig trained to become a warfare tactics instructor specializing in anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare and then spent 20 months teaching at Surface Warfare Officers School in Newport, Rhode Island. Since February 2019, he has been studying for his master's degree in defense and strategic studies at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport. Upon graduating in March 2020, he returned to sea as operations officer on the USS John Finn (DDG 113), homeported in San Diego.

A member of the Buccaneer cross country, swimming and crew teams during his postgraduate year, Craig credits his Blair experience with preparing him to succeed at the Naval

Academy in ways he never would have imagined. “Everything from living away from home to taking challenging academic classes gave me an advantage,” he said. “Athletically, Blair’s outstanding coaching staff, facilities, environment, spirit and competitiveness allowed me to push myself physically and mentally to levels that made follow-on progression at USNA smooth and almost easy.”

At USNA, Craig was a four-year javelin thrower for Navy track and field, and he took on a variety of midshipman leadership roles. The summer between his junior and senior years was especially busy as he helped train the incoming class of 2015, interned at the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, and completed a five-week training and assessment with the Navy’s Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Training and Evaluation Unit 1 in San Diego.

Other members of Craig’s family have ties to Blair, including his brother, **Matt Stocker ’11**, and his father, Craig Sr., who is a longtime member of the School’s grounds crew. Every time Craig returns to campus, his appreciation for Blair’s “real family atmosphere” is renewed. “No matter how much the faculty and staff change, I’m always greeted by a familiar, smiling face,” he said. “I’m forever grateful to be a part of the Blair family because Blair is part of my family, too.”



Patrick Maillet '10

A legislative assistant to U.S. Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN-04), Pat is working in an arena about which he has always been passionate: government and politics. Before he came to Blair—following in the footsteps of his mother, **Patrice Maillet ’77**, sister,

Kaitlin Maillet Matyasovsky ’04, and brother, **Matthew Maillet ’06**—he candidly admits that he didn’t quite know what to do with that passion. Enter his faculty mentors, including Dr. Miller, Associate Dean of College Counseling Joe Mantegna, former history teacher Jim Connor and his four-year advisor, English teacher Bob Brandwood, who helped him home in on what he wanted to do and where he wanted to go in life.



“Blair had an extremely profound impact on my life,” said Pat, who served on class council all four years at the School and as a senior prefect. “Aside from providing me with some amazing, lifelong friends, Blair taught me how to be comfortable in my own skin and to lean into what interests me.”

Pat matriculated at the University of Michigan’s Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, where he had the opportunity to participate in a program that taught him not only the “what and why” of government, but also the “how” of crafting public policy. He wrote a column and served on the editorial board of *The Michigan Daily*, the university’s student newspaper, and developed a healthy obsession for Michigan football and basketball before heading to Washington, D.C., with his bachelor’s degree in public policy.

Unable to find a position on Capitol Hill as a newly minted college graduate, Pat accepted a job at a D.C.-based online educational company. “After working there for just under a year and applying for what felt like 500-plus jobs, I landed an entry-level position at a government relations firm,” he said. “I formed working relationships on the Hill in my 18 months with the firm when something finally opened up in Rep. McCollum’s office.”

Since beginning work in Congresswoman McCollum’s office in May 2016, Pat has advanced through several positions to become a legislative assistant. In this role, he covers a portfolio of issues for the representative, including healthcare, transportation and housing. In addition, Pat attends evening law school at The Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law, where he will earn his JD in May 2021. ■



WHERE IN THE WORLD IS BLAIR ACADEMY?

One of the most impactful aspects of the Blair experience has always been the wide range of domestic and international trips led by faculty members over School breaks. Every year, the offerings vary, but all Blair travel opportunities have one thing in common: They encourage students to immerse themselves in new cultures and experience how others live, gain cultural awareness and emotional intelligence, and become true global citizens who are ready to take on the challenges of our highly connected world.

This school year, Blair's language department faculty organized a trip to Europe, while a service-minded group of students spent winter long weekend volunteering at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, a powerful experience that has become an annual Blair tradition.



BRIGHTENING THE SPIRITS OF ILL CHILDREN

A group of eight Blair juniors traveled to Memphis with Blair's Director of Health Services Tara Parker and Director of Annual Giving Colleen Smarth to lift the spirits of families whose children are receiving treatment at St. Jude. During the five-day visit to the hospital, the Blair group played games with patients, organized crafting sessions, and prepared and served meals at the Ronald McDonald House. The trip has been an annual Blair tradition since 2015, when **McKenzie Belton '16** first proposed it. For the fourth year, McKenzie and her mother, Lori, helped Blair students plan their itinerary and traveled to Memphis to volunteer alongside them.



INTEGRATING HISTORY, LITERATURE & LANGUAGE

In partnership with the Paideia Institute for Humanistic Study, classics teacher Mitchell Towne and history teacher and Timken Library Director Ann Williams are planning a trip to Greece over Blair's summer break. From June 1 to 12, 10 students will visit 14 Greek cities and towns as they follow an itinerary that integrates history, literature and language and immerses students in the culture. Mr. Towne looks forward to reconnecting with his former colleagues at the Paideia Institute, where he led classical tours for three years around Italy, Greece and Sicily before joining Blair's language department in 2019. ■

MAKING THE MOST OF THE WEEKEND

Blair Academy is known for challenging students to reach their full potential, both in and out of the classroom. However, there is no shortage of fun, especially on the weekends. Through day trips, competitions and much more, students are given the opportunity to relax and unwind from the stress of the week. These trips and traditions unite the Blair community in celebration of the School's history and spirit, giving students the chance to get to know peers and teachers who might not be part of their daily routine.

