

Taft
BULLETIN

2020

CLASS OF

2020

We dedicate this issue to you!

SUMMER 2020



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Taft honored the Class of 2020 with a special online Commencement tribute that included video well-wishes from faculty, the head of school, and alumni, as well as a photo montage of our graduating seniors.

SUMMER 2020

INSIDE

DEPARTMENTS

- 3** On Main Hall
- 12** Around the Pond
- 32** In Print
- 56** Annual Fund Report
- 59** Class Notes
- 102** Milestones

SUMMER 2020
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EDITOR
Linda Hedman Beyus

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Kaitlin Thomas Orfitelli

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Debra Meyers

PHOTOGRAPHY
Robert Falcetti

COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATE/CLASS NOTES
Seamus F. Conway

DESIGN
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Taft Bulletin
Alumni Office
The Taft School
110 Woodbury Road
Watertown, CT 06795-2100
taftbulletin@taftschool.org

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ON THE COVER

We dedicate this issue to the Class of 2020, who prevailed through months of remote learning, social distancing, and being away from campus during the spring months of the pandemic. The tradition of honoring the newest class of graduates continues, with bricks of each graduate's name placed on the school's paths.

ROBERT FALCETTI

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On MAIN HALL

A WORD FROM HEAD
OF SCHOOL WILLY
MACMULLEN '78



Facing Complex Challenges

IT'S BEEN A SPRING LIKE NO OTHER, AND IT FEELS AS IF TAFT IS LODGED IN A MOMENT IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY WHEN WE ARE FACING TWO MASSIVE AND COMPLEX CHALLENGES—ONE OF THOSE HINGE MOMENTS WHERE GREAT CHANGES ARE SWINGING ON AN AXIS. THE FIRST IS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, PERHAPS THE GREATEST HEALTH CHALLENGE WE HAVE KNOWN IN OVER A CENTURY. THE SECOND IS OUR NATIONAL RECKONING WITH STRUCTURAL RACISM AND THE KILLING OF BLACK PEOPLE BY POLICE. THEY ARE DISTINCT AND YET CONNECTED, AND *TAFT WILL BE CHANGED BY BOTH*. WHAT WILL GUIDE THESE CHANGES IS SIMPLE: THE BELIEF THAT WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION AS EDUCATORS TO ENSURE THAT EVERY TAFT STUDENT FEELS SAFE, HEALTHY, AND VALUED.

Here's what I mean. Taft has always been affected by the world outside our campus, despite the word “bubble” that students often use to describe what life can feel like once you enter the gates. Recall how the 1918 influenza pandemic swept through the country and washed over campus. Taft was not untouched: Scores of students fell ill, and one boy died. A few years later, Horace Taft had built a new infirmary, what we now know as Mac House. And remember that every major cultural or political change in our history has been felt by Taft students, faculty, and staff—economic crises, world wars, presidential elections, civil rights, social trends. When we look at the school with a historic lens, we see changes that followed these moments. That's why Taft is still a relevant school: it's always changing.

And because of COVID-19, things will be different on campus this fall. Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont has announced a plan for the opening of public schools as long as public health data continues to support the model, and so we are optimistic we will greet students in September. We've been planning for this possibility for the past three months, and after a remote spring term, I can't wait. We are getting clear guidance from the state, health officials, outside consultants, and the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools. We have a lot of work ahead of us, and the COVID-19 landscape is constantly changing, but there is a picture that is coming into focus.

But if we are able to open in the fall, *things must and will change*. We will bring students back to campus in different ways. Testing will be a mandate. Wearing a mask is going to be normal, at least in most spaces and most times. Classes will meet, but we will space out desks, use rooms we have never used, limit class size—and offer a remote model for students who might not be able to be on

“Because of what many Black students and alumni bravely shared about the painful experiences of racism they knew at Taft, we must do hard work to make ourselves what we want to be—a school where all students of color feel welcomed, included, and valued. Where they belong.”



Head of School
Willy MacMullen '78 gave,
and joined, a number
of online talks over the
spring and summer.

campus. For the first time in our history, we won't have sit-down dinner, and you'll see dining room tables with just three students and grab-and-go offerings in the servery. We are going to limit student density in central places: common rooms, hallways. We will find ways to "gather" the community, but it won't be with 580 students all together in Bingham. So, perhaps more visibly and profoundly than at any time in our history, the world outside will change what a Taft education looks like.

And because of what many Black students and alumni bravely shared about the painful experiences of racism they knew at Taft, we must do hard work to make ourselves what we want to be—a school where all students of color feel welcomed, included, and valued. Where they belong. Here, too, *things must and will change*. We will complete a strategic plan around diversity, equity, and inclusion, performing an audit to get a good baseline of information and understanding of the work that has been done to date, engaging diverse community members, exploring recommendations made by alumni, and setting a road map going forward. The faculty are really committed to their own professional growth as well, asking, How can we become more knowledgeable about our own biases and more skilled in our work? This summer has included a lot of all-faculty training. We will also create clear and understood ways that acts of discrimination and racism can be safely reported and responsibly acted on. We also are going to partner with business and community leaders in town to make sure that Taft students feel safe and welcome when they leave campus. These changes, as others, are to make Taft better.

I want to be clear: We are going to do a lot of things differently in order to try to keep the community healthy and to ensure students of color feel safe and valued. We will be thoughtful and strategic in our changes, but that does not mean we won't learn lessons, see unintended consequences, adjust course

“We are going to do a lot of things differently in order to try to keep the community healthy and to ensure students of color feel safe and valued.”

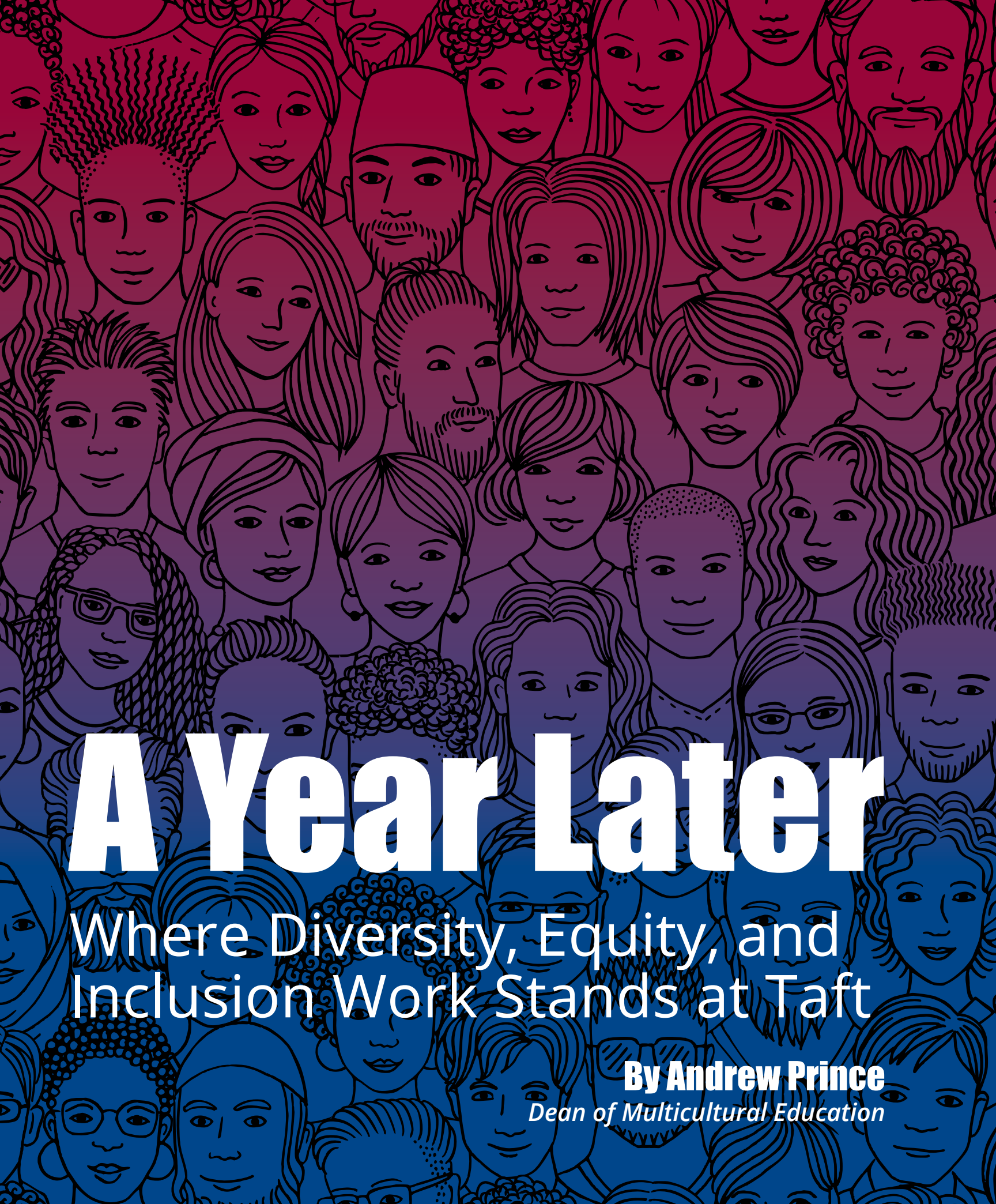
based on new information, even make mistakes. That's what change involves, even requires. We are eager and confident, but humble as well given the complexity of this moment. We will do well as long as everything we do flows from the same place: our mission of the education of the whole student and the claim that follows inevitably, that *every* student deserves to be safe, healthy, and valued.

As it is for our nation and all institutions, it's a really stressful moment for the school. Change always is a stressor for organizations and organisms, but it also is what can make them stronger. In his fascinating book *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*, author Nassim Nicholas Taleb observes that when you deprive robust, "antifragile" systems of stressors, they actually weaken. They get stronger when they are stressed. They find upside following systemic shocks. They become something new because of the disorder. And so, if no moment has had more unknowns and felt more challenging than the one we find ourselves in now, I also like to believe that Taft is one of those organizations that, existing in a moment of enormous challenges, becomes better.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Willy MacMullen".

William R. MacMullen '78





A Year Later

Where Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work Stands at Taft

By Andrew Prince
Dean of Multicultural Education

Context is important, and as I write to you now there are two important contexts to acknowledge. The first is that the *Bulletin* last year featured a Q&A with me titled “The Ongoing Work of Inclusion,” and in some ways this article should serve as a logical and necessary update on the work we have done in the last year. The second is that the United States is having what I hope is a revolutionary reckoning with systemic racism. And I want to start by asserting that Black Lives Matter. This is not a political statement, but a statement of the rights that all humans should be afforded no matter their skin color or any other identifier.

Black Americans should not have to fear for their lives as they jog (Ahmaud Arbery), play with a toy gun (Tamir Rice), shop in Walmart (John Crawford), carry a legally owned and registered firearm (Philando Castille), sleep in their homes (Breonna Taylor and Atatiana Jefferson), exist in the world as who they are meant to be (Islan Nettles), or while under suspicion of using a forged \$20 bill (George Floyd).

In my capacity as a leader and educator at Taft, helping our students to understand and process this moment, to see the systemic racism deeply ingrained in the fabric of America, and to feel safe

more around the world are protesting to change. The rest of this piece will focus on the work we have and will take up at Taft, but I want to state again that Black Lives Matter.



Affinity groups have been a key feature of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work we do as a community, and our affinity group offerings have expanded in the last school year. In addition to our Black and Latinx male and female affinity groups—Shades and Mosaic, respectively—our Asian and Asian American affin-

“The United States is having what I hope is a revolutionary reckoning with systemic racism. And I want to start by asserting that Black Lives Matter. This is not a political statement, but a statement of the rights that all humans should be afforded no matter their skin color or any other identifier.”

and valued on our campus is a responsibility that I take very seriously, as do all of my colleagues.

I am also more than the roles I inhabit on campus. I am a multiracial man who is often perceived as Black, and consequently this work and this historical moment are deeply personal. My brother and his wife are pregnant, and I cannot wait to love that child with all I have. I am also deeply fearful for their unborn baby, as no amount of privilege, education, money, love, care, or guidance will make it safe from systemic racism. It is this reality that millions of Americans and tens of millions of people or

ity group, LGBTQ group, and African student affinity group TASA, we saw faculty and students create our Female Student affinity group, GALS, and our European Student affinity group. Additionally, we created affinity groups for families, hosting Families of Students of Color gatherings on move-in day and at Family Weekends. We had also anticipated offering an official Alumni of Color Gathering during Alumni Weekend and a Families of Students of Color Gathering prior to Admissions revisit days, and we were in the process of coordinating a Trans Student group, which we would have run in



Andrew Prince working with students in his American Government class.

partnership with peer schools. While COVID-19 kept us from launching these offerings this year, we will certainly take them up again in the new school year.

And in the last few weeks, white faculty and staff have come together to create the White Anti-Racist Caucus (WARC), which will go a long way in furthering the anti-racist work we do as a school. Our fundamental goal is to ensure that students feel safe, included, and affirmed so that they can learn and grow, and this will only happen when folks who have privilege, white people in this case, are actively interrogating and dismantling systemic racism. We have an amazingly caring and dedicated group of faculty, and the WARC will create a space where white faculty members can increase the rate of positive change at Taft and in our broader world.



It is also important to revisit the important work that faculty and staff were doing to further their skills and awarenesses around DEI. A key piece of these efforts is the conferences and workshops that adult community members again attended this year as a part of our Professional Education and Growth (PEG) program. These conferences included Venture Out’s “Beyond Bathrooms” training in support of trans students, the

NAIS People of Color Conference and Equity Design Lab, the Glasgow Group’s National Diversity Practitioners Institute, and Educator’s Retreat for Women of Color, and included plans for people to attend the White Privilege Conference, the National Diversity Practitioners Institute, and Diversity Directions Independent School Seminar.

Additionally, we continued our adult community member book club for which we read Nancy Jo Sales’ *American Girls: The Secret Lives of Teenagers and Social Media*, and in the wake of COVID-19, we expanded to movies and offered *American Promise*. New faculty have continued to complete required training sessions on what author-educator Zaretta Hammond calls “culturally responsive pedagogy,” and all faculty have completed required training on implicit bias and microaggressions at faculty meetings, including our year opening and closing meetings.

