

Media-Providence Friends School Moves to Distance Learning, Builds Connection, & Serves the Community During COVID-19 Crisis

The following is an April 27th NEWS RELEASE from Cristina Perachio, Director of Marketing & Communications.

With the stay-at-home orders issued by Governor Wolf to stop the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus), MPFS moved to Distance Learning and virtual teaching on March 17th. As an independent school, the faculty and administrative staff at MPFS are allowed the flexibility to craft an outstanding distance learning program and have the ability to do test-runs before the stay-at-home order was put into place. Additionally, each family has been equipped with Chromebooks for their students to ensure that all MPFS students, regardless of finances, are able to successfully participate in distance learning.

As a Quaker school, MPFS teaches the Quaker testimony of Stewardship, which empowers students of all ages to be stewards of our local community and the larger world. While the current situation is unsettling, the MPFS community is proud to be doing their part to help flatten the curve and contain COVID-19 (coronavirus) to protect their vulnerable friends, neighbors, and the general public.

MPFS is sensitive to the fact that working parents are struggling to juggle the demands of full-time work with the added responsibility of full-time parenting and education. To best accommodate families during this time, the Distance Learning schedule is

DISTANCE LEARNING... | *Continued on page 7*

Annual
Giving Report
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Teacher Shirley Wright-Kamara and her 2nd grade class meet on Zoom for their morning check-in as part of MPFS' Distance Learning program.

LETTER FROM

Parker Snowe

Clerk, Board of Trustees

Dear Friends,

It has been quite a year! Without a doubt, this has been one of the most challenging years for all of us at MPFS, but also one to be celebrated and appreciated for many reasons, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The year kicked off with the arrival of Jon Hall as our new head of school. T. Jon has brought a fresh set of eyes to bear on all aspects of the School, with a focus on day-to-day operations and personnel management. He has helped us see how we might approach our work in new ways.

We welcomed several new faculty members into the community. T. Dianne joined us as the new fifth grade teacher, T. Marina took over preschool - 5th grade Spanish, and T. Peter, an MPFS alum, took over middle school Spanish.

In addition to teachers, we have had a few other additions to the MPFS family: T. Shannon welcomed a baby girl, Eloise Hohl, born in mid-February, and T. Cristina welcomed a baby girl as well, born in June, Maiella Mary LaDuke. Needless to say, both births caused a lot of excitement at MPFS!

In addition to new arrivals, we are also celebrating the tenure of a few long-standing family members who will be retiring as of June 30, 2020. After two stints at MPFS and roughly 30 years, Mike Spellman will be calling it a career on June 30. Also, after a nearly 50-year-long association with MPFS (in its various forms over those years), T. David Camp has decided to retire. We know we can speak for many, many people past and present who are grateful to David and Mike for giving so much of themselves to our school. They will be greatly missed!

We had a number of exciting things happening programmatically this year:

- Seventh-graders Chloe, Kayla, Sage and Jeremy won honorable mention in the 2020 NPR National Student podcast contest. Their subject was climate change and what middle school students can do to curb it. This was a project in T. Kristen's class.
- T. Daryl and Middle school science started an aquaponics program this year. Aquaponics promotes stewardship of community and the planet and growing sustainable food that maintains the balance of needs within an ecosystem rather than overharvesting and ultimately depleting the environment.
- The 8th grade had a very successful trip to Costa Rica at the end of February. Some of the many activities included exploring the rich biodiversity of several regions of the country, immersing in the Spanish speaking culture, and making connections with two schools (interacting with students and doing service work).
- Just before we had to close campus because of COVID-19, we enjoyed a few amazing performances of the middle school musical, "Into the Woods," put on by T. Stefanie and T. Deb (Deb Irwin, parent of Chase and Addison). The show was made even better by incorporating the lower school ensemble.

PARKER SNOWE... | Continued on page 3

March 13th was a day we are sure most of us will not forget, and the same could likely be said of the ensuing three months. It's been said many times in communications since then, but it deserves to be said again: we could not be more proud of the way the faculty shifted gears and continued their programs virtually. With some tweaks here and there as a result of parent and student feedback, things went better than we had even hoped for.