The fun begins in September when Blair designates a certain number of "community weekends," during which boarders are required and day students are encouraged to remain on campus. On Super Sunday, students enjoy a carnival on Marcial Field that includes a soap slide, *Kon-Tiki* boat races, games and a barbeque. Around the same time, the community gathers at Soccerfest to cheer on the boys' and girls' soccer teams as they take on crosstown rival North Warren Regional High School.

Over the course of the fall, students enjoy the beauty of the season in the Northeast by participating in day trips to places around the area, including apple orchards, paintball venues, concerts and restaurants. Students also have the opportunity to travel to New York City for events such as the Feast of San Gennaro. Family Weekend, held in October, is an opportunity for students to show their parents and siblings firsthand what they do each day. During the fun-filled, three-day event, families meet their student's friends and teachers and enjoy activities that showcase Blair's campus and community.

Peddie Day, of course, is another highlight of the fall semester. Aside from fun trips and competitions, students often plan their own weekend activities for the Blair community, such as a December dance marathon that raised money for a children's hospital or other weekend activities designated to support a good cause.

Each January, students look forward to the annual Winter Ball. The dance begins with mocktails at Sharpe House, followed by dinner and dancing in the Romano Dining Hall, which has been beautifully decorated by a



committee of dedicated parents. Other winter weekend activities include trips to New York City and Philadelphia, ice skating, sledding and shopping.

At Blair's biennial Relay for Life, usually held in late April, students, faculty and staff walk around the track



at Hampshire Field to rally together to fight cancer. The program includes a luminaria ceremony and a variety of themed laps, while a DJ keeps the crowd energized, and faculty members grill food, organize games on the turf, and oversee a midnight swim in Wallace Pool. During alternate years, Blair's artists also host a spring art show to raise money for the independent nonprofit "Blair in Kenya."

As the school year comes to a close, Blair students and faculty relish the opportunity to kick back at weekend events like barbeques and dance parties. The annual "Blairstock" festival brings members of the community together to enjoy one another's art on the last weekend seniors will spend on campus as students. In addition to enjoying music performed by their peers, students play Wiffle ball, make tie-dye shirts and enjoy the warm spring weather. ■



STUDENTS ENJOY CUISINES FROM MANY NATIONS AT **INTERNATIONAL WEEKEND & BEYOND**

International Weekend, held January 11 and 12, featured one of the Blair community's favorite annual events: the International Bazaar. Students and teachers came together in the Chiang-Elghanayan Center forum to celebrate the diversity of the community with a fashion show, fun activities and, of course, food! More than 20 nations and cultures were represented among the tables of delicious cuisine that included everything from Chinese dumplings to French crepes. Everyone enjoyed sampling new and familiar dishes, many of which were prepared by students, faculty members and parents.

Beyond the International Bazaar, students are enjoying a robust experience of worldwide cuisine this year, thanks to the generosity of a Blair family. Their gift has provided increased opportunities for weekend trips to international restaurants, as well as a greater variety of global offerings in the Romano Dining Hall. Students from different countries can now regularly find ingredients to create dishes from their own culinary traditions, and the entire community is enjoying the opportunity to explore the world through tasty foods.



HEAD OF SCHOOL ROUNDTABLES INSPIRE THOUGHTFUL CAMPUS CONVERSATIONS

Students and faculty explored timely topics ranging from affirmative action to gun violence during four Head of School Roundtables last fall. Instituted by Head of School Chris Fortunato in 2015, the series gives students an opportunity to look closely at some of the most challenging issues of the day and talk about them with their peers, outside experts, and teachers they know and trust.

"My number one goal for this year's Roundtables is to promote understanding on campus," Mr. Fortunato said, noting that students bring a variety of perspectives to every issue. Roundtables provide a forum where students can communicate those perspectives in thoughtful, tactful ways that help others understand why they feel the way they do. "Participants also gain experience talking about difficult topics with peers and adults who both challenge and support them. They're practicing an important skill that will serve them well in their lives beyond Blair."

CHALLENGING TOPICS, COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION

The series opened in September with a discussion on young people's power to influence and/or change

conversations around national and global issues, a topic inspired by news stories about teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg. Fifteen students considered the pros and cons of student activism over dinner with Mr. Fortunato and Blair's scholar-in-residence Timothy Patrick McCarthy, PhD, a professor at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and a visiting professor of public service and social justice at the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service.

Carson Honor '21 enjoyed discussing student activism with Dr. McCarthy, whom he had met at a Roundtable last year, and took away a better understanding of his fellow students' opinions on the subject. Those sentiments were echoed by **Jeffrey Wu '21**, who attended the Roundtable to learn what others thought about staging protests at Blair. "We talked about what Blair students would have done differently to protest, given our geographical location and the School that we are," he said. "For me, that was the most interesting part of the discussion."