Finally, we are currently in the process of creating a summer training for faculty to help them better identify and address microaggressions and overt racism. In total, Taft spent between a quarter and a third of our PEG budget on DEI training for faculty, in addition to funds from the dedicated DEI budget. The aforementioned efforts and the budget allocation that allows for them reflect the board’s investment in the faculty as a part of our deep communal commitment to professional growth. And the reality is that we can and must do more, whether it

is in-house training sessions, more outside conferences, or, in the age of COVID, making use of so many of the excellent online resources that have become available.



The classroom is a key place where DEI work must occur. Department heads and teachers began the process of interrogating our curriculum to look for ways that we could better provide students with “windows” to gaze into the experiences of others and “mirrors” to see their own experiences reflected back to them while also raising students’ awareness of injustices in the world and educating on how to combat them.

In the History Department, for example, we undertook a review of the sources that we had students read in each class and made a concerted effort to ensure that the voices of people of traditionally marginalized groups were more prominent in our curriculum.

The curricular work we started this past school year will continue and intensify this summer and into the upcoming school year as we continue to create opportunities to teach students key DEI principles in the classroom which is essential. Already this summer the Science Department has put together a list of anti-racist resources for science teachers that is being circulated, the English Department is hosting a book club centered on Zaretta Hammond’s *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, the Pedagogy and Assessment Group is reading Joe Feldman’s *Grading for Equity*, and the library has put together a web page featuring Racial Justice Literature.



Finally, it will be helpful to review some of the work that has already begun in anticipation of the coming school year. First, Taft will be authoring a DEI strategic plan to guide our work moving forward. The creation of this plan will involve a careful accounting of the work we currently do with input from trustees, administrators, teachers, staff, parents, students, and alumni. We will use this information to identify our strengths around DEI work as well as our areas of needed improvement and construct a series of action steps with associated accountability metrics.

This work will be supported by two newly created philanthropic funds, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Current Use Fund and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Endowment Fund. These funds will allow us to continue our current efforts and expand upon them in ways that will surely benefit our DEI efforts. For community members looking for ways to support our efforts to make Taft a more inclusive place, giving to

these funds would be one important way to contribute.

We have heard a lot from students and alumni recently, and I am deeply appreciative. You have shared your experiences with us in ways that will guide our communal work and help to ensure that everyone feels that they belong at Taft. My parting request is that you continue to reach out to us to both share your experiences and ask us questions about our efforts.

The work of creating a more just and equitable school, and consequently a more just and equitable world, will only be successful if the entire community is working on it together. From trustees to staff to faculty to administrators, our fundamental goal is to ensure that students feel safe, affirmed, and included when they are on campus so that they can take advantage of all of the wonderful things Taft has to offer. I am thankful to be able to do this work for and with the Taft community. ■

“The work of creating a more just and equitable school, and consequently a more just and equitable world, will only be successful if the entire community is working on it together.”

Andrew Prince earned a Master of Arts in private school leadership from the Klingenstein Center Teachers College at Columbia University. His teaching career includes graduate studies work at the Dalton School in New York City and a faculty post at Montclair Kimberley Academy in New Jersey. Originally from California, he graduated from Harvard University with a Bachelor of Arts in government, with a minor in moral and political philosophy. He also played Division I baseball at Harvard. A faculty member at Taft since 2017, he serves as Dean of Multicultural Education, teaches AP U.S. Government and Politics, and is an adjunct in Centennial. He is also an assistant varsity baseball coach and an assistant varsity football coach. Andrew was recently invited to become a member of the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) Commission on Diversity in Independent Schools (CODIS). CODIS ‘exists to inspire a wide spectrum of individuals in the effort to make our school communities rich in the experience of human differences.’

To learn more about Taft’s ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion work visit www.taftschool.org/dei





Creative, Caring, Passionate, and Dedicated

Teaching and Learning During a Global Pandemic

THE SPRING TERM AT TAFT was a time like no other. While the familiar rhythm that is daily campus life was cut short, school life did go on: Faculty delivered dynamic and innovative lessons in virtual classrooms; performing arts groups continued to rehearse and perform in virtual spaces; some sports teams engaged in virtual workouts and team-building Zoom sessions; and clubs and organizations continued to meet, plan, act, and work remotely to keep our community connected.

“We should feel real pride in what the school has accomplished in becoming a remote learning institution,” Head of School Willy MacMullen ’78 wrote in May. “The vast majority of students *did really impressive work*, remained engaged, connected with teachers, and demonstrated quality learning. And Taft teachers were all you would expect them to be.”

The challenges, of course, were great; it wasn’t always easy. Still, while so many facets of the spring term were unprecedented, there was much that felt familiar. How did our remote community remain connected while continuing to advance the school’s mission of educating the whole student? Here is a sampling of our work.

◀ Spring term is often a time for field work and experiential learning.

Students in Carly Borken’s Aquatic Sciences class typically visit the White Memorial Foundation and Conservation Center, 4,000 acres of forest, fields, and wetlands. Borken took her students to White Memorial again this year—through a video exploration of the foundation’s vernal pools. She donned waders, grabbed a net, and walked through pools, narrating her finds: bivalve clams, vegetation that both indicates and adapts to the temporary nature of vernal pools, millions of insect larvae, and all kinds of treasures from the forest floor.



Watch Carly Borken’s video lesson from White Memorial [here](#).

“This spring was not what anyone anticipated, but our community was able to pivot, change gears, and engage in remote learning with generally the same commitment level that they bring to their education when we are on campus.”

—Academic Dean Jennifer Kenerson

Spanish Teachers Jillian Danaher and Baba Frew also made field trips

part of the spring term curriculum, visiting unique spaces and exploring new technologies. Students in their classes were able to explore historic Spanish masterpieces, paintings, and sculptures by period through the Madrid’s Museo del Prado’s virtual site. Danaher also used Padlet, a shareable, online post-it board, to engage students in conversation about art by creating thematic, digital gallery walks.



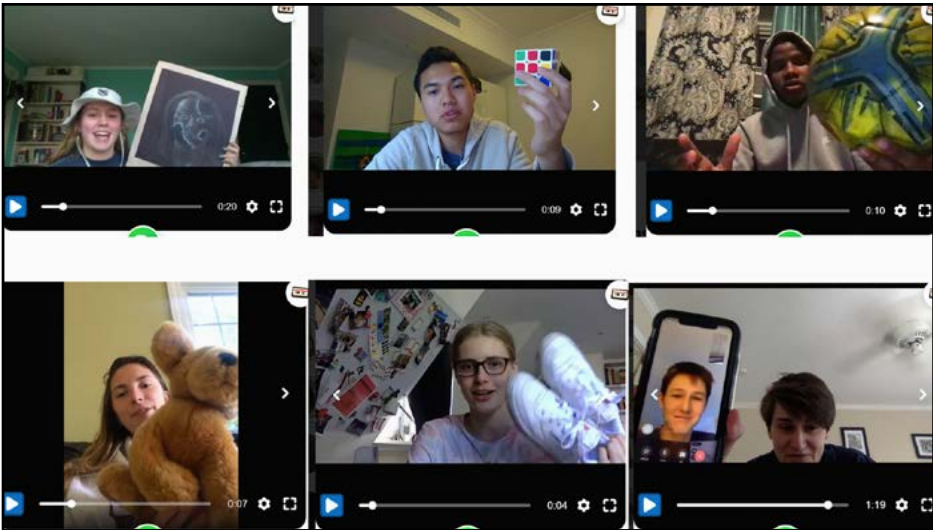
Sample art from the Mexican revolution through Danaher’s Padlet gallery [here](#).

▼ Accelerated Biology students study the chemistry of life:

cell biology; energy and metabolism; chromosomes, inheritance, and DNA; evolution; biodiversity; human body systems; and ecology. Among the methodologies used in the class: fetal pig dissection. Science Teacher and Department Chair Shannon Guidotti did not want students to lose the learning value of the experience, so she recorded a dissection tutorial at home. “This is always a culminating experience after we finish our unit on systems of the body,” says Guidotti. “This year we used the tutorial, then asked the students to complete a video practical on EdPuzzle to test their knowledge of structures and systems.”



► During the spring term, a number of Taft teachers used FlipGrid, a social learning platform that allows teachers to create “grids” to facilitate video discussions. Each grid is like a message board: Teachers post questions and post video responses that appear in a tiled grid display. Students can also respond to each other. English Teacher Zana Previti used FlipGrid to engage students in conversations about their time away from Taft using physical objects to represent their feelings. She also used virtual board work with mids to explore duality in *The Glass Castle*, and learned to use digital annotation in reading *Invisible Man*.



DUALITY: having 2 parts: exhibiting 2 contradictory qualities/ traits at the same time.

Generative

Light
Heat
Food

Destructive

burning
scarring
kill
annihilate

Generative

Brilliant
Loving
Protective
Entertaining

Destructive

[Rex Walls]

4:45 / 7:06

Duality in The Glass Castle: TGC Week II

► Dan Calore’s Performance Engineering students develop and run tests on products and designs. They use test data to optimize design and performance. On campus, students use Traaxis remote-controlled cars in their testing. During this year’s spring term, Calore asked students to conduct performance testing using household items: They ran tests using paper airplanes, simple catapults, and by flipping bottles. They worked to maximize flight time, distance, and accuracy with catapults and different paper airplane designs. In the bottle flip, they worked to determine the best bottle to use, the optimal amount of liquid in the bottle, and techniques that would yield

“My teachers have all been amazing and just about as accommodating as could be. As the year begins to come to an end I have realized it doesn’t matter where you’re being taught but more by whom. I think the strength and resilience of the teachers and faculty at Taft have really shown me what a special place Taft is.”

—excerpted from a Taft student email



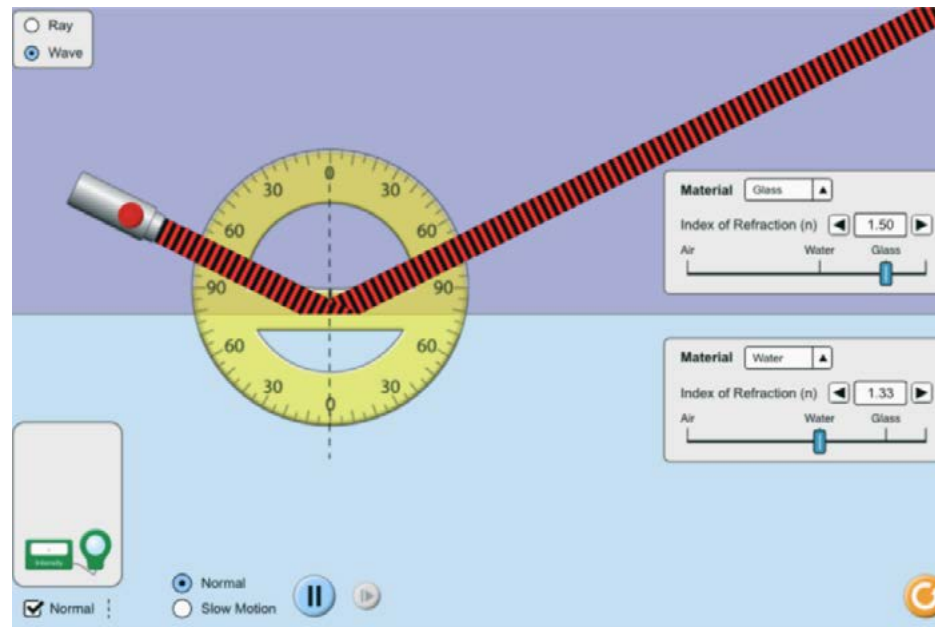
the highest probability of landing the flip. Students submitted videos of their testing. “Having the students make videos to show what they have done is something that I will continue to use next year,” says Calore. “It has been great to listen to the students describe the work that they are doing, rather than having them just write about it.”

► Helena Fifer’s Public Speaking students learned technique and polished their skills, then shared their work through a series of recordings—both audio and video—on a wide range of topics. They interviewed family members to learn family history, shared the screen with

siblings and best friends with whom they are sharing quarantine spaces, and talked candidly about life during the coronavirus. Their speeches offered glimpses of life in Singapore, Tokyo, Thailand, Germany, and the United States.

► **Parker Washburn used online, interactive labs from the PhET Interactive Simulations project** at the University of Colorado Boulder with his honors and accelerated physics students. As part of his Accelerated Physics study circuit behavior, including Kirchhoff’s Loop Law and Junction Law, lower mid Matt Ramirez built and analyzed the electric current and voltage in a simple circuit. Honors Physics studied wave motions and behaviors. Lower mid Annabel Brawn used methods from a simulated lab to demonstrate two wave behaviors: total internal reflection and dispersion of light.

“Taft physics teachers have been using PhET for a number of years,” says Washburn, “but only for activities that we could not reasonably conduct in the



confines of a classroom—think satellite motion and planetary orbits. The experiments I had my students do online are very good substitutes for the on-campus experiments that we would have been conducting as part of our spring curriculum.” Washburn also used Zoom features to enhance the learning experience.

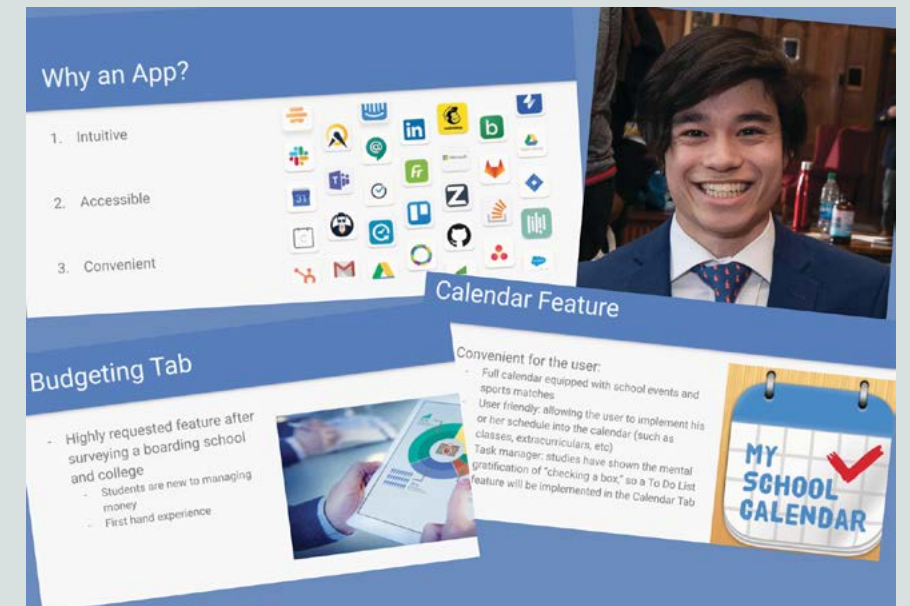
“During Zoom classes I assigned student pairs to their own ‘Breakout Room’ (a Zoom feature) where they continued to work with partners, just as they would if they were on campus. In fact, many of the students have really enjoyed the ability to interact with their peers and have expressed that these labs help to solidify these concepts.” ■



◀ **Science teachers, including Jim Lehner and Amanda Benedict,** turned their kitchens into science laboratories to continue demonstration and experimentation with their students. Here, Lehner invited students to explore capillary action in the kitchen using celery, paper towels, food dye, water, and jars. “This is how water reaches the leaves of plants without an active vascular system,” explained Lehner.