None of us could have imagined mid-way through March that we would not return to campus this school year, and yet here we are. We cannot say enough about the way the community pulled together and stayed the course; the positivity was incredible!

Of course, now our focus continues to be on the fall. Our scenario-building team meets regularly to discuss various possibilities and plan for the ones that are most likely. **As of now, we have no reason to believe that school will not open as planned in September.** Granted, things will be quite different in terms of the movement of students and the way in which drop-off and pick-up is conducted, to name a few, as many different protocols will have to be in place to meet CDC recommendations. As always, we will communicate these changes to our stakeholders.

At the board level, we have already begun updating the five-year Strategic Plan that was rolled out in 2016. This task, along with ongoing financial oversight and nurturing our relationship with Media Meeting, will be priorities for the board this year.

Despite these uncertainties, one aspect of the MPFS community remains constant: the strong love we have for each other and for the School's mission as an experiment in values-based education grounded in the Quaker Way. As we move forward in these trying times, let us hold onto these core elements that define us.

In Friendship,



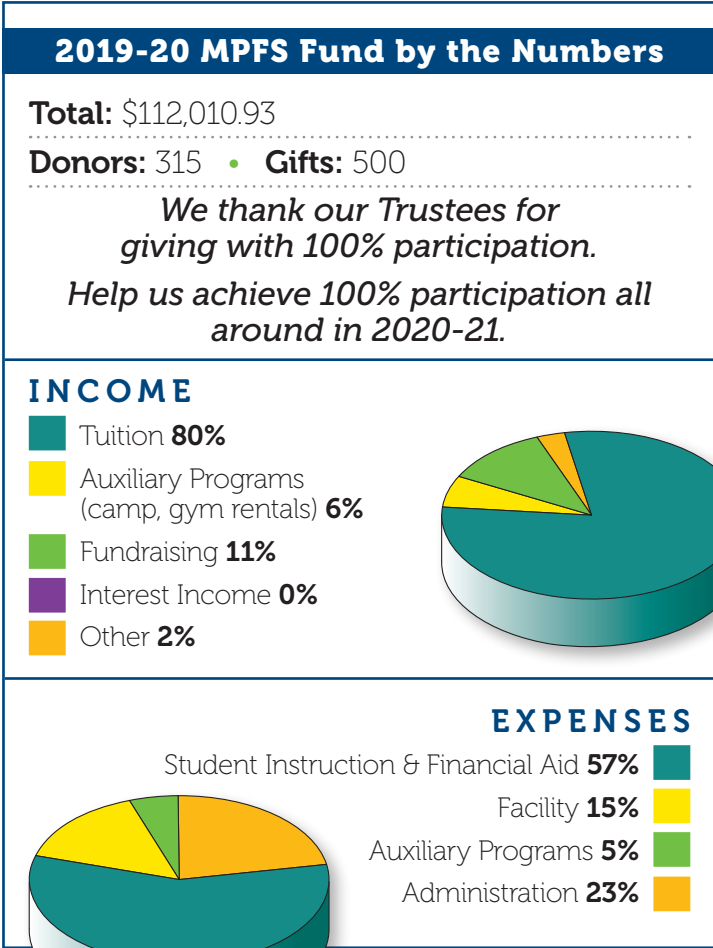
Parker Snowe
Clerk, Board of Trustees

Annual Giving Report

In this unprecedented time, one of the most important things we can do is provide safe spaces for our children: a sense of calm amid the turmoil, a sense of normalcy amid the upheaval, and a sense of support when there is so much out of our control. At MPFS, we have a tradition of being one of those safe spaces, a tradition that has continued in new ways since COVID-19 and one we were able to successfully navigate because of our donors. We are fortunate to have such a benevolent community as we tackle this collective crisis, providing essential financial support, so we can rapidly respond to the moment. Thank you again for your commitment, thoughtfulness, and generosity.