Dr. McCarthy returned in early October to participate in a Roundtable on the federal court decision that rejected claims that Harvard University had intentionally

discriminated against Asian American students. **Ben Liu '22** and **Sophia Davis '22** were among those who participated in the conversation, and both appreciated hearing the perspectives of their fellow students. "I'm glad different viewpoints on affirmative action came up during the discussion because our final thoughts were more thorough and thoughtful as a result," Ben observed.

For his part, Dr. McCarthy is consistently impressed with student interest and engagement in Blair's Roundtable discussions. "Students seem to really appreciate the School's desire to create spaces to discuss matters of contemporary importance," he said. "Our discussion about affirmative action was wide-ranging, with students wrestling deeply with debates about diversity and discrimination. We didn't come to any resolution, but neither has society. I love participating in these vital conversations with students who really care about what matters."

EXPLORING MULTIPLE SIDES OF ISSUES

Two more fall Head of School Roundtables both brought over a dozen students and teachers to the table for dinner and in-depth discussion. In mid-October, following the release of the movie *Joker*, participants grappled with the continuing controversy about whether "violent" or "disturbing" movies and video games play a role in the ongoing epidemic of gun violence. Carey Goldstein from the social justice organization Cultures of Dignity joined the group via videoconference to provide expertise on young people's physical and emotional well-being. That was followed by a November Roundtable on football player Colin Kaepernick's ongoing battle with the NFL over kneeling during the national anthem.



During each Roundtable, Mr. Fortunato has been pleased to see students thoughtfully explore multiple sides of the issue, in addition to expressing their own viewpoints. He attributes that in part to the dinnertime format, which has a different feel than an academic conference held during the school day. "Having a conversation while breaking bread fosters a spirit of openness," he said. "Our students are unafraid to share their perspectives, yet they are generous in their ability and desire to explore other viewpoints. That's been wonderful to see."

For **Ava Nothstine '21**, the rich conversation she enjoyed with her peers during the year's first Roundtable left a lasting impression. "There were opposing viewpoints around the table, but that did not stop us from having a real discussion," she reflected. "Students on both sides of the issue explained their ideas and beliefs, while also listening to the other side's defense. Even when we talked about sensitive topics such as gun control or climate change, there were no arguments, only discussion. That was really interesting to experience." ■



To read about some of the winter's campus highlights, including International Weekend and Headmasters' Societies Games, visit www.blair.edu/winter-highlights.



Photos **Worth a Thousand Words**



Blair's performing artists entertained visiting families in "Blair on Stage," held during Family Weekend. Vocal and instrumental ensembles, as well as the cast of *Peter and the Starcatcher*, delighted the audience.



Musicians in Blair's vocal and instrumental ensembles performed both popular and classical repertoire at the Fall Concert in November. Attendees enjoyed music ranging from strictly classical pieces to more contemporary American pieces.



The Blair Academy Players presented *Peter and the Starcatcher* by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson, adapted for the stage by Rick Elice, in mid-October. The play provides a backstory for the characters of Peter Pan, Mrs. Darling, Tinker Bell and Hook.



December's traditional Christmas Vespers heralded the holidays for the Blair community. The candlelit service included scripture readings by members of the senior class and musical interludes performed by the Chamber Orchestra and Singers.



In February, the Blair Academy Players presented the classic American musical, *Chicago*. With music by John Kander, lyrics by Fred Ebb, and book by Ebb and Bob Fosse, the production delighted audiences with a universal tale of fame, fortune, and show-stopping music and dance.



Blair to Create a Crew Training Center

To meet the needs of Blair's steadily growing crew program, the School is creating an indoor crew training center, giving rowers the opportunity work on their skills and strength year-round. The project is the latest campus enhancement to emanate from Blair's 2018-2025 Strategic Plan, *All In*, and, together with the recently completed J. Li Golf Training Center and winter sports complex, the new facility will enrich the Blair experience for student-athletes.

The crew training center will be housed in the former Park Street maker space, a building that offers ample room for Blair's largest athletic team—comprising 60-plus boys and girls—to train together. Dedicated weight- and ergometer-training areas are among the center's planned features, along with an office for the coaching staff and a restroom.

The focal point of the crew training center will undoubtedly be its eight-person indoor rowing tank, a feature that is much more likely to be seen at a college or university than at a high school. In the sculling/sweeping tank, Blair's rowers and coaches will have the opportunity to engage in technical training throughout the year that will translate directly to their in-season work on the water.

Among its many benefits, the tank will allow students to hone their skills and monitor progress using mirrors and

video recordings; give novices and varsity rowers the ability to master sport-specific fine motor skills while in a stable platform; and allow students to practice both port- and starboard-side rowing, helping them develop body awareness and avoid injury.

Director of crew programs and head girls' coach **John Redos '09** is excited about the many advantages the new facility will provide for his current roster, as well as its value as a recruiting tool for years to come. "Having all our athletes train together will maximize training efficiency and ensure proper instruction is available at all times, and the technical skills rowers develop during the off-season will make for a much smoother transition to the water in the spring," he said. "The crew training center will give us the opportunity to take our program to the next level and prove to be an invaluable asset to Blair rowing."