► Innovative Programs and Advanced Academic Experiences

When it was established nearly 60 years ago, **Taft’s Independent Studies Program (ISP)** was the first of its kind in the nation. Today, it continues to challenge Taft students to think about learning in new ways, offering ISP scholars both avenue and opportunity to extend their learning beyond the traditional curriculum. Since the inception of the program, Taft students have completed more than 1,000 independent study projects in all fields of learning. This year **10 students completed ISP projects** on topics as diverse as diagnosing dengue fever, the Vietnamese diaspora in literature, and fast fashion. Students also worked on developing more affordable medical prosthetics, writing and recording original music, painting, and exploring treatments for autism.



Taft’s Global Studies and Service diploma program also continued to thrive under challenging conditions. Throughout their Taft careers, diploma candidates work to meet service and academic requirements for the GSS diploma, which include completing specific academic courses, foreign language proficiency, engaging in service initiatives locally and globally, and preparing culminating presentations, which were presented by video this year. Fourteen seniors earned the diploma this year, the most in any graduating class since the program was introduced in 2014.

Taft is a member of the **Global Online Academy (GOA)**, giving students access to a wide range of nontraditional courses, as well as a network of people and resources from more than 60 independent schools around the world. This year, senior Ian Staines not only completed an entrepreneurship course through the Academy, his project, “**Why Is There No App for School?**” was selected from more than 350 projects to receive an Audience Choice Award.

A LIGHT EXISTS IN SPRING

A Light exists in Spring
Not present on the Year.
At any other period—
When March is scarcely here

—Emily Dickinson



[Click here to watch the "Campus in Spring" video.](#)

Taft's Community Responds to the Global Pandemic



Compassion and Creativity

UPPER MID FELICIA WANG regularly volunteers at the local homeless shelter. She also serves the Taft community as an EcoMon, and as a math, physics, chemistry, and writing tutor. But her dedication to service runs even deeper: She frequently spends time in service to the local Chinese community.

"I think it's really cool that we are all American, but are still finding cultural and ethnic connections and embracing our ancestral cultures in these communities," says Felicia.

So when family friend Li Song Zhang called on Connecticut's Chinese communities to come together in support of area health-care workers—including her husband, a respiratory physician at Waterbury's Saint Mary's Hospital—Felicia was eager to get involved. Looking to YouTube videos, hospital requirements, and other



public resources for ideas and specifications, Felicia began making face shields for the medical teams at Saint Mary's.

"Li Song is really responsible for this face-shield project, and for the vast mobilization of Chinese families in Connecticut," says Felicia. "I made a few experimental shields and then FaceTimed with Li Song and her family to see which ones would work best."

As the initiative grew, those crafting the masks began sharing tips and techniques to improve their form and function. Felicia's sister and mother are also making masks, using materials from around the house, along with items purchased

online and at local craft stores before they were closed in response to the state's executive orders. The project, for which both Li Song and Saint Mary's Hospital have expressed their deep gratitude, was something of a natural fit for Felicia.

"I have an interest in engineering and computer science, and have always enjoyed crafts and building things with my hands—being a really mechanical thinker," Felicia says. "I like being able to create and build things—it gives me a sense of power and freedom."

And now, a sense of community and support.

Caring and Connected

WHEN IT WAS ANNOUNCED IN March that COVID-19 considerations could mean that the safety and well-being of our community would be compromised by a return to campus after spring break, School Physician Diane Fountas worked to closely monitor local, state, CDC, and WHO information and guidelines to help establish Taft's COVID-19 response on all fronts. She also became a critical connection between the extended Taft family and our neighbors in need.

"Medical facilities everywhere were reporting shortages of critical medical equipment, including protective masks and gowns," says Dr. Fountas. "Students began reaching out to their advisors saying they had masks in their rooms or had masks shipped to them during break. Head Athletic Trainer Sergio Guerrero and Nursing Director Sheri Masotta had supplies of protective gear and equipment that—with no students on campus—would go unused, and which they were willing to donate."

Dr. Fountas began reaching out to her contacts in the local medical community, offering to share Taft's resources. They were eager to receive the supplies and deeply grateful for Taft's generosity and compassion. Her contact at Waterbury Hospital noted that the supplies were like "gold" to the hospital's caregivers.

As word of Taft's donations began to spread across social media and throughout the community, Dr. Fountas began hearing from Taft's global family, including many living in China and Hong Kong.

"Parents, alumni, and friends got on board, reaching out to me and to Admissions Director Peter Frew '75 asking if they could help," says Dr. Fountas. "One family seemed to be scouring the earth to get us N95 masks. It is really a story that is complex and full of compassion and quite moving and impressive: I have newfound friends and pen pals sharing not only their generous gifts, but also personal stories of what they have experienced and are experiencing during



this extraordinary time. They are helping to take care of all the world, all the while living through the same issues we are."

The speed of the global response, coupled with the sheer volume of donations, made it somewhat difficult to track numbers, but supplies were delivered to Waterbury Hospital, Saint Mary's Hospital (Waterbury), Charlotte Hungerford Hospital (Torrington), the Watertown Police Department, the Child Abuse Team of Greater Waterbury, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, and physicians serving some local nursing homes. Literally tens of thousands of surgical masks were donated, along with thousands of face shields with masks; N95

surgical masks; COVID-19 test kits (which were fast-tracked for more comprehensive data and faster results); thousands of pairs of protective gloves and surgical gowns; along with thermometers, cases of tissues, hand sanitizer, germicidal wipes, gauze and gauze pads, CPR masks, and hand towelettes. Taft has also supplied our own essential campus workers, including those in our security, mail, and maintenance departments, and replenished our stock in preparation for a return to full campus life.

"Our donations have kept many, many health-care workers safe and protected," notes Dr. Fountas. "I am very proud to be part of such a generous community."

Apart Yet Together

THOUGH TAFT STUDENTS spent the spring semester spread across the globe, they found ways to come together to support to the communities surrounding Taft's campus during the global pandemic.



Some of the initiatives combined creativity with traditional fundraising ideas—class committees sold student-designed T-shirts to benefit hospitals in Waterbury, Connecticut. Working with Atlantic Sportswear, our boys' and girls' lacrosse teams also sold T-shirts, with a portion of sales income earmarked for the Watertown Food Bank.

Taft's Red Rhino Fund—an endowed, charitable fund run by students—launched a more ambitious initiative. Each year, the fund awards grants to youth-centered community organizations working to support literacy and education. In 2020, the fund awarded \$10,869 to six organizations. Among other things, the grants helped Waterbury's Police Activity League purchase Chromebooks for their Homework Haven and supported the United Way's home visit and literacy program.

The fund's ability to award grants

depends on a steady income stream. In the past, campus events, including a badminton tournament and the Spring Fling, have generated income for the fund. In 2019, the Spring Fling alone raised more than \$5,000. Fund members needed to get creative while away from campus. The solution: a virtual Spring Fling. On a Friday night in May, students gathered for a Zoom Spring Fling, "costumes and sweet outfits advised," said Chris Murphy '21, who DJ'd the event, and offered dollar song requests and shout-outs to benefit the Red Rhino Fund. Proceeds from ticket sales also went directly to the fund and will help support grants in 2021.

"Service is inherent to the architecture of our school," noted outgoing Grants Chair Maggie Robertshaw '20. "Waterbury needs us now more than ever. Being able to provide resources to local organizations establishes a lasting relationship between Taft and the surrounding community." ■

History Day

Tafties Honored for Exceptional Work

TAFT STUDENTS EARNED HONORS for their submissions to Connecticut's state-level National History Day competition. Upper mid Felicia Wang was named the second-place winner in the Senior Papers category, while lower mid Anishka Perera took second place in the Senior Individual Documentary category.

Connecticut History Day is one of 58 National History Day affiliate programs and invites students in grades 6–12 to explore local, state, national, and world history by researching and writing papers or creating video documentaries, exhibits, live performances, or websites on

a historical topic of their choosing that fits with the year's theme. Competitors are asked to conduct extensive research using libraries, archives, museums, and oral history interviews. Students then analyze and interpret their findings, draw conclusions about their topic's significance in history, and create final projects. Those projects are judged by professional historians and educators.

This year's theme was Breaking Barriers in History. Felicia approached



that topic through a paper titled "A Tale of Consumerism and Conformism: Too Many Barriers Broken?" Anishka filmed the short documentary, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Peaceful Protester*. The senior categories include all high school-age regional winners from across the state. Their second-place honors qualify Felicia and Anishka for national-level consideration. ■

Summer Reading 2020

Memorable Memoirs

TAFT'S SUMMER READING COMMITTEE offered students four memoirs to choose from this year. Selections were introduced to the school community during a virtual assembly.

School Chaplain Robert Ganung sponsored *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*, by Father Gregory Boyle. Tafties will recall the impact of Boyle's message and spirit from his visit to campus last year. The founder of Homeboy Industries, Father Boyle has spent more than 20 years running gang-intervention programs in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles, the gang capital of the world. In *Tattoos on the Heart*, he reflects on his experience working in the barrio and the role of faith in his work.

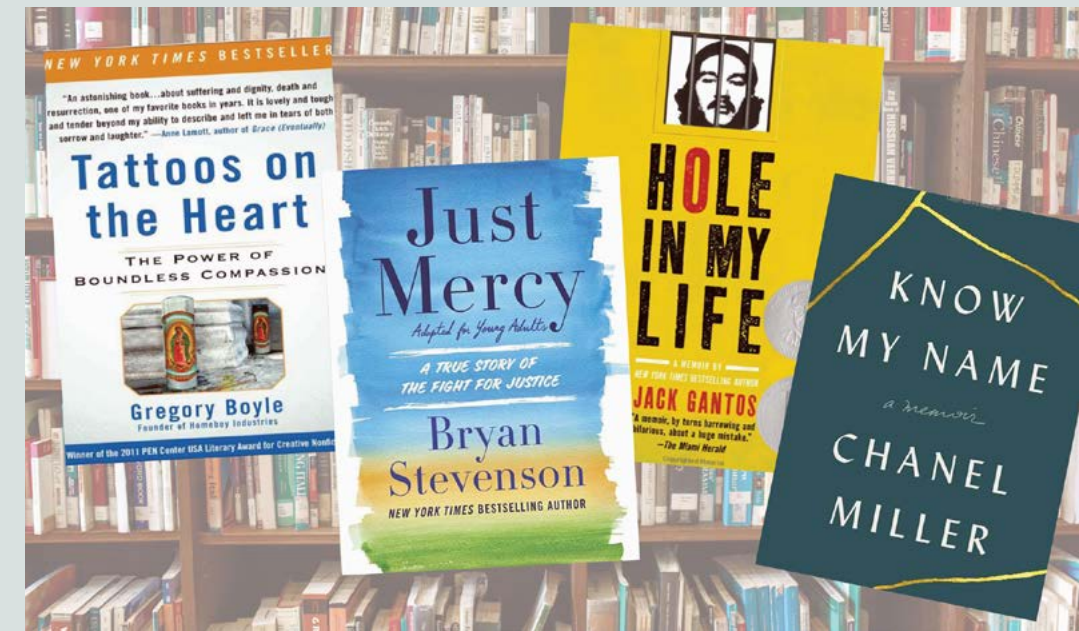
"This is a book about renewal, redemption, and personal transformation," Ganung noted in introducing the selection. "It is a heartening and powerful book."

Personal transformation is also a theme advanced in Jack Gantos's memoir, *Hole in My Life*, sponsored this summer by the Taft Library.

"The book details an amazing series of mistakes—some hilarious, some tragic, and some in between," said Library Director Sean Padgett. "We follow along as the author drops out of college, struggles to find his voice, and agrees to help pilot a sailing ship loaded with drugs before turning his life around."

Hole in My Life won the American Library Association's Michael L. Printz Award, recognizing the best book written for teens, based entirely on its literary merit, and the Association for Library Service to Children's Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal, awarded to the most distinguished informational book published in English.

Students could also consider *Just Mercy*, a number-one *New York Times* bestseller and winner of multiple honors, including



the NAACP Image Award for Nonfiction and the Carnegie Medal for Nonfiction.

"The book details the efforts of the Equal Justice Initiative and a young Bryan Stevenson as they work to provide legal representation to people who have been illegally convicted, unfairly sentenced, or abused in state jails or prisons, especially those who are marginalized by poverty and racial injustice," explains selection sponsor and Dean of Multicultural Education Andrew Prince. "I see this book as one of the many ways we can continue our efforts to live up to our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusivity by striving to understand and combat systems and causes of systematic oppression."

Stevenson's story has also been told in the HBO documentary *True Justice*, and the movie *Just Mercy*, starring Michael B. Jordan.

The final 2020 summer reading option is *Know My Name*, sponsored by Taft's female affinity group, and described as "immersive and emotional" by Lila duPont

'21. Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for autobiography, *Know My Name* is Chanel Miller's deeply personal account of her widely publicized sexual assault on the Stanford University campus. The case not only brought changes to California law, but the sentencing judge in the case was recalled.

"It is a story full of truths about sexual assault," noted Sinthya Guaman '21. "It is important to recognize such a global issue and to think about how it is dealt with in the United States."