We thank the following donors for their contributions – unrestricted, restricted, and gifts in-kind – received during the last academic year, between July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020. In our continued effort to save paper and help our environment, the Annual Giving Report is available online: visit mpfs.org/annual-report for a full listing of all our generous donors!

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



THANK YOU FACULTY



The MPFS Advancement Committee of the Board in collaboration with MPFS families, put together a video to surprise the Faculty and let them know how much they appreciate everything they did for their students this year. We feel your love!

Thank you.



OUR NEWEST ALUMNI: CLASS OF 2020

Congratulations, Graduates!

We want to extend a heartfelt congratulations to the graduating 8th grade Class of 2020! We are proud to send this group of curious learners, engaged citizens, empathetic friends, and leaders onto their next adventure in high school. This tight-knit crew will be missed and we wish them the best of luck! See their high school choices:

Bria Young – Concord High School

Bryelle Small – Neumann Goretti High School

Eric Merlin – Delaware Valley Friends School

Ethan Bell – Abington Friends School

Jacob Gelman – Pencrest High School

Julian Smith-McLallen – Upper Darby High School

Nasir Walker – The Christian Academy

Sakinah Abdus-Salaam – Abington Friends School

Savannah Brown – Springfield High School

Sylvia Hoffmann – Friends Central School

Sophia Sigel – Friends Central School



Visit mpfs.org/news to read Q&A interviews with each of our 2020 graduates!

UPDATE ON THE CLASS OF 2016: Looking Ahead



Time sure flies! The MPFS Class of 2016 graduated from high school this spring and many will be heading off to college this fall. Congratulations to all and be sure to pay your friends at MPFS a visit soon! For those students we were able to reach before printing, see to the right for post-high school plans:

Eily Stetler – Temple University, Tyler School of Art

Joshua Blair – Widener University, Business

Oronde Green – Undecided about plans for fall, looking into things like computer graphics

Terreshia Haynes – Undecided

MEET **Teacher Peter Kashatus**

Teacher Pete Kashatus, Class of 2011

When I was a 7th grader at MPFS, I had an assignment that asked what job I wanted to have when I grew up. The jobs my classmates chose varied significantly – some wanted to be doctors, lawyers, artists, and musicians. I chose one profession that nobody else wanted, and it stunned my friends when they heard me say it in class: Teacher.

I didn't put much thought into why I wanted to be a teacher. I was a good student, but that wasn't enough of a justification for my future career. Both of my parents were teachers (and still are), but I didn't really care what my parents did (remember, I was thirteen years-old). I simply figured, I like school, so wouldn't it be fitting that I become a teacher?

What I didn't know was that I didn't necessarily like school in general. It was the MPFS experience that helped shape my desire to pursue teaching.

I first visited the school as a 4th grade prospective student in 2006,

and I was surprised by the warm welcome I received from the teachers and my future classmates. I was extremely shy, and I dreaded introducing myself to new people. But I certainly came out of my shell by the end of my first year there. It was exciting to learn new things in class, plus, I got along with my classmates and loved meeting new visiting students.

Along with the relationships I built with my classmates, MPFS also fostered my lifelong love of learning. In keeping with Quaker tradition, my teachers made a point to engage us with the curriculum by having us reflect on our own beliefs, as well as opposing ones. One example is from Teacher Nancy's 6th grade Humanities class, where we covered the 2008 presidential election. She asked each of us who we supported in the election, and then we had to do a research project on the opposite candidate.

Another example is from Teacher David's 8th grade Quakerism class, where we spent an equal amount of time learning about various world religions as we did learning about Quakerism. Through these projects, I was exposed to the viewpoints and perspectives of those who were different from me, which challenged what I initially thought about my own beliefs.

My favorite project was in Teacher Lisa's 8th grade Spanish class, where each of us did a research project on a Spanish-speaking country of our choosing. In my quest to stand out from the crowd, I chose the least-explored country that speaks Spanish: Equatorial Guinea. A small, lesser-known country in West Africa, it was colonized by the Spanish before gaining independence and eventually going through a dictatorship. That's when I first became enchanted with learning about people from other cultures.