Fundraising has begun to create and equip the crew training center and fund its operation. Mr. Redos expressed gratitude to the generous donors who have already contributed to the project. If you would like to support the crew training center, please contact Chief Advancement Officer Craig Hall at hallc@blair.edu or (908) 362-2032. ■



Blair Dedicates **the Bogle Science Center**

A perfect autumn day provided the backdrop for the dedication of the Bogle Science Center, which took place on the plaza in front of the newly expanded and renovated academic building on October 19. Trustees, alumni, parents, current and former faculty, students and friends of the School attended the event to celebrate the completion of the yearlong, \$9-million project and to honor all who helped bring it to fruition.

Head of School Chris Fortunato and Chairman of the Blair Board of Trustees Doug Kimmelman P'12 '13 '15 '22 each thanked the donors whose generous contributions made the transformation of the Bogle Science Center possible. Bogle Hall was originally dedicated in 1989 as Blair's science, mathematics and computer science facility; now, it boasts an 8,000-square-foot, three-story addition, and every detail of design, furnishing and technology is focused on the optimal teaching and learning of the laboratory sciences.

Science department chair Kelly Hadden expressed gratitude to Mr. Fortunato, Blair's Chief Operating Officer James Frick, Director of Facilities Dave Schmitt, purchasing agent Marie

Giuricich, maintenance staffers and the science faculty, whose efforts and hard work brought the Bogle Science Center to completion at the start of the school year. "In this state-of-the-art facility, we now have the opportunity to expand our science curriculum, offer students a dynamic environment in which to grow and investigate, and offer courses that are centered on research and hands-on experimentation," Mrs. Hadden said. "This building is truly a dream come true."

Among those recognized at the dedication was the late Chairman Emeritus of the Blair Board of Trustees **John C. Bogle '47**. His generous support and leadership as Board Chairman from 1986 to 2001 were instrumental to Bogle Hall's much-needed construction in 1989, just as his enthusiasm and continued generosity were vital to its expansion and renovation 30 years later.

Former Headmaster and faculty member Chan and Monie Hardwick were in attendance, and, in his remarks, Mr. Hardwick noted that Bogle Hall was the first of a succession of new buildings on campus that have shaped the lives of



thousands of students over the last three decades. “Today we rededicate a building that was Jack Bogle’s first leadership step in transforming the Blair campus and began his quest to inspire many others to join him,” Mr. Hardwick said. “And, in this moment of rededication, we also pause to think again on this extraordinary man, our great friend and leader, our Jack. For his time with us and for his love for Blair, we are grateful.”

Several members of the Bogle family attended the dedication and received a warm welcome from the Blair community. Bogle Hall was named in 1989 by Mr. Bogle and his brothers, **William Yates Bogle III ’45** and the late **David Caldwell Bogle ’47**, in memory of their parents, Josephine Hipkins Bogle and William Yates Bogle Jr. Among the students who cut

the ribbon to signal the official opening of the Bogle Science Center was one of this year’s Bogle Brothers Scholars, students who are beneficiaries of the scholarship Mr. Bogle established in 1968 in honor of his brothers.

The facility’s completion marks the accomplishment of the third academics-focused building project at Blair in the past three years, as well as an important milestone in the implementation of the School’s 2018-2025 Strategic Plan, *All In*. Guests enjoyed touring the Bogle Science Center at the conclusion of the dedication. Throughout the facility, they glimpsed the exciting opportunities on the horizon for Blair students as they pursue coursework, passions and projects in the laboratory sciences. ■



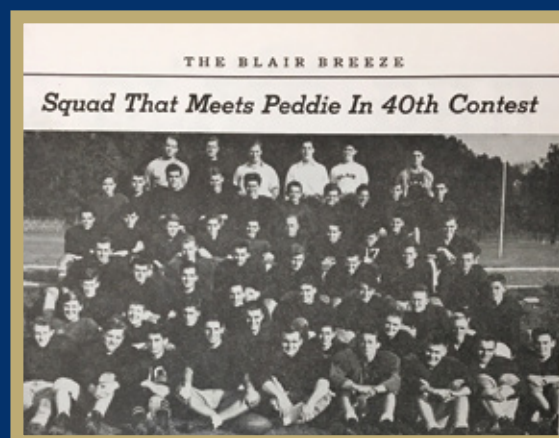
Kelley-Potter Cup celebration on Peddie Day 2019.

GO BUCS! BEAT PEDDIE!

OUR TRADITIONAL RIVALRY SPANS 116 YEARS. HELP KEEP THE BLUE AND WHITE SPIRIT ALIVE FOR GENERATIONS OF BUCS WITH A GIFT FROM YOUR ESTATE.

Peddie Day is one of the most beloved and long-standing traditions at Blair. Memories and friendships are forged on the field, in the stands, in the dorms, on the sidelines and in the dining hall. Alumni like **Herb Siegel '46** (*pictured with the 1942 squad, right*) continue to value Blair's traditions throughout their lives. Please consider supporting more Blair victories on and off the playing fields by making a provision for the School in your will.