Our summer reading selections are chosen carefully, and often reflect current social issues, common campus themes, and matters of historical significance. Traditionally, Taft students and faculty read one book over the summer break, and then come together in the fall to discuss the book. In an effort to promote greater student engagement, the committee decided to offer a variety of books and allow each student to select a book that he or she would be most interested in. ■



"The main thing is to be moved, to love, to hope, to tremble, to live."
 –Auguste Rodin, on the arts

Connecting Through the Arts

▲ Taft Theater Earns Prestigious Honors

WATERBURY'S SEVEN ANGELS THEATRE recognized talented Tafties in June with an impressive 19 Halo Award nominations. Typically, the nominations encompass three Taft productions. The fact that there was no spring play made

the sheer number of nominations even more extraordinary. Now in their 17th year, Halo Awards honor high school students' achievements in all aspects of theater, from acting and dancing to set design and stage management.

Productions mounted by more than 60 high schools across Connecticut were considered during the nomination process. Congratulations to all of Taft's 2020 Halo nominees and to the winners, noted with an asterisk. They are:

For the fall production of *Mamma Mia!*:

- > Sarah Woerner as Donna, Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Musical
- > Annabelle Wyman and James Hughes as Rosie and Bill, Best Performance by a Couple or Dynamic Duo in a Musical
- > Meghan Spangenberg as Sophie, Best Performance by a Supporting Actress in a Musical
- > Coleman Grustas as Rev. Alexandros, Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Musical
- > Madelyn Yow, Best Special Effects
- > Tony Liu, Sophia Pan, Nicole Zang, Harry Yuan, Angela You, and Kaitlyn Taliaferro, Best Lighting Design and/or Execution
- > Set Crew, Best Scenic Design and/or Execution
- > Cast, Best Dancing*
- > Cast, Best Chorus
- > Best Contemporary Musical

Special Awards/Recognition:

- > Coleman Grustas, "No Small Parts" Award for his role as Rev. Alexandros in *Mamma Mia!*

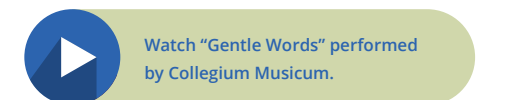
For the winter production of *The Tempest*:

- > Kimmie Johnson as Prospero and Ivy Zhuang as Miranda, Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Play
- > Claire Roberts as Caliban, Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play*
- > Frank Trosky as Alonzo, Best Performance by a Featured Actor in Play
- > Lily Thompson as Ariel, Best Performance by a Supporting Actress in a Play
- > Chris Stutt as Ferdinand, Best Performance by a Supporting Actor in a Play
- > Frank Trosky and Ronald Ceesay as Stefano and Trinculo, Best Performance by a Couple or Dynamic Duo in a Play
- > Linh Vu, Best Stage Management
- > Best Classical Play*



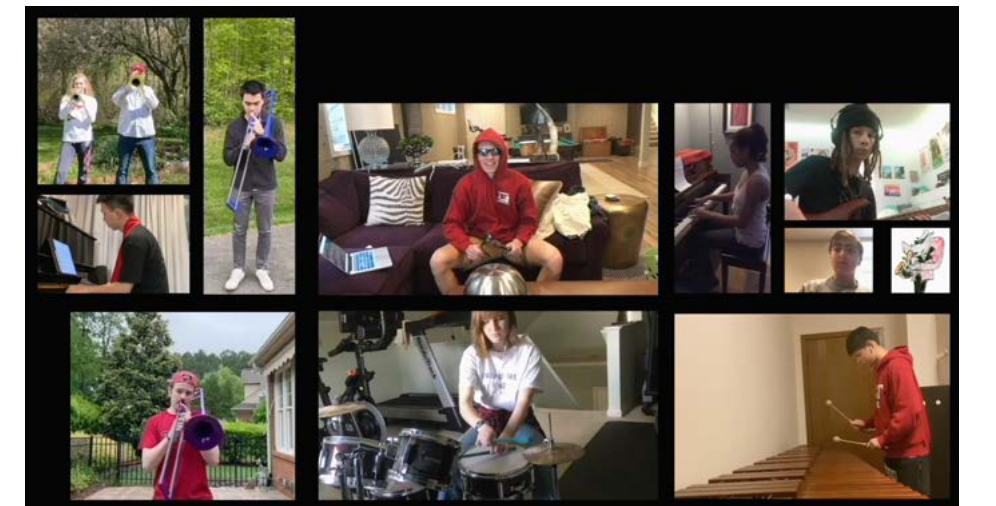
◀ Collegium Musicum

Collegium Musicum is Taft's venerable showcase choir, open to all students by audition. They perform at an advanced level of vocal and choral musicianship, even when they are scattered across the globe. Enjoy their take on Kevin Siegfried's "Gentle Words."



▶ Jazz Band

JAZZ BAND CREATED A FUN and toe-tapping version of "Grazing in the Grass," which was composed in 1968 by Philemon Hou and first recorded by Hugh Masekela. The Taft Jazz Band's 2020 quarantine version, made under the direction of Music Teacher TJ Thompson, brought some traditional instruments and a bit of improvisation in the area of a drum set made of a metal bowl and barbecue tongs. The final virtual performance was another confirmation of how Tafties can collaborate across space and distance to make beautiful things happen.



► **Oriocos**

PERFORMING “LOCH LOMOND” during the last concert of every school year is tradition for Oriocos, Taft’s all-male a cappella group, and it is a tradition they wanted to uphold despite the unusual circumstances they faced this year. Oriocos head Edvin Tran Hoac ’20 and Chris Wang ’21 worked closely with the rest of the talented performers to produce this video to share, Edvin says, “with fellow Tafties around the world. We hope that you find enjoyment and comfort in this beautiful tune.”

Watch Oriocos perform “Loch Lomond.”



◀ **Hydrox**

MEGHAN SPANGENBERG ’20 AND JULIA Kunzelmann ’20 led Hydrox, Taft’s talented all-female a cappella group through many rehearsals as they prepared to perform for prospective students on Admitted Student Days. On the set list: “Fly Me to the Moon,” arrangement by Sofie Thomas ’21. With the tenacity and persistence that typify all Rhinos, the group was not deterred by the cancellation of the annual event. Plan B, conceived by Posey Durling ’21 and captured by Sofie, is here now, for your viewing and listening pleasure. And it is extraordinary.

See (and listen) for yourself!

► **Dance**

THIS EXTRAORDINARY PRODUCTION features students from Sarah Surber’s Dance I, II, III, and IV classes seamlessly connecting through movement from locations across the globe. The piece is set to an original song written and performed by Meghan Spangenberg ’20, “Til the Sun Meets the Sand.” The talent is staggering. Bravo, Rhinos! ■

Watch the performance.



Non ut Sibi

Days of Service

EVERY YEAR, SENIOR WEEK includes a day of service—one final opportunity for the senior class to join together in service to the community. Last year, lower mids also added days of service to their end-of-year programming. Despite the challenges 2020 presented, these important days of service—these opportunities for students to bring the Taft School motto to life through meaningful action—were not lost. Members of both classes engaged in service activities in their home communities, from making face masks and providing support for frontline health-care workers, to tutoring children and delivering food to those in need, Tafties rose to the occasion. Watch a video highlighting some of Taft’s lower mids in action here. ■

Click to watch the Lower Mid Community Service Days video.



Senior Bonnie Song continued volunteering her time with an initiative that has meant a lot to her and which she has been a part of for some time, teaching diving skills to children with autism.



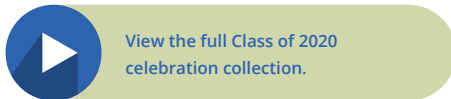
Owen Wyman ’23 delivered food and supplies through an organization in his community that offers emergency shelter, supportive housing, food, mentoring, and youth programming.

Honoring the
CLASS OF
2020

TIME AND AGAIN, BUT MOST exceptionally during their Senior Spring, members of the Class of 2020 proved themselves to be strong, resilient, and determined. On behalf of the class, the monitors requested that Taft not hold a virtual Commencement ceremony; they remain optimistic that a return to Taft's campus will be possible in the future, and that they can celebrate

commencement in person, together, at that time. So on what would have been Commencement Day, Taft did not don regalia, present awards, or read graduates' names during a virtual ceremony. Instead, we curated a collection of fun and traditional resources that would allow students and families to celebrate on their own time, in their own way. There are messages from

the Head of School, the School Chaplain, and alumni. There are photos, bagpipes, and bricks. And there is this song, a commencement tradition, reminding the Class of 2020 that they are truly a part of "Taft Forever."



And see some of our social media posts:



Class of 2020, you're alumni now! Welcome to our deeply connected community of Taft graduates. Enjoy this video and more on our virtual Commencement page at www.taftschoool.org/commencement. #taft2020 #taftalumni #taft4life #taftlife #mytaft





Commencement Day traditions. H/T Paton Roberts Enjoy this video and more on our virtual Commencement page at www.taftschoool.org/commencement. #taft2020 #tafttraditions #taftlife #mytaft





Instagram

This is it; today is the day! Join us in honoring the Class of 2020 by visiting our virtual Commencement page—taftschoool.org/commencement—using the link in our bio. #taft2020 #taftlife #mytaft

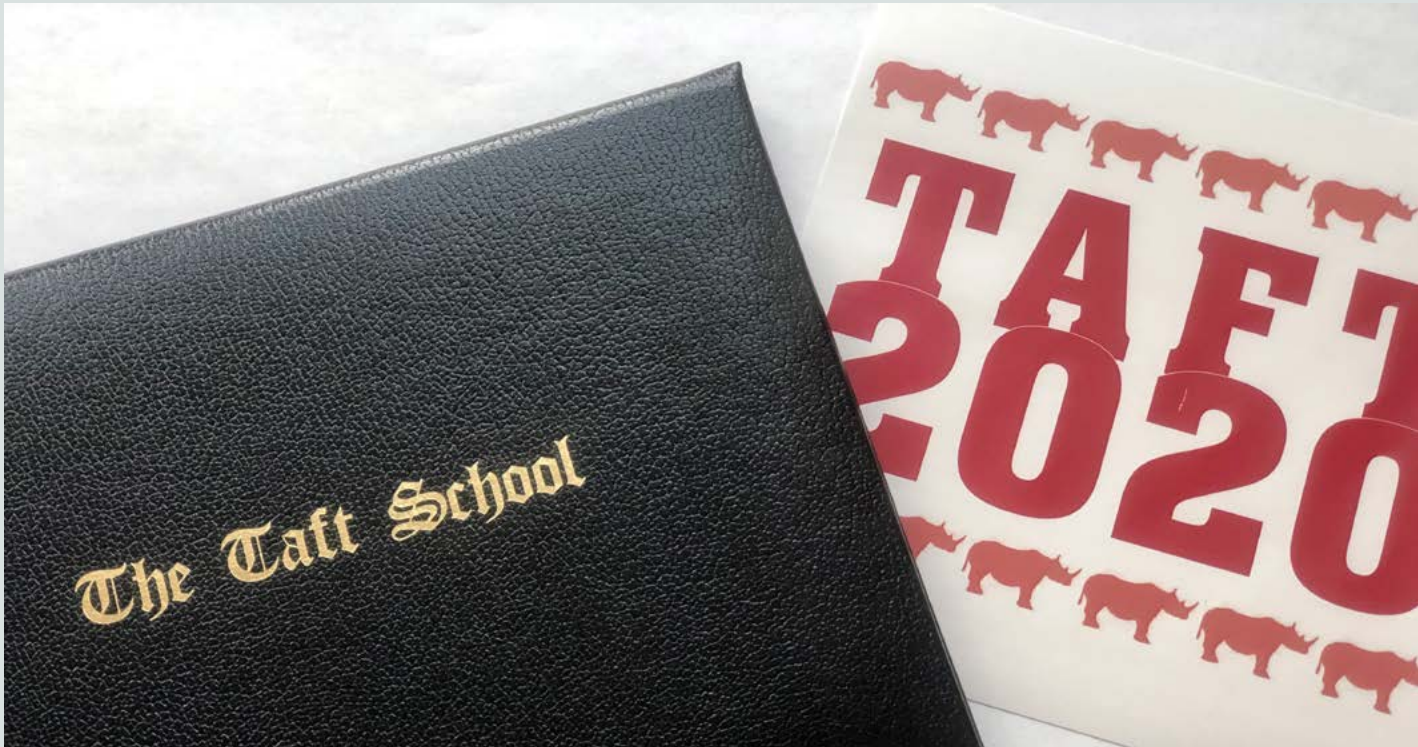


Gatorade Player of the Year

SOCCER PHENOM AND ALL-AROUND exceptional young man Sammed Bawa '20 became the first Taft student to be named a Gatorade Player of the Year. The award recognizes outstanding athletic excellence, high standards of academic achievement, and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field. As the 2019–20 Connecticut Boys Soccer Player of the Year, Bawa is now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Player of the Year award. In his senior season at Taft, Bawa logged 21 goals and five assists, leading Taft to the New England Prep School Athletic Council Class A tournament semifinals; he was also named the New England Prep Soccer Journal

Midfielder of the Year, and participated in the High School All-American Game. Bawa ended his prep soccer career with 72 goals and 35 assists. Bawa came to Taft from the Right to Dream Academy in Ghana. Last year he organized a soccer tournament in Ghana, raising more than \$6,000 for the community. He has also volunteered locally as a youth soccer coach. Bawa will play soccer for the University of North Carolina this fall. As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Bawa follows in the footsteps of well-known athletes including Derek Jeter, Peyton Manning, Kerri Walsh, Marion Jones, and Kobe Bryant.





College Bound

THE CLASS OF 2020 BEGINS the next step in their education at exceptional colleges and universities across the country and around the world. Top picks for this year’s Rhinos, with seven students matriculating to each this year, are Georgetown, Tulane, and SMU.

The number of students from this year’s graduating class attending a given university is reflected in parentheses following the school name. Those with no parenthetical reference will welcome one Taft student this fall.