After graduating from MPFS in 2011, those lessons stayed with me. I later attended the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia, then Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. During my time at Earlham, I immersed myself in foreign cultures by studying abroad in Cuba and Bolivia where I became fluent in Spanish.

After I returned home from college, I decided to pay a visit to MPFS and see some of my old teachers. Soon afterwards, the school announced there was an opening for a Spanish teacher, and invited me to apply. It wasn't until I got the job that I remembered my fateful 7th grade project where I said I wanted to be a teacher. Little did I know it would lead me back to the place where it all started.

I started the job in early February, and I had a blast meeting the students and picking up where they left off in the curriculum. Our progress was paused, though, when the coronavirus pandemic forced us to continue school online the next month. I was amazed by the resilience that the students and their families showed in continuing their education with dedication and optimism. The seamless transition further showed me how special the community I grew up in was, and how I feel more at home than ever that I've returned.

– Teacher Pete Kashatus, Class of 2011

broken up by division and creates blocks for time spent with classroom teachers, a break for lunch and physical activities, and time spent with specials teachers. This schedule balances the importance of student community with video check-ins and time spent working independently. We work hard to provide a meaningful balance. We are aware attending live zoom chats can sometimes be challenging as family life continues to happen around our students. We are mindful of this and enter this new time with much flexibility and understanding.

Lower school students begin the day with a morning check-in on Google Hangouts or Zoom and then begin a review of their assignments and tasks for the day. The afternoon is blocked off for lunch, physical activities organized by Athletic Director Ryan Dunne, independent work, or downtime. Finally, students join their virtual classroom again for an end-of-the-day check-in and goodbyes!

Middle school students begin the morning with Advisory in their virtual classroom, which gives students a chance to say good morning, see each others' faces, share any news and "be" together. Students then rotate through their various core subjects as well as specials as a class. The afternoon is blocked off for lunch, physical activity, and independent work, and office hours with their teachers. Middle school students end the day with another period of Advisory.



4th Grade student Katie Gephart-Hall joins her class on her MPFS Chromebook as part of MPFS' Distance Learning program.

Our full-time School Counselor, Teacher Laura Taylor, continues to collaborate with teachers, meet with whole classes, small groups, and individuals virtually. This work is vital to sustaining and nurturing the social and emotional well being of our students during these challenging times.

Another Quaker testimony that the MPFS community has continued to truly embrace during this challenging time is Service. Service Learning is an integral part of the MPFS experience. Through Service Learning, students gain a sense of responsibility for one another, their community, and their world, along with self-worth, compassion, and empowerment. Students in the MPFS community have helped raise funds for local families in-need of groceries, sewed fabric masks for donation to local healthcare workers, and written letters to residents of local senior centers.

Despite the COVID-19 crisis, MPFS is still enrolling for the 2020-21 school year. The Admissions office has instituted a new application process to provide our prospective families with a virtual and interactive alternative to our Admissions process including live virtual Open Houses. To learn more, visit mpfs.org/rsvp or contact Angela DiMaria, Assistant Head of School and Director of Admissions & Academic Program at 610.565.1960 x104.

Come explore with us!



@mediaprovidencefriendsschool

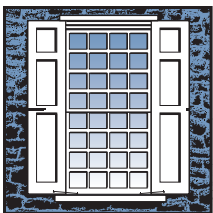


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IMPORTANT DATES:*

*Please note: These dates
are subject to change due to
COVID-19 restrictions.

Virtual Back-to-School Night
September 24

Virtual Open House
October 16

**Virtual Grandparents &
Special Friends Day**
November 24

610.565.1960
mpfs.org

In a continued effort to be mindful of our Quaker testimony of Stewardship - *Protect and care for the Earth* - we are making our Winter/Spring issue of *DragonTales* digital.

If you do not already receive eNews from MPFS and are not a current parent please submit your email address, before December 2020, to get notification and a link to the newsletter. Visit mpfs.org/digital-dragon-tales to sign up today. We thank you for your help!



Thank you

T. Grace for your many years
of love and care for the students,
faculty and staff at MPFS.