To discuss your lasting legacy at Blair or to learn about joining the John C. Sharpe Society, contact Velma Anstadt Lubliner, assistant director of advancement for capital and planned giving, at (908) 362-2041 or lubliv@blair.edu. You can also learn more at www.blair.edu/gift-planning.



The Blair Breeze highlights football game against Peddie School, 1942.



Herbert J. Siegel '46 and Jeanne Sorenson Siegel.

HERBERT J. SIEGEL '46

SUSTAINING BLAIR'S TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

"The tradition at Blair Academy is for excellence, and that tradition gave me a great foundation in every part of my life," said Honorary Trustee **Herbert J. Siegel '46**, a man who has magnified the excellence of the Blair experience for countless students and teachers through his decades-long service and legendary generosity to the School. Recently, he turned his attention to the next generations of Buccaneers by making an estate gift that not only provides exceptional support for scholarship aid but also demonstrates the power of lifelong Blair relationships.

Mr. Siegel commemorated his 70-plus-year friendship with the late Chairman Emeritus of the Blair Board of Trustees **John C. Bogle '47** by coupling his planned gift to Blair with one from Mr. Bogle's estate. Together, the two extraordinary benefactors created The Herbert J. Siegel '46 and John C. Bogle '47 Scholarship Fund. This endowed fund will support the Blair education of deserving students and provide them with the same foundation of excellence that launched Mr. Siegel and Mr. Bogle into lives of tremendous professional accomplishment and selfless service to others.

Crediting his wife, former Trustee Jeanne Sorenson Siegel, with encouraging his decision to provide for Blair in his estate plans, Mr. Siegel said that knowing his name would be tied forever to that of Jack Bogle was a great honor. In recent years, he and Mrs. Sorenson Siegel also

honored Mr. Siegel's long friendship with his late brother-in-law, **Edwin M. Sabol '36**, by establishing The Ed Sabol '36 and Herbert Siegel '46 Athletic Endowment Fund to support Blair's athletic programs. The fact that Mr. Sabol, who went on to found NFL Films, was a Blair alumnus inspired Mr. Siegel to come to Blair himself. "I had so much admiration for him," Mr. Siegel said.

From Blair, Mr. Siegel matriculated at Lehigh University and built his career at Chris-Craft Industries. A greatly admired corporate leader, he served as Chris-Craft's president and board chairman from 1968 to 2001 and as a senior advisor after the company was acquired by News Corporation of America in 2001.

Mr. Siegel has shared his business success through his generous support of numerous causes and organizations throughout his life, including Blair Academy. Here, he has devoted his time and expertise as a Trustee from 1985 to 1992 and as Honorary Trustee since 1999, and his gifts have touched every corner of campus. He has supported young women as the benefactor of The Ann L. Siegel Scholarship and the junior girls' dormitory Ann L. Siegel "Annie" Hall, both named for his late wife. Blair's athletes have benefited from The Ed Sabol '36 and Herbert Siegel '46 Athletic Endowment Fund and the Herbert J. Siegel Prize. Senior faculty have been recognized for their service to the School through the Siegel Faculty Equity Plan, and the entire Blair community has enjoyed the natural beauty of the 120-acre Siegel Property that buffers the north and west parts of campus.

Mr. Siegel's generous estate gift will help the School achieve one of its key strategic objectives in the 2018-2025 Strategic Plan, *All In*: Grow endowed scholarship funds to support a diverse and talented student body. He shared wise words as he encouraged others to join Blair's John C. Sharpe Society of planned givers: "Anyone who has attended Blair or has a child at Blair should hope that generations of other children would have the same opportunity." ■



Mr. Siegel and the late Chairman Emeritus of the Blair Board of Trustees **John C. Bogle '47** at the fall 2017 Trustee meeting.



BLAIR TIES

for the Kelley-Potter Cup



KELLEY - POTTER CUP
DONATED BY THE
BLAIR SENIOR CLASS
OF 1989



For the second year in a row, the Bucs and Falcons tied on Peddie Day and shared the Kelley-Potter Cup, with a final score of the day's competition being 5-3-5. With Peddie's home advantage in Hightstown, the Falcons will hold the Cup for six months before turning it over to Blair in May. As the sun set over the football field, Head of School Chris Fortunato and Peddie's Headmaster Peter Quinn shook hands and congratulated all athletes on a job well done, surrounded by a sea of Bucs and Falcons.

Athletic Director **Paul Clavel '88** commended Blair athletes for their extraordinary heart, grit and sportsmanship, and hoped everyone was proud of their performances over the course of a very successful fall 2019 season. "Of course, we go into every Peddie Day excited to bring the Cup home, but I couldn't be prouder of the effort our teams put forth," he said.

It was a beautiful fall day in Hightstown, and Blair fans came out in force to cheer for the Bucs, enjoying one another's company at games and matches across campus and in the hospitality tent for alumni and parents. ■

BUCCANEERS



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04



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01 Girls' varsity squash posted a win over Greens Farms Academy (**Ali Frazier '22** pictured).

02 **Jaylen Blakes '21** scored consistently for boys' varsity basketball; he had several 30-plus-point games.

03 At the Hill Invitational, **Aidan Riano '20** placed second in the 800m and third in the mile.

04 **Theo Reginensi '21's** win helped boys' varsity squash defeat Loomis in January.