Amherst College	Georgetown University (6)	Stanford University	University of Rochester
Babson College (4)	Hamilton College (2)	Stony Brook University	University of Southern California
Barnard College (2)	High Point University	Trinity College	University of St Andrews
Bates College (2)	Hobart William Smith Colleges (2)	Tufts University	University of Texas at Austin (2)
Bentley University	Howard University	Tulane University of Louisiana (7)	University of Vermont
Binghamton University	Iona College	United States Naval Academy	University of Virginia (4)
Boston College (2)	Lafayette College	University of British Columbia	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Boston University (2)	Macalester College	University of California-Berkeley	Vanderbilt University
Bowdoin College (3)	McGill University	University of California-Davis (2)	Villanova University (2)
Brown University (6)	Miami University-Oxford	University of Colorado Boulder	Virginia Commonwealth University
Bucknell University (6)	Middlebury College (3)	University of Edinburgh (2)	Virginia Tech
Coastal Carolina University	New York University (4)	University of Iowa	Wake Forest University (4)
Colby College	Northeastern University	University of Maine	Washington and Lee University (2)
Colgate University (4)	Northwestern University	University of Miami (2)	Washington University in St Louis
Colorado College (2)	Ohio State University	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	Wellesley College
Columbia University (2)	Princeton University (2)	University of New England	Wesleyan University (4)
Cornell University (3)	Rhodes College	University of North Carolina	West Virginia University
Denison University	Rice University	at Chapel Hill	Yale University (3) ■
Dickinson College	Rochester Institute of Technology	University of Notre Dame	
Duke University (2)	Rutgers University (2)	University of Oxford	
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania	Scripps College	University of Pennsylvania (4)	
	Southern Methodist University (7)	University of Richmond (3)	

Meet Taft’s Newest Alumni Trustee

Amanda Costanzo McGovern '93



TAFT ALUMNI HAVE ELECTED Amanda Costanzo McGovern '93 to serve her alma mater as the newest member of Taft’s Board of Trustees.

McGovern discovered Taft when her brother, Eric '92, arrived on campus in 1989; she enthusiastically joined him the following year. She brought great energy and spirit to her dorm monitor and tour guide positions, and to Taft’s JV soccer, ice hockey, and lacrosse teams. As a senior, she brought that same zeal to the varsity cross country and crew teams. In the classroom, McGovern developed a strong interest in romance languages, falling in love with French and Spanish. Mark Potter’s art history class also ignited her passion for art and travel: With his encouragement, McGovern took a gap year after graduation, deferring her entrance to Vanderbilt University to study Italian and art history in Rome, and to kayak in Baja, Mexico, with the National

Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS).

With a bachelor’s degree in English from Vanderbilt University in hand, McGovern came back to Taft during the summer of 1999 to sharpen her teaching skills under the tutelage of one of the best—English Teacher Steve Schiefflin. McGovern taught English literature in Taft’s premier Summer School before enrolling in a master’s program in English education at Manhattanville College. She began her career as an English teacher in 2002 at the French-American International School in Boston. While there, she reconnected with fellow Taftie Todd McGovern '92. They were married in 2004.

She switched gears in 2007, embarking on a career in the luxury retail industry. McGovern’s passion for foreign languages and strong interpersonal and organizational skills took her to Cartier North America, where she started as an executive assistant to the president and CEO. She advanced

through a number of corporate-level management positions during the next seven years and spent time in Cartier’s New York City flagship boutique. McGovern is now a training and development consultant for Moxie Professional Development, where she has worked with a number of luxury brands, including Hermès, Cartier, Louis XIII, Moët Hennessy, and Diptyque.

McGovern is also an experienced non-profit management professional. In 2004, she and her husband, Todd '92, who passed away in 2013, cofounded Seas It, a nonprofit promoting recovery through recreation for cancer patients and their caregivers. She became the executive director of Seas It in 2014, managing grant requests, fundraising, networking, and leading development initiatives and creating strategic plans.

Though she has since stepped away from the executive director post, McGovern continues to proudly represent Seas It at cancer centers nationwide, building partnerships and leading training programs.

In 2017, McGovern created and launched the popular podcast *Cover Story*, which streams bimonthly on Spotify, iTunes, and Stitcher. She cohosts and coproduces each episode.

McGovern currently lives in New Jersey with her twin boys and husband and is happy to be back on the ice again with some of her former Taft women’s hockey teammates. Her passion for Taft continues to run deep: She is proud to return to campus each year to spend time with the recipients of the Todd P. McGovern '92 Scholarship, given each year since 2013 to students whose courage, passion, optimism, and commitment to service embody the spirit of Todd’s extraordinary life. ■

*Superfans: Power, Technology,
and Money in the Music Industry*
NEW DEGREE PRESS
Emily Gumbulevich '08

Despite touring and releasing music, many successful artists still have to work a day job to stay afloat. However, fans have more say in the music industry than ever, and it is up to these fans to contribute to building a new industry that puts the power (and money) back in artists' hands.

Gumbulevich explores, for example, how and why the music industry is changing, how Taylor Swift has used social media to challenge the status quo of the "old" music industry, and why seemingly successful artists like DREAMDIVE still have to work side jobs to pay the rent.

*Last Train to Vienna:
The twisted tale of how Ukraine
suddenly became the central nerve
point of international contention*
Rudolph Chelminski '52

of grief captured the world's attention in 2020 and brought U.S. President Donald Trump to impeachment is a strange and tangled story.


The 700 Haiku of The Carpenter
CREATESPACE
Peter Britell '59

A longtime attorney, Britell is the author of five books and a treatise on the law of green buildings and lives in Florida. Britell is a magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Harvard College, a cum laude graduate of Harvard Law School, and holds an L.L.M in taxation from New York University Law School. He was also a triathlete for more than 40 years.

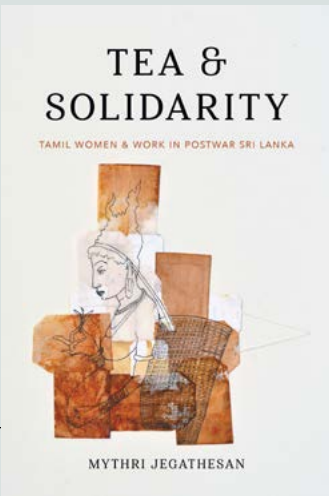
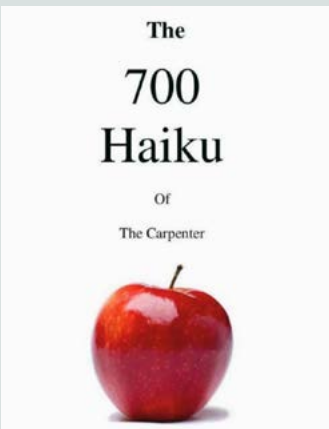
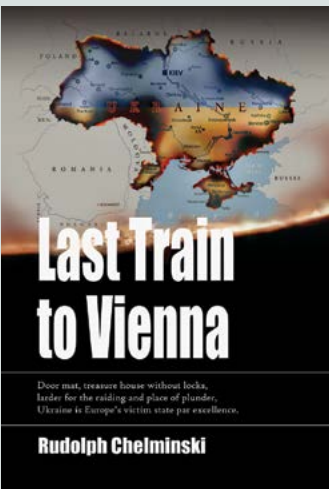
*Tea and Solidarity:
Tamil Women and Work
in Postwar Sri Lanka*
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS
Mythri Jegathesan '90

Superfans


Power, Technology & Money
in the Music Industry



EMILY GUMBULEVICH



In *Tea and Solidarity*, Jegathesan seeks to expand anthropological understandings of dispossession, drawing attention to the political significance of gender as a key feature in investment and place making in Sri Lanka specifically, and South Asia more broadly. This vivid and engaging ethnography sheds light on an otherwise marginalized and often invisible minority whose labor and collective heritage of dispossession as “coolies” in colonial Ceylon are central to Sri Lanka’s global recognition, economic growth, and history as a postcolonial nation.

 Listen to an interview with Mythri Jegathesan on the New Books Network

*The Power Company
Plays Hardball and Gets Nailed!*
PAGE PUBLISHING
A. Leigh Baier '59

The Power Company Plays Hardball and Gets Nailed! is a novel about the role of a young attorney from the North who had grown up with Mafia and CIA mentoring and learned how to win battles.

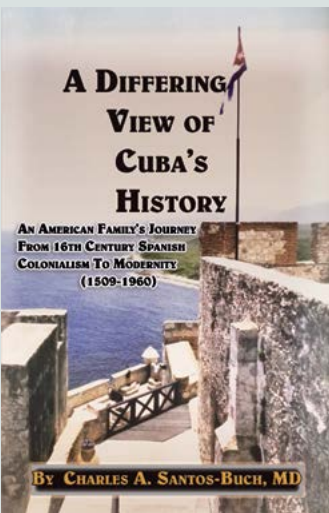
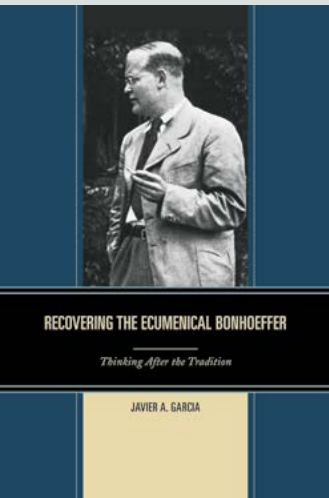
Recovering the Ecumenical Bonhoeffer
FORTRESS ACADEMIC
Javier Garcia '05

A Differing View of Cuba's History
TRIMARK PRESS
Charles A. Santos-Buch '49

**THE
POWER
COMPANY**

Plays Hardball and Gets Nailed!

A. Leigh Baier



In PRINT

ROCKRIDGE PRESS
Eliza Whetzel Savage '06

Discover some of the greatest benefits of plant-based nutrition and learn the basics about food and beverage remedies in this book. With details for a wide variety of superfoods—vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, herbs and spices, even coffee and tea—you'll find resources for many common health problems.

Eliza Savage, M.S., R.D., C.D.N., is a New York City-based registered dietitian with a lifelong passion for wellness. She has extensive experience counseling patients in private practice and in outpatient settings at New York's top hospitals. She wears many hats as a nutritionist: writing for various wellness companies, consulting with brands as a nutrition expert, and contributing to media outlets such as Women's Health, Well+Good, and Health.

BALBOA PRESS
Mike Macy '69

If you would like your child considered for this competition, please contact the Taft Bulletin at taftbulletin@taftbulletin.com.

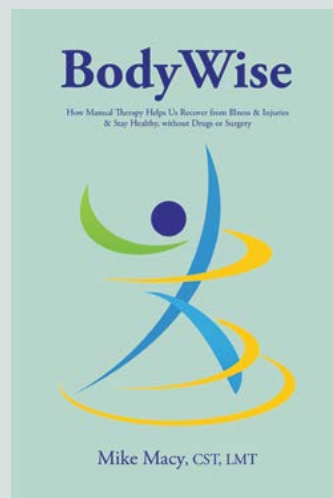
Over the past 50 years, manual therapy has become an increasingly accepted and effective option for treating pain, injuries, and illnesses, including many that have not responded to medical approaches. While not a substitute for medical care when that is needed, craniosacral therapy and visceral manipulation, the two specialties featured in this book, complement standard medical care, rarely involve unwanted side effects, and treat the whole person, usually leaving them healthier and happier than before.

Katharine Eats Her Lunch

IBOOKS
Kate Teves '97

Katharine is a hungry shark, and she wants to eat her lunch! A lunch that will go crunch, crunch, crunch! A brunch that she can munch, munch, MUNCH!

work added to the Hulbert Taft Library's Alumni Authors Collection, please email the editor (lindabeyus@taftschool.org) and mail to Taft School | 110 Woodbury Road | Watertown, CT 06795-2100.



Kate Harding Teves '97



I was never an artist, but in 2017, I was doodling on a pad of paper for no apparent reason, and the Squirbles were born. This was the first time I had ever illustrated *anything*. My husband, Christoph Teves '97, and I then wrote *Meet The Squirbles* together. From there I went on to make more illustrations and to write *Katharine Eats Her Lunch*.

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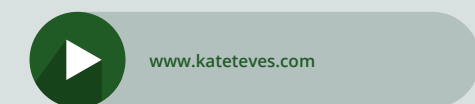
What do you love about it?

Out of the blue, writing and illustrating for children has become a real passion of mine. Of course, I love the creativity of the work. But I also love thinking seriously about how kids see the world. I enjoy creating inside jokes and hidden details in my drawings because I think kids like feeling as though they're "in" on something.

I've worked as a writer for television and advertising for most of my career. But the birth of the Squirbles presented me with something very different. I soon began writing comics and working on more kids' stuff. I'm working on a graphic novel for middle school girls right now.

The shutdown forced me to publish *Katharine Eats Her Lunch*, and I'm so glad. I was going to try to get an agent and a publisher for it, but that would have taken a whole year. So when every kid in America was stuck at home, I thought, Ah! Perfect time to publish an e-book!

We are polishing off a new Squirbles book right now (the brothers, Pip and Percy, have to clean their rooms—no ifs, ands, or buts!). We're also adding coloring sheets and other cool stuff for kids to my website.

Taft Bulletin / **SUMMER** 2020



STILL SERVING

The Work and Perspectives of Taft Alums During COVID-19

This past spring, when the coronavirus pandemic swept through the nation, we contacted several alumni working in COVID-affected sectors to hear their experiences. Here are the stories of, and words from, a variety of graduates who are leading in the manufacture of masks and PPE, the regulatory landscape, technology, medical reporting, testing, remote education, emergency care, job flexibility, and the environment.

HEALTH CARE
TELEMEDICINE
Manufacturing PPE
GOVERNMENT
ENVIRONMENT
JOURNALISM
Working Remotely
EDUCATION

NEW AFRICA SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

SERVING in the ICU

Alexa Bette Lehtinen '94 is a registered nurse in the ICU at Yale New Haven Hospital, where she's currently working around the clock on the front lines of the fight against the coronavirus. Lehtinen, who graduated with a B.S.N. from Fairfield University in 2008 and has been a registered nurse for 12 years, was kind enough to take the time to answer several questions about her experiences of late.

What has it been like in the ICU?

The medical ICU at Yale New Haven Hospital usually takes up two floors within the Smilow Cancer building. Back in early March, Yale moved most of the oncology patients out and reconfigured two more floors to care for critically ill, COVID-positive patients. All four floors were soon filled, and we faced staff, supply, and PPE (personal protective equipment) shortages. We had to pull nurses and doctors from all other parts of the hospital to assist. The atmosphere was chaotic and tense at first. We didn't know when the curve would flatten, and the hospital had to adjust daily to rising numbers.

How has your job changed since COVID-19? Are you working much longer hours?

I usually work three 12-hour shifts per week. Luckily, I have not been mandated to work longer hours. Care for critically ill COVID-19 patients is a whole new area of medicine. There is no one proven treatment yet for the virus, so we are seeing various drug and convalescent plasma trials. Many of our patients end up intubated and in ARDS (Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome). We often

"prone" these patients, which involves using a team of six to eight people to turn them onto their stomachs. This position opens up the lungs and improves oxygenation.