05 **Kyle Cuffe '22** was game MVP in the Bucs win over Our Savior Lutheran competing in the Kyrie Invitational at the Barclays Center.

06 **Corrine Wilm '21** placed third in the 800m at the Hill Invitational (**Jessica Wilm '21** also pictured).

07 Wins over High Point/Walkkill Valley and Gill St. Bernard's highlighted the swimming season (**Rintaro Mori '23**, pictured).

08 **Marc-Anthony McGowan '23** was the 106 lb. champion at the 2019 Walsh Ironman tournament.

09 **Jaylin Hartman '23** was the leading scorer in the Bucs' win over Hun with 18 points.

10 The girls' varsity ski team placed third in the state championship giant slalom race (**Avery Lehman '21** pictured).



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Winter Champions Showcase **the Best of Blair Athletics**

Throughout the winter, Blair athletes competed in over 150 contests and exhibited exceptional sportsmanship, dedication and teamwork. Director of Athletics **Paul Clavel '88** commended Blair athletes for another successful season.

"I am very proud of our winter athletes; they all worked hard to achieve team and individual milestones," Mr. Clavel said. "When faced with adversity, our student-athletes rose to the challenge and fought hard. As we enter the spring season, we will continue to strive to meet this level of excellence."

Successful Seasons for Boys' & Girls' Basketball

Blair's varsity girls' and boys' basketball teams won their respective Mid-Atlantic Prep League (MAPL) championships in mid-February. The girls defeated The Lawrenceville School 79-47, earning their 10th-consecutive MAPL championship. The boys overcame The Hill School 61-51, earning their third title in a row.

"This will go down as one of the most hard-fought MAPL championships we have won, as we had to do it versus an elite team that had beaten us earlier in the year on their home court," said boys' varsity head coach Joe Mantegna. "The resilience and poise our squad showed in a hostile environment proved to be the difference. I couldn't be more proud of this group."

The girls' varsity basketball team then made history on February 19 with its 76-52 win over New Jersey rival The Hun School in the NJISAA prep "A" state championship. **Helena Friend '21**, the team's leading scorer, seized the



The girls' varsity basketball team poses after winning 2020 Mid-Atlantic Prep League championship by a score of 79-47. This marks their 10th-straight MAPL title.



The boys' varsity basketball team poses after winning the 2020 Mid-Atlantic Prep League championship by a score of 61-51

moment by dropping a career-high 26 points. Center **Tabitha Amanze '22** followed her on offense with 24 points. The contest was a special win for floor leaders **Olivia Miles '21** and **Dominique Darius '21**, as they earned their first state championship since entering Blair as freshmen.

"I am so proud of the resilience and toughness that these girls demonstrated this season," said **Quint Clarke '87**, head girls' varsity basketball coach. "This was

the most successful year in Blair girls' basketball history, and with our top eight players returning next year, we are already excited to get back on the court."

On February 22, the girls' varsity team competed in the Insider Exposure Independent School National Championship in North Carolina. The Bucs made it to the championship game, falling short to Winston-Salem Christian 47-53. The team finished the season with a 26-5 record.

Three Buccaneer Wrestlers Crowned National Prep Champions

Marc-Anthony McGowan '23 (106 lbs.), **Shayne VanNess '21** (132 lbs.) and **Rylan Rogers '22** (180 lbs.) earned the national prep champion title in their respective weight classes at the 2020 National Prep tournament, held February 21 and 22 at Lehigh University. As a team, the Bucs earned a total of 268.5 points to finish in second place behind rival Wyoming Seminary.

In addition to being crowned national prep champion, Shayne also received the Ray Mendoza Award as the wrestler who produced the most team points in the tournament. **Ryan Miller '20** (120 lbs.), **Cody Chittum '23** (132 lbs.) and **Peyton Craft '21** (195 lbs.) each placed second in their weight classes, while **Noah Pettigrew '22** (220 lbs.) and **Eli Anthony '20** (285 lbs.) placed third. **Danny Wask '22** (126 lbs.) placed fourth while wrestling up a weight class. **Sean Kilrain '20** (170 lbs.) placed fifth and **T.J. Stewart '22** (160 lbs.) placed

in eighth in their respective weight classes, rounding out the place-winners for the Bucs.

"Our wrestlers worked hard this season," said head wrestling coach **Brian Antonelli '93** following the national prep tournament. "They competed strongly and represented the School with class. We are always thankful for all of the support we receive from parents, alumni and friends."

Youssif Mostafa '22 is Squash State Champion

The varsity boys' and girls' squash teams traveled to the Pingry School on January 12 to compete in the NJISAA prep "A" state championship. During the competition, Youssif blazed through the boys' bracket to become Blair's first state champion since 2003, when **Emilie (Slack) Rendall '02** earned the title. On the girls' team, co-captain **Zoe Reinert '20's** strong performance resulted in her finishing in third place.

"Youssif was confident throughout the state tournament and that transpired into a dominant performance," said varsity boys' squash coach Doug Compton.

"There was never any doubt that he was going to win a state title this year. I am so proud of what he has accomplished this season."

Blair Swimmers Break Records

Blair's varsity swimmers concluded their season in mid-February at the Eastern Interscholastic Swimming Championships, held at Franklin & Marshall College. During the meet, **Anna Insana '21** placed 13th in the 200 freestyle with a time of 1:56.52 and seventh in the 500-yard freestyle with a time of 5:06.52. In the 500, she was the top MAPL finisher, and both times are new Blair Academy swimming records.

"Though relatively introverted and quiet, Anna leads by example and consistently gives her best effort," said head swimming coach Caroline Wilson. "Her teammates look up to her tremendously as someone who has an amazing work ethic and puts forth the effort to reap results."

Camille Williams '20 qualified ninth for finals in the 50 freestyle with a time of 24.66, besting a Blair swimming record in the process. She also placed seventh in the 100-yard freestyle with a time of 53.94, missing the Blair record by only .06 seconds.

"Camille is known on the team for her kindness and care for everyone, her willingness to push herself, and her ability to complete a difficult workout but still thank the coach for pushing her," Caroline said. "She is keenly aware of both her needs and the needs of those around her, making her a wonderful teammate. As an athlete, she is constantly pushing herself to succeed." ■



Marc-Anthony McGowan '23 earns his first National Prep championship at 106 lbs.



Former captain of the U.S. women's soccer team and World Cup champion Julie Foudy addressed the Blair community at a spirited Chapel last fall.

Sports Legend Shares Leadership Philosophy During Campus Visit

In October 2019, Blair's Dean of Campus Life and Director of Leadership Programs **Carolyn Conforti-Browse '79** enthusiastically introduced her friend and colleague Julie Foudy to the Blair community at Thursday Chapel. The three-time Olympic Gold medalist and *espnW* writer, soccer commentator, features reporter and host came to Blair to speak to the entire community and have lunch with the girls' soccer and softball teams. Ms. Foudy, who is a former captain of the United States women's soccer team and World Cup champion, spoke about her philosophy on sports and leadership and how Blair students can make a difference in the lives of others, topics close to her heart as the co-founder of the Julie Foudy and *espnW* Sports Leadership Academy (JFSLA) and author of the 2017 book *Choose to Matter: Being Courageously and Fabulously You*.

In fact, it was at the JFSLA camp that Mrs. Conforti-Browse first met the soccer legend 14 years ago, introduced by former Blair faculty member **Todd Smith '90**, who was one of the five

founders of the New Jersey- and California-based program on athletic training and leadership development. Designed for girls ages 12 to 18 who play soccer, lacrosse, basketball and/or water polo, the five-day camp is intensive—and fun—and offers an empowering and transformative experience to student-athletes as they learn leadership skills through sports.

An Outward Perspective

"You can't help but be inspired by Julie because she is such an accomplished athlete and a celebrity in her own right but also someone who, in every aspect of her life, is committed to making life better for others," said Mrs. Conforti-Browse, who has worked with the JFSLA for a dozen summers as the organization's co-director of academic curriculum.

What Mrs. Conforti-Browse has found most inspirational is Ms. Foudy's focus on the present and the future and the selfless approach she takes to defining leadership. "Julie is not



concerned with what happened yesterday but asks what are you doing today to make tomorrow better—not for yourself, but for others,” Mrs. Conforti-Browse explained.

Outside Your Comfort Zone

With Mr. Smith and fellow JFSLA coach and Blair Athletic Hall of Famer *Winnie Lizardo Orbe '06* in the audience, Ms. Foudy shared with the Blair community her philosophy, which centers on leadership being “personal instead of positional.” She also encouraged everyone to take Eleanor Roosevelt’s often-offered advice to “do one thing that scares you every day” and pointed to the wisdom of sports and exercise psychologist Dr. Colleen Hacker, who once cautioned her to “never to wish the butterflies away.”

“Butterflies are a great thing,” Ms. Foudy said. “It means you care. It means you are invested. It’s visceral; it matters! Don’t you want things in life to matter? Now, the trick is, just teach the butterflies to fly in formation.”

Ending her Chapel talk with three pieces of advice on how to best achieve that, Ms. Foudy encouraged students to

1) “own their awesome;” 2) “be the idiot who says yes;” and 3) “understand that success is usually messy”—not a neat, clean straight line. “Surround yourself with people who will let you dream and get outside of your comfort zone,” she concluded. “The hard part is raising your hand and choosing leadership and establishing your leadership style.”

Ever grateful that her former colleague, Mr. Smith, introduced her to the inspirational work of the JFSLA, Mrs. Conforti-Browse is delighted that her connection to the organization has afforded so many Blair participants, whether as campers or staff members, the opportunity to meet incredible leaders like Ms. Foudy, who fittingly concluded her Chapel by answering a question about how leadership is all about giving back to others.

“So much of leadership is service,” she said. “It is serving your teammates, celebrating others, lifting others up. You don’t have to be a celebrity to do that. We all can. Leadership is service and we are all better because of it.” ■

Always Inspired

by *Carolyn Conforti-Browse '79*

In this essay, veteran Blair faculty member Carolyn Conforti-Browse reflects on what she's learned about leadership as a teacher, softball coach and staff member at the Julie Foudy Sports Leadership Academy (JFSLA)—as well as how her personal friendship with sports legend Julie Foudy has impacted her perspective and served as a conduit for connection.