What has been the hardest part of your job in recent months?

Strict visitor restrictions went into place in early March. Family members are not allowed to come into the hospital unless a patient is actively dying. Talking to family members and hearing their anguish at not being able to hold a loved one's hand while they are so ill has been heart-wrenching. Additionally, the suffocating feeling of having to wear a mask for each entire 12-hour shift has been incredibly challenging.

What has been the most gratifying?

Connecting family members with their loved ones via Zoom and FaceTime, and seeing their faces light up as they talk to the patients, is often the highlight of our shifts. Also, we have had a few extremely ill patients pull through after many weeks in intensive care, so we line the hallways and clap as they roll out of the ICU.

How are you feeling about the future? Do you feel that things are improving or that the curve is flattening? As someone on the front lines, what are your projections?

We have seen the number of patients in the ICU go down slightly, but we still have all four ICU floors open. We are worried about people recklessly defying social distancing guidelines. We are exhausted and feeling apprehensive about second and third waves. There is a huge disconnect between what we are witnessing in health care (the horrible ways in which this virus ravages the human body) and those within the community that feel this isn't something to be taken seriously.

Any other thoughts you'd like to share?

When we first started caring for COVID patients, I moved out and lived separately from my family for a while, worried I would bring the virus home. However, at a certain point it became apparent that we would be caring for COVID patients for a very long time. A "new normal" set in for everyone on our health-care team. I am living at home again, trusting in the fact that we have effective PPE and taking every precaution possible to protect my family.

—Carola Lovering Crane '07



"Connecting family members with their loved ones via Zoom and FaceTime, and seeing their faces light up as they talk to the patients, is often the highlight of our shifts."

Alexa Bette Lehtinen '94, R.N., on duty at Yale New Haven Hospital in Connecticut.

LEADING the Innovation Pack

Dr. Davis Liu '89 and practicing telemedicine

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused physicians, patients, and health-care networks across the globe not only to turn to telemedicine, but to fully embrace it—many for the first time. For Davis Liu '89 and his colleagues at Lemonaid Health, the concept (and its broad use) is not new. It is both a firmly established practice and the basis of their business.

“Since 2015, Lemonaid has been focused on providing affordable, high-quality, primary care services to patients in all 50 states and the District of Columbia using our technology platform,” says Liu, who consults with as many as 100 patients each day through Lemonaid’s smart-phone app and [website](#). “We routinely evaluate a wide range of conditions, from sinusitis and bladder infections, to depression, anxiety, and thyroid function.”

It should not be surprising, then, that Lemonaid is once again leading the innovation pack: In partnership with Scanwell Health, Lemonaid is offering the first at-home, rapid serology testing kit for the coronavirus.

“It was clear that Lemonaid’s national presence, integrated medical team, and technology platform would allow us to

offer patients timely, evidence-based, reliable testing for exposure to the SARS-CoV2 virus on the same scale as that of our other medical services,” notes Liu.

The at-home test, which is pending government approval, can determine past infection or exposure to the coronavirus. Patients will be required to complete a health questionnaire on the Lemonaid website before a Lemonaid provider orders the test. Lemonaid will then ship the Scanwell test kits—which require only blood from a simple finger-prick—to patients. Lemonaid clinicians interpret the results and follow up with each patient. Liu expects the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to validate the test and grant Emergency Use Authorization in August.

“The technologies used are commonly used in medicine. The difference for a novel virus like SARS-CoV2 is determining what type of assays are needed to identify the virus,” Liu explains. “Scanwell worked with a vendor who developed this test for use in China. Use in the United States requires the validation and approval by the FDA via Emergency Use Authorization.”

Liu notes that Emergency Use Authorization is temporary, and owes its

speed in part to limitations on some of the requirements of formal FDA approval. Once the emergency declaration is lifted, however, the full formal review process must to take place for the test to remain in use.

In the meantime, Lemonaid’s overall patient volume continues to rise, as in-person access to physicians is limited by quarantine, physician availability, and job (and therefore health insurance) loss.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is fundamentally changing how we think about public health, and how we think about access to medical care for all Americans,” says Liu. “One of my hopes is that there will be a greater acceptance of telemedicine by the medical community to complement the traditional doctor office visit. The care Lemonaid provides is affordable, convenient, and where patients want it when they need it. Obstacles, stressors, and barriers to accessing care—things like travel, time, and whether or not a patient has coverage—no longer apply, allowing patients to focus on just one thing: How do I get better?”

—Debra Meyers

Davis Liu, M.D. is a board-certified family physician, patient advocate, physician leader, blogger, and the author of two books, *The Thrifty Patient: Vital Insider Tips for Saving Money and Staying Healthy*. He’s passionate about making health care more convenient, personalized, and affordable. Prior to joining Lemonaid, Dr. Liu was a practicing primary-care doctor for 15 years at Kaiser Permanente in Roseville, California. He also served on the Permanente Medical Group (TPMG) board of directors as vice chair of the Finance and Audit committee and the Governance committee. Dr. Liu graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. He received his medical degree from the University of Connecticut School of Medicine.



“The COVID-19 pandemic is fundamentally changing how we think about public health, and how we think about access to medical care for all Americans.”

Dr. Davis Liu '89 in his office, where he provides medical care from to patients in all 50 states and D.C., where Lemonaid Health is operating.

MANUFACTURING

PPE During a Critical Time

A Q&A with **James McKinnon '87**, Cotswold Industries

As CEO of Cotswold Industries, James McKinnon '87 is carrying on the legacy of the third-generation family-owned and -operated American textile manufacturer. His grandfather founded the company in 1954, and his dad, Wink '60, followed suit and continues to work for the business. Cotswold is a leader in the development and distribution of technical textiles and apparel fabrics and has supplied a wide variety of products for sectors such as the military, medical device manufacturers, and hospitals, including PPE.

Your family's textile business has been producing personal protective equipment for health-care workers and patients for decades. With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting the U.S. in the spring, did you have to make major changes to shift the company's focus and increase production on PPE and your Saxon Shield line? How difficult was that?

As a current supplier to various U.S. government entities, Cotswold moved quickly to reposition our USA manufacturing assets to produce PPE materials in large quantities. We were fortunate in that our commercial workwear products were well suited for dual-use PPE production so that we were able to pivot quickly to address the unprecedented demand. Our durable water-repellent and antimicrobial chemistry is applied to all our products so that we produce reusable products that are high-performance as well as being sustainable.

Were your textile manufacturing facilities able to stay open as "essential businesses"?

Yes. Cotswold has five factory locations in South Carolina and Georgia, and we were deemed essential as soon as the country began sheltering in place.

What advantages does Cotswold have that set it apart in the world of PPE manufacturing and materials?

Our focus as a company revolves around producing value-driven fabrics that are also as sustainable as possible. Our innovation team took up the challenge to use the demand opportunity to develop an isolation gown PPE product called "Eco-Shield" that is made from 100 percent recycled plastic bottles. We felt that if given the chance to show what we could manufacture in this country, that FEMA, DOD, and various private health-care companies would see the great value in an American-made, innovative, and purpose-driven partnership.

How has the textile industry in the U.S. been doing with so many disruptions to retail consumption and manufacturing during this crisis?

As it's been for many businesses, 2020 has been very tough on USA textiles companies that were heavily focused on apparel and/or home furnishings. However, as an industry, we have banded together to use as much production capacity as possible to drive protection PPE fabrics to our health-care heroes. Our industry has had many success stories around recreating broken supply chains, and we feel that those will continue to pay dividends in new and effective ways of meetings the challenges of our "new normal."

Have you been working remotely or in Cotswold's home office in New York City?

Regarding our NYC head office, we were quite fortunate to have had our IT infrastructure put 100 percent into a cloud-based solution several years ago. We were able to seamlessly switch to working from home without any issues. Our managers and associates that are required to be on site received rigorous training and were issued protective equipment so that they feel and stay as safe as possible.

—Linda Hedman Beyus

"2020 has been very tough on USA textiles companies that were heavily focused on apparel and/or home furnishings. However, as an industry, we have banded together to use as much production capacity as possible to drive protection PPE fabrics to our health-care heroes."



Cotswold Industries' line of PPE, Saxon Shield.



To learn more visit [Cotswold Industries website](#).



James McKinnon '87, CEO of Cotswold Industries. ROBERT FALCETTI

Well INFORMED

How a pandemic brought to the forefront clinical informatics, the life's work of **Dr. Charles Safran '69**

Out of plain sight during the frantic search for ventilators and masks, there was another critical conundrum facing doctors and hospitals as the coronavirus began carving a deadly path through the United States.

It was one that Dr. Charles Safran '69 has devoted his illustrious career to as an informatician, an area of expertise that may have once seemed wonky.

How do hospitals facilitate the free flow of patient records over different database platforms? And how can health-care workers treat and evaluate people for a

his first telemedicine application in 1996.

But then the pandemic hit.

"Why would you want to go to a downtown office in Boston potentially filled with people who might be sick with an infectious disease?" he says.

In 1983, fresh off completing his residency at Boston's VA Medical Center, Safran joined the staff of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and became an instructor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. One of his first projects was to conduct a clinical trial of computer

a pandemic to effectuate dramatic change.

"The patient, him or herself, is the least utilized resource in all of health care," Safran says. "Maybe people don't have to go to a physical office and waste all that time. There's better operational ways of organizing health care."

When the pandemic hit, several hospitals teamed up with the city of Boston and the commonwealth of Massachusetts to create a 1,000-bed hospital called Boston Hope in the convention center. It was a novel and cooperative approach, but one fraught with potential complications because of the different electronic record-keeping systems used by the hospitals.

"So we have this sort of spaghetti of different data streams coming in," says Safran, a former advisor to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But the technology is only as good as the backbone of the databases: coding. The language of computers needed to expand to include a whole new set of terms related to COVID-19. And it had to happen quickly and accurately.

"In health care, [figuratively speaking] if you're 'dialing someone's telephone number,' you have to get all 10 digits correct," Safran says. "So in health care, a little bit of error causes someone to die. So we can't afford a 4 percent error rate. We all face the same problem, which is how do you get the right information, in the right time, to the right person, in the right format, so they can act on it?"

"Any plan is good until you're punched in the face if you're a boxer. The same is true for hospitals. How do we get telemedicine to work at scale, and oh, by the way, you've got a week to make it work?"

myriad of conditions without exposing patients or themselves to the virus?

Safran had a unique insight into those challenges as the former chief of the Clinical Informatics Division at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston and a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School.

"Any plan is good until you're punched in the face if you're a boxer," Safran says. "The same is true for hospitals. How do we get telemedicine to work at scale, and oh, by the way, you've got a week to make it work?"

Telemedicine had shown promise over the decades, but was stymied by regulations that did not allow doctors to see patients in other states, according to Safran, who built

software that allowed women to treat UTIs themselves. The women could use a computer terminal in a doctor's office to be evaluated, go over treatment options, and print a prescription if appropriate.

In 1996, Safran spearheaded an initiative funded by the National Library of Medicine to prove the value of telemedicine. The project was called Baby CareLink and was used to monitor premature infants. The developers had hoped the application would eventually help children with acute leukemia, women with breast cancer undergoing bone marrow transplants, patients who had undergone kidney transplants, and those recovering from strokes. But it would take

"So in health care, a little bit of error causes someone to die. So we can't afford a 4 percent error rate. We all face the same problem, which is how do you get the right information, in the right time, to the right person, in the right format, so they can act on it?"

Safran is particularly proud of the mentorship role that he has played for some of the most innovative minds on the front lines of the pandemic. One of them is Dr. Larry Nathanson, an emergency physician at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, who started training under Safran when he was an undergraduate at Boston University and developed pioneering approaches to treating the Boston Marathon bombing victims. Nathanson also set up a field hospital in Haiti after the earthquake.

At Beth Israel Deaconess, the hospital has been able to reduce the number of health-care workers exposed to patients potentially infected with the virus through the use of iPads and a robot. It has also helped the hospital conserve personal protective equipment, known as PPE.

"You didn't want to actually gown other people who didn't necessarily have to be in the room," Safran says. "But they could participate in the care remotely."

Clinical informatics has become more mainstream over the past decade. It's a medical subspecialty with its own medical board examination.

Still, sometimes the work of an informatician is conflated with information technology, as was the case once with a chief of medicine at Beth Israel Hospital.

"He turned to me and said, 'You mean you can fix my email?' I said, 'I'm sure I could, but that's not what I do,'" Safran says.

—Neil Vigdor '95



Dr. Charles Safran '69, former chief of the Clinical Informatics Division at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, and professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. DONNA SAFRAN

Making Remote Work WORK

A Conversation with Sara Sutton '92, CEO and founder of FlexJobs

Known as the “Queen of Remote Work,” Sara Sutton '92 is the CEO and founder of **FlexJobs**, an innovative career website specializing in full-time and part-time remote jobs, employee and freelance jobs, and on-site jobs with flexible, part-time, and alternative schedules. Sutton also founded **Remote.co**, a one-stop resource for remote teams and companies, and the **1 Million for Work Flexibility** initiative. Sutton is also the creator of **The TRaD* Works Forum**, dedicated to helping companies leverage the benefits of telecommuting, remote, and distributed teams. She recently shared her thoughts about what the COVID-19 pandemic has meant for workers, workplaces, and employers with the *Taft Bulletin*.

Your businesses seem custom-built for the workforce and workplace changes that came with the COVID-19 pandemic. Have you received increased inquiries from both workers and employers?

On the employer side, we experienced **an increase in remote job listings in April over March this year**; even with widespread job losses, there are still many employers hiring for remote jobs. On the job seeker side, we're also seeing many more professionals actively seeking remote and flexible work. This is surely a combination of necessity due to the global work-from-home experiment that's been thrust on organizations and on the economic downturn. That being said, we're seeing huge increases in the number of people who have decided they want to continue working this way in the long term, even after their companies reopen. In fact, **31 percent of people worked from**

home occasionally, before the pandemic began in the U.S., and by the end of April, 63 percent of U.S. employees said they had worked from home in the last seven days because of COVID-19 concerns. This exposure to remote work is driving more people to consider it as a permanent option for their professional lives.

What are the biggest challenges your clients are facing right now?