In the era of sports individualization, we tend to forget that sports are a great platform to teach life skills. Blair has been uniquely dedicated to this ethos and must remain so. The best teaching of collaboration happens at every level of all of our athletic teams. Our alumni are sports heroes who

have made careers of using sports to change the world, including world-class wheelchair athlete **A. Martin Ball '56**, whose designs transformed wheelchair sports, **Hudson Taylor '05**, founder of Athlete Ally, and **Shamila Kobestani '08**, former captain of the Afghanistan women's national soccer team and advocate for women's issues.

I have been lucky to have encountered many inspirational role models such as these three personal heroes, and I believe I will encounter many more. My first Blair coaches showed me a new way of operating in the world. Generally, sports figures touch us deeply when they invoke in us our own sense of power and agency. They are at their best when they inspire us to be better and do more: Julie Foudy, my friend

and role model, is most prominent. Our friendship led me to work with motivational speaker Amy Liss, recently featured in Julie's podcast, "Laughter Permitted," who joined us in the dugout and inspired the 2015 Blair softball team to one of the most lopsided and decisive championship wins ever over Lawrenceville. There have been countless others, many of them my own players. I will never forget how inspiring the class of 2004 Cortneys were—Cortney Romyns-Sinegra and Courtney Fields. I met them as eighth graders who were determined to use sports to help get the best education they could in life.

I first met Julie through **Todd Smith '90**, who invited Glenn Whitman, **Erin (Flynn) Dow '97** and me to work for the Julie Foudy Sports Leadership Academy (JFSLA) in the spring of 2006. When I first met Julie, I was taken aback by the energy she brought to the room when she entered (the Blair community experienced that same feeling last fall during her Chapel talk) and embarrassed that I only really remembered Mia Hamm of the U.S. women's soccer team 99ers, not Julie, who was the captain and assisted in nearly all of Mia's goals. That first academy, standing in a lineup with 99ers and future stars, Carla Overbeck, Mia Hamm, Heather O'Reilly, Cindy Parlow Cone, Christy Rampone, Jaime Pagliarulo and Tiffany Roberts Sahaydak, and later sitting at lunch with news anchor Robin Roberts and *USA Today* sportswriter Christine Brennan,

“Sports have always been a conduit for connection; I consider myself blessed because of the many ‘teams’ that I have been on.”

was a jaw-dropping experience for someone who has never been terribly celebrity conscious. It did occur to me: What the heck am I doing here?

What inspired me most was Julie herself: Two days after meeting her, in the hustle and bustle of camp, I was behind her in the dirty dish line. She knew the name of the dish room attendant—that got my attention! I had read her bio, about her travels on her own dime to investigate suspected child labor when she was sponsored by a big sports company; I knew she was a defender of Title IX, and I had seen her ability to infuse energy into a room. But the fact that she was gracious to everyone, remembering my kids’ names and spending every minute with the girls—even doing dorm duty!—restored my faith in the sports celebrity.

I also was taken by her philosophy. I vividly remember her stating in a staff meeting: “We are not going to fixate on why something did NOT happen in the past; that is a waste of our time and energy. We are going to teach young women to find their voices and make today better. We will teach them how to make tomorrow better.” Julie initially hired me to help with the residential oversight of the academies—who knew dorm duty would be a marketable skill—and I have since worked to design curriculum and train staff, while following one former boss’s advice: “Always work to be indispensable.”

Julie’s example of how to use sports as one of the best ways to teach success resonated deeply, especially as she figured out how to greatly impact young athletes in a compressed five-day timeline. Through my work with the JFSLA, we were able to bring Shamila, our first-ever Afghan student, to Blair. Through the JFSLA and the inspirational work of Blair parents and the Afghan Girls Financial Assistance Fund, 30-plus girls have come to the United States for boarding school and college.



Because of my work with the JFSLA, I met and sponsored Nagma Shaikh, who is working to become one of the first female soccer officials in India. It is gratifying to me that the JFSLA continues to grow, especially with the recent addition of four-time Olympian and humanitarian Tamika Catchings and the sponsorship of espnW and Disney.

Amy Liss, in her speech on gratitude and teamwork at Blair, taught us that we all spend our lives building our teams. Sports have always been a conduit for connection; I consider myself blessed because of the many “teams” that I have been on. When the lessons of sports are taught correctly, belonging and inclusion, resilience and grit, and leadership and collaboration are the inevitable and enviable results. ■

“When the lessons of sports are taught correctly, belonging and inclusion, resilience and grit, and leadership and collaboration are the inevitable and enviable results.”

Peddie Day Gatherings:

Alumni around the country gathered on October 29, 2019, for the annual Peddie Day Gatherings to kick off Peddie Week. Cities included Boston, Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Easton, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. The gathering in Denver was held on October 30, due to a snowstorm!

Young Alumni Networking Reception:

Young alumni came together with Blair Trustees and faculty on September 25, 2019, for the annual Young Alumni Networking Reception. Hosted by Trustee Emeritus **Jim Krugman '65** and his wife, Connie, in New York City, the event gave attendees the opportunity to connect with fellow alumni and Blair faculty.