I think the biggest challenge from an organizational perspective is how to come up with a sustainable and strategic plan to integrate the “new norms” around remote working and health guidelines. It's one thing to be in a crisis, all-hands-on-deck mode initially, but now is the time to regroup, take a deep breath, and start to plan what the next steps really look like to ensure resilience.

On a more personal level, I think

for many of us distraction and being overwhelmed are among the biggest challenges. For those of us with kids, it's a whole additional job with online school, camps, and childcare. Work aside, with the daily news, worries about loved ones, developing a new normal at home, and creating your own personal protocols for leaving home, there is a lot to be thinking about right now. That's why developing routines and processes can be so helpful to get us back on track.

Are there particular business sectors that have become more reliant on a remote work model?

The **fields with the most remote work listings right now** include customer service, sales, computer and IT, medical and health, and education and training. These industries have seen a massive shift in people seeking remote services rather than in-person services. For example, **health insurance companies are seeing dramatic increases in tele-health usage by patients**, and need to increase their remote staffing accordingly.

From the workers' perspective, industries such as retail, travel and hospitality, entertainment, and event planning have experienced huge job decreases overall and record unemployment. We're trying to offer as much support as possible to help people overcome layoffs and difficult circumstances to find jobs that better fit their lives going forward.



Sara Sutton '92, CEO and founder of FlexJobs.

“We’re seeing huge increases in the number of people who have decided they want to continue working [remotely and flexibly] in the long term, even after their companies reopen.”

Do you think the workplace landscape has been permanently changed by COVID-19?

Absolutely. The shift toward remote work has been happening slowly and steadily for the last 10 to 15 years, but COVID-19 accelerated the shift significantly. The speed with which companies were able to successfully adapt to remote work during this crisis, and the positive results of implementing remote work to maintain efficiency and productivity during the most extreme circumstances, show just how vital

remote work is to the future—and truly, the present—of work. We're already seeing **companies that previously did not have large remote workforces** making plans to keep at least portions of their teams remote permanently. Major companies, including Google, Microsoft, and CNN, have announced they'll stick with remote work at least through the end of the year, with permanent transitions to hybridized models. And other large companies like Facebook, Twitter, and Shopify have announced massive shifts toward remote work as a permanent business strategy.

To listen to a Taft online discussion with Sara Sutton on working remotely, visit the Rhino Crash 2.0 virtual events page.

—Debra Meyers

Sara Sutton's Top Tips for Making Remote Work WORK

These are not typical times, to say the least. Even experienced remote workers are facing all sorts of additional challenges—children at home, online school, and partners or roommates sharing the space, to name a few. Still, Sutton says, there are a few tried-and-true guidelines that can help make remote workers successful.

> **Establish a routine.**

The best remote workers build work routines and a home work environment that help them stay focused and manage their work obligations.

> **Create a dedicated workspace.**

Having a dedicated workspace—a guest bedroom, a true home office, or just the corner of a shared space—helps the shift to work mode.

> **Set boundaries.**

Productive remote workers need to set boundaries—and communicate them to those around them—so that when they're working, they're really working.

> **Communication is key.**

Communication needs to be a cornerstone in a remote worker's day. Communicating with coworkers, clients, managers, and other stakeholders is critical to maintaining and strengthening strong working relationships, remotely. This includes impromptu conversations on chat, email exchanges, phone calls, and web and video conferencing. And remember, you do NOT need to use video as the default for every meeting, especially if it brings technical challenges or anxiety. Sutton says, “I've had far more video calls in the past three months with people new to remote work than I have in the prior 13 years with well-seasoned remote workers!”

Making Government Work SENSIBLY

By Philip K. Howard '66

As the founder of Common Good and an author, **Philip K. Howard '66** offers his insights on America's bureaucratic system during the pandemic

America failed to contain COVID-19 because, in part, public health officials in Seattle were forced to wait for weeks for bureaucratic approvals intended—ironically—to avoid mistakes. Then, when the virus was almost everywhere, governors and President Trump tossed rule books to the winds. It would otherwise have been illegal to do much of what they did—setting up temporary hospitals, practicing telemedicine, using whatever disinfectant is handy...without documenting and getting preapprovals for each step.

America got past the initial health crisis, thanks to the heroic, unimpeded dedication of health-care professionals. But what will save America from a prolonged recession? Many shops and restaurants will be out of business. Dormant factories and service organizations will need inspections before reopening. Government agencies will be overwhelmed by requests for permits. Months, perhaps years, will pass as America tries to restart its economic engine while bogged down in bureaucratic quicksand.

COVID-19 is a wake-up call that there's a serious flaw in the operating system of American government. But the flaw is not solved by deregulation. We *need* government to protect against pandemics and to safeguard clean air and water. What's

needed is government that actually works sensibly, instead of paralyzing both officials and citizens in thick bureaucracy.

The missing link is human responsibility on the spot. Modern government not only sets goals, but dictates a correct way to achieve them. Coming out of the traumatic decade of the 1960s, we tried to create government that was better than people. Governing would be automatic. Just follow the rules. But the complex shapes of life never fit the square legal holes. The result is broad frustration and alienation. It works about as badly as central planning because that's what it is.

"America got past the initial health crisis, thanks to the heroic, unimpeded dedication of health-care professionals. But what will save America from a prolonged recession?"

Every president since Jimmy Carter has campaigned on a promise to rein in red tape. Instead, it's gotten worse because no one has thought to question the underlying premise of thousand-page rule books dictating precisely how to achieve public goals. The mandarins in Washington see law not as a framework that enhances

free choice but as an instruction manual that replaces free choice. The simplest decisions—maintaining order in the classroom, getting a permit for a useful project, contracting with a government—require elaborate processes that could take months or years. Essential social interactions—a doctor talking with the family about a sick parent, a supervisor evaluating an employee, a parent allowing children to play alone—are fraught with legal peril. Slowly, inexorably, a heavy legal shroud has settled onto the open field of freedom. America's can-do culture has been supplanted by one of defensiveness.

COVID-19 is the canary in the bureaucratic coal mine. The toxic atmosphere that silenced common sense here emanates constantly from a governing structure that is designed to preempt human judgment. The theory was to avoid human error. But the effect is to institutionalize failure by barring human responsibility

"What's needed is government that actually works sensibly, instead of paralyzing both officials and citizens in thick bureaucracy."

at the point of implementation. It's as if we cut off everyone's hands.

Perhaps now is also the moment when Americans pull the scales from their eyes and see our bureaucratic system for what it is—one governed by a philosophy that fails because it doesn't let people roll up their sleeves and get things done.

In June of this year, the nonpartisan group Common Good, which I chair, launched a campaign calling for spring cleaning commissions to reboot American government. We present a new governing vision that empowers officials and citizens alike to use their common sense, and a shadow platform showing how overhaul could transform health care, schools, the economy, and the environment. Prominent citizens such as Mitch Daniels, Bill Bradley, and Al Simpson are helping, as well as members of the extended Taft community, such as Lance Odden. To learn more about the work of Common Good, visit www.commongood.org.

Philip K. Howard is the founder of Common Good and author, most recently, of *Try Common Sense*. His TED talk has been viewed over 700,000 times. He is the 2018 recipient of the Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal.



Philip K. Howard '66, author and founder of Common Good.

Talking TOILET PAPER, Forest Destruction, Clean Air, and Environmental Advocacy

with **Liz Barratt-Brown '77**,
Natural Resources Defense Council advisor, during the age of COVID-19

Can you tell us what you've been working on recently with NRDC?

My campaign team has just launched our Issue with Tissue 2.0 report, which spotlights the role that toilet paper, paper towels, and tissues play in the destruction of Canada's boreal forest. The report has a really useful scorecard so you can see how your brand measures up. All of the major brands still use 100 percent virgin fiber in their at home products, an anachronism in the 21st century.

Every minute, the equivalent of seven NHL hockey rinks are logged, damaging a forest ecosystem of ancient trees, carbon-heavy peat soils, and a myriad of waterways. The boreal stores more terrestrial carbon than any other ecosystem, so its future is our future. It's also the future for species like caribou, moose, songbirds, and waterfowl, and, of course, the 600 Indigenous communities that rely on it for their food and spiritual practices.

Many of these communities have put forward plans to protect their traditional lands. We are supporting those and working to take the pressure off these lands by encouraging the major players to move to more recycled content or alternative fibers like bamboo or wheat waste.

Working with Indigenous partners has always been central to our work, and it is all the more important now as we wrestle with the impacts of colonialism and racism not just regarding the treatment of our Indigenous colleagues but on their removal from their lands.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the work that NRDC is doing? Have priorities shifted or been curtailed in some areas?

Even though many people are working from home, it hasn't stopped NRDC's work. If anything, our work has expanded during

this time. Exposure to air pollution may exacerbate COVID-19, so NRDC is working to make sure Americans aren't needlessly exposed to more health risks. We have filed lawsuits challenging the rollback of fundamental clean air and water safeguards and the rush to build controversial projects, like the tar sands mega pipeline Keystone XL, while people are quarantined at home. NRDC wants to be sure Americans aren't facing multiple threats at this time and that policy responses don't make the climate crisis worse.

We have also worked closely with community groups to urge governors to put a moratorium on water turnoffs and to focus state responses to COVID-19 on the most vulnerable populations. For my own work, it's been challenging working on a toilet paper campaign while toilet paper has become scarce for so many people. But there is also a lot more interest in toilet paper than ever before, so we are going to roll with it!



Barratt-Brown with her husband, Bos Dewey, and daughter Eliza; she also has a son, Barratt.

"Exposure to air pollution may exacerbate COVID-19, so NRDC is working to make sure Americans aren't needlessly exposed to more health risks. We have filed lawsuits challenging the rollback of fundamental clean air and water safeguards."



Liz Barratt-Brown '77 at Iceland's Gullfoss Falls.

Is there less public interest and support in environmental efforts since the coronavirus crisis?

For good reasons, the pandemic has consumed the nation's attention. Ditto the protests that have risen from the horrific deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others. But increasingly Americans, I think, will realize that we are dealing with multiple, interwoven crises—COVID-19, climate change, and the inequitable treatment of people and the environment. An increasing number of communities have experienced chaotic weather—more heat waves, more flooding and drought, more hurricanes and storms, and of course wildfires—and this year is predicted to be one of the worst for hurricanes. I think we'll see that environment and equity concerns will be top issues in the November elections, even though we've been so preoccupied with COVID-19. As for support for groups like

NRDC, we are definitely going to see a belt-tightening as fewer people have the funds to make donations and NRDC's own endowment has shrunk in the marketplace.

It's NRDC's 50th anniversary, so what milestones stand out?

Justice William O. Douglas once queried, "Who is going to speak for the trees?" NRDC was founded in 1970 to do just that, to help pass our nation's bedrock environmental laws and ensure they were implemented. NRDC started as a small band of Yale Law School graduates, but today counts over 700 scientists, lawyers, and policy advocates working in offices from New York to Beijing.

There are so many milestones, but one sticks out to me as an example of how "out of the box" NRDC's work has been at times. In the early 1980s, we worked with Soviet scientists to prove that monitoring nuclear testing under the test ban treaties was possible by

detonating an explosive in the desert and showing that seismic instruments could pick up the explosion. We've worked on challenges as diverse as closing the ozone hole over the planet, getting lead out of gas globally, saving millions of acres of forests in Canada and the U.S., removing pesticides and antibiotics from processed foods, cleaning up drinking water supplies in Newark and Flint, and saving a whale nursery in Baja, Mexico. NRDC has made a major contribution to protecting our planet. But we know we have a lot more work to do, and even though I for one have stepped back into a consulting role now, I am confident a diverse, passionate group of advocates will carry NRDC on for 50 more great years of environmental advocacy.

—Linda Hedman Beyus



To learn more about NRDC's Canadian boreal forest work visit www.nrdc.org/save-canadian-boreal.

TELLING the Stories

From the desk of New York Times' reporter **Neil Vigdor '95**
during the spring of COVID-19

First came the email: Several of my colleagues at *The New York Times* went to a conference in New Orleans where someone had tested positive for the coronavirus.

It was the night of March 10. The specter of an invisible pathogen upending lives, families, friendships, and workplaces had not manifested itself—not yet. The probability of the virus spreading to every corner of America still seemed infinitesimal.

But I wasn't prepared for what happened next.

and chit-chats with conductors.

As of June, I haven't been back to Manhattan since, and probably won't return until September at the earliest. Our newsroom, a nexus of gritty reporting, gifted storytellers, and energy, suddenly fragmented into more than 1,000 home newsrooms around the globe. Living rooms in Washington Heights. A journalism fellow's home in Indiana. Flats in Rome and Hong Kong. A cottage in Nantucket. An editor's desk in the Poconos.

have lost their lives to the virus.

I have written stories about hucksters like the Tennessee man with 17,000 bottles of hand sanitizer and a Queens, New York, man who sold people stolen home test kits for the virus and never gave them their results.

I have written about the dying nursing home resident in Michigan who asked Alexa, the Amazon virtual assistant, for help. And then there was the Virginia bishop who succumbed to COVID-19 after defying warnings about the danger of religious gatherings.

We have not gone unscathed. A number of colleges have gotten sick, and in March, Alan Finder, who spent nearly 30 years at *The Times*, died from the virus.

At a time of so much uncertainty, our shared purpose is as clear as ever. It's one of keeping readers informed so they can make pragmatic decisions about the safety of themselves, loved ones, and friends. It's one of telling the stories of those who don't have a voice. It's one of holding leaders accountable. And it's one of getting the whole story, no matter how inconvenient or nuanced.

We always have taken our job home with us.

"We're apart [as a newsroom], but we're together, and we have stories to tell, stories that are more important than ever."

That same night, a cleaning crew in hazmat suits fanned out in the newsroom, emptying trash bins as reporters and editors somewhat nonchalantly hustled to make deadline and tried to block out distractions, including this unsettling one.

That was my cue. Time to start working from home, I told myself as I gathered up my laptop and gear for my 12:25 a.m. train ride home to Connecticut, a nightly exercise in people watching

We're apart, but we're together, and we have stories to tell, stories that are more important than ever.

Since I started working from home, I have been a regular contributor to the live briefing on the pandemic on the *Times* homepage, where millions of readers have flocked for dispatches about COVID-19, stay-at-home orders, the shortage of crucial supplies, and updates on the number of people who

Neil Vigdor is a breaking news reporter for *The New York Times*, where he has written about the death of George Floyd, the Buffalo, N.Y., police officers charged with knocking an elderly protester down, impeachment, the disappearance of Jennifer Dulos, and the coronavirus pandemic. He previously covered politics for *The Hartford Courant* and Hearst Connecticut Media. He has interviewed Donald Trump, Michelle Obama, Mitt Romney, Jesse Jackson, Jeb Bush, and Rudy Giuliani, among many others.



"At a time of so much uncertainty, our shared purpose is as clear as ever. It's one of keeping readers informed....It's one of telling the stories of those who don't have a voice. It's one of holding leaders accountable. And it's one of getting the whole story, no matter how inconvenient or nuanced."



IMAGINING Education's Future

By John Merrow '59

Education reporter **John Merrow '59** offers his insights on teaching and learning during the pandemic

While we can't know what the world will look like in the aftermath of the current pandemic, we know that our basic needs and drives will be unchanged. From my perspective, and from Taft's, the education of our young must take center stage.

School closings have fundamentally altered the landscape. With schools closed and parents engaging in "home learning" with their children, we can no longer ignore the yawning divide between rich and poor and—too often—between white and non-white in America.

Resources are part of the solution, of course, but we need a paradigm shift. Educators must learn to look at *each* individual student and ask, **How is this child intelligent?** because every child has skills and abilities deserving of development.

Post-pandemic, it is completely inappropriate to continue asking How smart are you? and then formulate answers based on test scores. That's the MO of a "sorting system," and if America is to recover, we must offer **all** children multiple chances to achieve their potential.

To be blunt, it's time to **stop** thinking like educators whose mantra all too often is "I taught it, but they didn't learn it." Instead, those charged with teaching need to think like **a librarian, a swimming instructor, a highway engineer, or a gardener**. Let me explain:

Librarians do not have a captive

audience. After all, no one is required to *attend* the library. To survive and prosper, librarians have had to identify their audiences and find ways to appeal to them, to draw them into their buildings or electronic networks. For the most part, they've succeeded, and without pandering.

With school buildings shuttered, students do not have to "attend" anything. They can log on to classes to get credit for "being there," but there's no way for the teachers to know who's paying attention and who's FaceTiming friends. And we know that more than 25 percent of students in Los Angeles, for example, aren't even bothering to log on. Even parents who are monitoring their children's efforts cannot be certain that the kids are paying attention.

So, as they plan for their classes, teachers must ask themselves the librarian's questions:

What can I do to make material this appealing?

How can I persuade my students to invest their energies in this subject?

Swimming instructors are measured by results. If wannabe swimmers don't learn to swim, the instructor cannot claim, "I taught them effectively, so it's not my fault that they cannot swim." No, he or she has to find new ways to teach swimming, because the instructor **owns the failure**. In my experience, many teachers already think the way

competent swimming instructors do. But not enough! *Every* teacher has to live by the mantra, "*If they're not learning, then I am not teaching.*" Teachers need to assess frequently, take a clearheaded look at the results, and adapt accordingly.

Highway engineers—the men and women who design our roads and streets—have one important goal in mind: to get us safely from Point A to Point B. Because they know that drivers' attention wanders, highway engineers build roads whose lanes are about one-third wider than the cars that travel on them. Without that extra room for predictable error, we'd have many more highway accidents. Instead, nearly all of us arrive at our destinations safely.

Apply that to teaching and learning, and we will have an education system that treats failure as nothing more than an opportunity to try again. Perhaps you know the story of WD-40: If the chemical engineers who developed that ubiquitous product had been *penalized for failing*, work would have stopped after their first try, which they conveniently labeled "WD-1." Instead, they tried and failed *38 more times* before hitting on a formula that worked!

Teachers, keep that in mind. Don't take it personally when a student doesn't get it the first time, or the fifth. Explore the reasoning behind the error, but not punitively. Celebrate wherever possible.

Gardeners understand that what

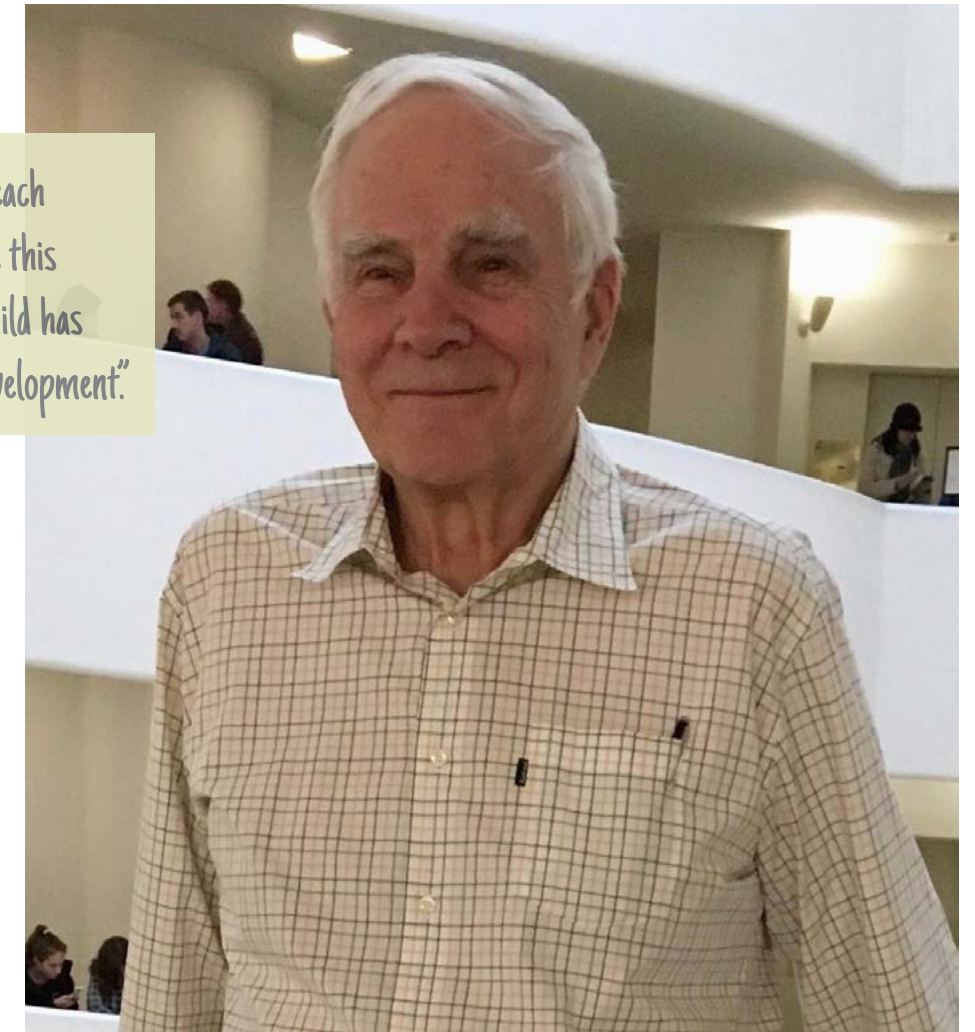
"Educators must learn to look at each individual student and ask, How is this child intelligent? because every child has skills and abilities deserving of development."

they are involved in is a work in progress. And works in progress take time, faith, work, and love. The *last* thing a gardener would ever do is pull up the emerging plant or flower by the roots to see if it's growing. Nurturing is essential. That's true whether or not schools are open.

Gardeners know that roses demand one kind of attention, which is different from what green beans, tomatoes, and hydrangeas require. "One size fits all" doesn't apply to gardening or to teaching and learning. The educational equivalent of the gardener's mind are the questions: How is this child smart? What is she interested in? And what can I do to nurture her interests?

What's more, gardeners don't hover over their seedlings; they pay the appropriate amount of attention and then walk away, leaving nature, the sun, the earth, and the seeds to do the work of growing. To be like gardeners, teachers and parents cannot hover; they cannot expect students to be "on task" all the time. In fact, in these awful times, play and free time have never been more important.

John Merrow began his career as an education reporter with National Public Radio in 1974 and recently stepped down as president of Learning Matters, a nonprofit production company. In 2012, he became the first journalist to be honored with the prestigious McGraw Prize in Education, often referred to as "education's Nobel Prize." Since 1984, he has worked in public television as education correspondent for *PBS NewsHour* and as host of his own series of documentaries. His work has been recognized with Peabody Awards, Emmy nominations, and other reporting awards. An occasional contributor to the opinion pages of major U.S. newspapers, he is the author of several books, his most recent being *Addicted to Reform: A 12-Step Program to Rescue Public Education*. He blogs weekly on **The Merrow Report** and lives in New York City with his wife.



John Merrow '59.

To this day I remain grateful that Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Snow, Mr. McKinley, The Beezer, and other teachers at Taft approached the challenge of teaching me with determination, an ego-free attitude, humor, tolerance, and (dare I say it) love. Because they believed in me (against all evidence!), they refused to allow me to do substandard work, though Lord knows I tried.

While I'm certain that today's Taft students are equally blessed, for the nation to succeed those blessings must be widely available. Getting there will require more than resources. What's needed is the recognition on the part of voters, politicians, and policy makers that we simply cannot afford to waste human potential. If this paradigm shift occurs, it will be perhaps the pandemic's only gift. ■

Coming Together for Taft

Thank you!

It can be hard to find reasons to celebrate these days, but I am very happy to share a very good one with you now.



During this period of great uncertainty and hardship, our loyal Taft donors came together to lift both the Annual Fund and the emergency COVID-19 Financial Impact Fund well past their goals. Our community contributed \$5,779,697—with 39% of alumni and 90% of current parents participating—and commitments to the COVID-19 Financial Impact Fund accounted for \$623,148 of that total. While it is no surprise that participation levels were down across the board—the same is true of all of our peer schools—our generous supporters heeded the call to embrace and protect Taft and its students in a moment of unprecedented challenge. The COVID-19 funds have already been put to use to boost financial aid, purchase PPE supplies, prepare and retrofit classrooms for safe in-person instruction, and upgrade and deploy the school’s technology systems to accommodate various forms of remote learning.

Of course, none of this would have been possible if not for the hard work and leadership of our Annual Fund volunteers, including Sara and Bob Savage P’18, ’20, Chairs of the Current Parents’ Fund; Jean and Stuart Serenbetz P’03, ’06, ’09, Chairs of the Former Parents’ Fund; Joanie Dayton GP’14, ’16, ’21, Chair of the Grandparents’ Fund; hundreds of Class Agents across more than a half-century of class years; and our dedicated Parents’ Committee. Taft owes a debt of gratitude to them all.

As we look toward the fall and the prospect of a protracted pandemic and economic recession, very little is certain except that Taft’s financial needs will remain high and the fundraising environment will be difficult. I thank all of those who have thus far shepherded Taft through this devastating crisis, and I hope that the Taft community will come together again, next year, to ensure that the school and its students continue to thrive.

In health and gratitude,
Dylan Simonds ’89, *Annual Fund Chair*

Parents’ Committee 2019-20



Sara and Robert Savage,
Parents’ Fund Chairs

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Long Zhong Yang and Xue Mei Tang
Joanne and Wayne Yow

Annual Fund Class Awards 2019-20

Snyder Award
Largest Annual Fund amount contributed by a reunion class 50 or fewer years out
CLASS OF 1990: \$256,600
Head Class Agent: Ben Levin

Chair of the Board Award
Highest percent participation from a class 50 or fewer years out
CLASS OF 1970: 46%
Head Class Agent: Barnaby Conrad

McCabe Award
Largest Annual Fund amount contributed by a non-reunion class
CLASS OF 1979: \$300,692
Head Class Agents: Patty Buttenheim and Pamela Cole

Class of 1920 Award
Greatest increase in Annual Fund dollars from a non-reunion class
CLASS OF 1979: Increase of \$160,534
Head Class Agents: Patty Buttenheim and Pamela Cole

Romano Award
Greatest increase in participation from a non-reunion class 50 or fewer years out
CLASS OF 1978: 33% from 30%
Head Class Agent: Chris Marvin

Young Alumni Dollars Award
Largest Annual Fund amount contributed from a class 10 or fewer years out
CLASS OF 2013: \$8,769
Head Class Agents: Jagger Riefler and Elizabeth Shea

Young Alumni Participation Award
Highest participation from a class 10 or fewer years out
CLASS OF 2018: 43%
Head Class Agents: Joe Hardison and Maddie Savage

Spencer Award
Highest percent of gifts from classmates who have not given in the last five years
CLASS OF 1970: 9%
Head Class Agent: Barnaby Conrad

Awards determined by gifts and pledges raised as of June 30, 2020.



Thank you to all who donated to Taft's
COVID-19 Financial Impact Fund
and to those still showing their generosity.

We also thank everyone who takes the message of
"Not to be served but to serve" to heart and are
serving their own communities in many ways.

To donate to the fund visit www.taftschool.org/give.

Every gift counts.

Wall Street Got You *Down*?

“As a member of the extraordinary Class of 1960, one way to further my goal of establishing a full scholarship in memory of our beloved head monitor, George Hampton, was to fund gift annuities. They are an integral part of a brilliant retirement strategy that allows me to bypass significant capital gains and also receive generous, guaranteed fixed income for life at a time when the yield on Treasuries is near zero and the future of the U.S. economy is extremely uncertain. Gift annuities are also a way for me to pay Taft back for the many ways the school supported me in becoming the best that I could be.”

—James Blakely Rule '60



Age	Single Rate %	Age	Single Rate %
65-66	4.7	78	6.4
67	4.8	79	6.6
68	4.9	80	6.9
69	5	81	7.2
70	5.1	82	7.4
71	5.2	83	7.6
72	5.4	84	7.8
73	5.5	85	8
74	5.6	86	8.2
75	5.8	87	8.4
76	6	88	8.6
77	6.2	89	8.8

- A gift annuity requires a minimum of \$10,000.
- Involves a very simple, two-page agreement.
- **No** attorney or financial planner needed though should be consulted before funding an annuity.
- Effective rate much higher than a commercial annuity.
- **No** management of investment fees to diminish payout.
- May include a second person.
- Great for you and great for Taft.

For more information, please contact Paul Parvis, Director of Planned Giving,
paulparvis@taftschool.org or phone direct 860-945-7751.

Please also visit our planned giving website for very helpful information: taftschool.giftplans.org

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