



CARDIGAN MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

NEWS FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 1 • WINTER 2021

“AGAIN, AGAIN!”



This year has tested us all in ways we never imagined possible. The adults in the Cardigan community have responded with purpose, conviction, hope, and a perhaps previously untested resolve that swings our legs onto the floor each morning. This resolve focuses on creating a space

that is safe for our boys: to keep them physically safe, of course, but also to protect and nurture them emotionally.

You would be mistaken to believe (albeit hopefully) that our kids are oblivious to what is going on around them. Not much evades their notice, which makes it all the more important to surround them with constructive and positive outlets for processing the extraordinary events that happen to coincide with their time on The Point. With this in mind, we have made significant modifications to our daily, weekly,

and even our annual program this year. The goal is not only to keep our boys and the whole community safe and healthy, but also to find opportunities for creativity, growth, and joy in the fog of uncertainty and fear with which we have all been living.

Some of our attempts have succeeded and others have failed, but true to the Cardigan spirit, we keep trying. Middle school boys need and want to be actively growing—heck, they’re going to grow whether we want them to or not!—and our jobs as parents and educators are to surround them with a community of people and values that encourage that. A flower will find its way to the sunlight if there is even a tiny crack in the pavement; the most effective programs this year have been those which simply create the space and support for the boys’ positive development.

I have seen our faculty and staff putting this philosophy into practice all across campus this year. When our sixth graders hold and care for their bunnies in our Farm Program, caring

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Students introduce themselves to Cardigan bunnies in the 1970s (left), and (right) the tradition continues as sixth graders participate in the 2020–2021 Farm Program.



for a living thing with less power than themselves, they are filled with vitality and purpose. More students than ever before are taking part in this program, and through it are connecting to the steady rhythm of birth, life, love, and death. Cuddling with a soft bunny or bonding with one of the many campus dogs (the latter may rival the number of faculty at Cardigan!) can be just the salve for the soul that we all need right now.

Other changes we have made this winter are helping us to prioritize health and safety without sacrificing joy. For example, we now have students engage in activities on Saturday mornings instead of going to class. Each weekend the boys fill two distinct blocks of time from a menu of activities. Some spend the first block trying out robotics, and can be found sledding down Clancy Hill during the second. Others will perhaps attempt rocketry and then snowshoeing. The activities are not only designed to be a fun break in the routine for the boys, but also a way for them to test their boundaries and step out of their comfort zones. In challenging our assumptions about what a “Cardigan week” looks like, this has tested our faculty and staff members’ comfort zones as well.

When the adult brow furrows (and did we think it could furrow more than it has in one year?) we often assume that our children’s brows will follow suit. But this year has helped to remind me of how effortlessly our boys seem able to access delight. Teachers must ensure that students

learn to prioritize their own safety, but students in turn are forcing us to appreciate the simple pleasures we can find in merely moving through this year together. And if we sometimes become discouraged by a year that seems to stack endless challenges on top of challenges, the boys can teach us a thing or two there as well. On a recent Saturday, some students built a “table kite” to see whose could float along farthest when set in front of a window fan. No need to encourage with the aphorism “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again;” the boys were practically begging to “try it again,” even before their kite fell over. Their excitement echoed in my memory with small voices from the back seat on a long-ago car ride, calling “again, mom, again!” asking Cynthia to play a song for the umpteenth time.

Our students may no longer be strapped into car seats, but we are striving to keep them safe in the embrace of Cardigan. When they cheer “again, again” we know that—if even for just that moment—we have created the space for them to find joy. Being present with each other, focused on the next immediate challenge, becomes the most important thing in the world, crowding out lingering worries or anxiety. It’s a lesson for the rest of us, and it’s a pretty good way to spend a snowy morning in New Hampshire.

It’s the *Cardigan Way*.

Ch. Day

Christopher D. Day P’12,’13
Head of School

At left, students gather to watch the inflation of the weather balloon “CMS-1,” an extra credit project by Cliff Stearns ’66, David Gaillard ’66, and Richard Douty ’66 that launched to 2,000 feet under Mr. Hulbert’s supervision. At right, current students test “table kites” during the new schedule’s Saturday activity period.



Help us keep you in the loop on all things Cardigan! Review the latest details of our 75th Anniversary celebrations on our website (www.cardigan.org/75) and send your current email address to development@cardigan.org.



THROUGH THEIR EYES

Glimpses of campus life from years past

“Rabbits have again become quite a hobby at Cardigan School. Skip Hendricks, Herb Anker, Bill Cushman and the Randalls are among those whose pets have filled the old quarters and have spread to inhabit the old barn.”

(“Rabbits Again Leading Hobby” in Cardigan Chronicle, October 29, 1955)

“The pigs have grown a lot since we got them—now weighing about 250 pounds. Lou Tobia went to feed them the other day and got thrown by them running into his legs, but he didn’t spill the food. The pigs eat so fast that the school can hardly keep them with a supply of food. We feed them two pails every meal, three times a day.”

Warren Cox '48

(“Facts About the Barn” in Cardigan Clarion, March 15, 1947)

“An interloper (rabbit) was smuggled back to campus from the Sandwich Fair and has since been lying low in various closets in Clark-Morgan. A month of dining room salads later, the clandestine dorm pet has managed to thrive to the point where a mere closet is not enough.” [...] “Update on the rabbit case: After the missing rabbit was located under the boathouse, the James Burnett Franklin House Rabbit Refuge has offered sanctuary for the past few days. There seems to be a shortage of pet lovers who are willing to add a rabbit to the household. An urgent plea is being broadcast by the Burnetts to find a home for the rabbit.”

Carol Shelton

(Staff Sheet, November 13 and 20, 1989)

“Pets at Cardigan Mountain School keep the masters busy. The fad seems to be increasing, too. Peter Randall and Fred Arsenault have rabbits in the old pump house at the new dormitory. Tom Dunn has a hamster, and Gregory Cronis and Richard Fisher have tried to keep chickens. Goldfish, parakeets and canaries are popular with the boys. Now that waterfront activities are increasing, turtles have begun to appear in some rooms. Crayfish were tried out, too. Tadpoles and salamanders—even a snake—have been removed from the sleeping quarters mysteriously—but some masters are suspected of having information about the disappearances.”

David Dagnino '56

(“School Pets Keep Masters on Toes” in Cardigan Chronicle, March 14, 1955)



Cardigan animals offer boys both responsibility and companionship (at right, top to bottom):

Byron Koh '52 gives a scratch to Black Dog, a local stray beloved by Cardigan students and faculty.

Students get up close and personal when visiting with a sheep in this undated photo.

Dr. Richard Morrison '50 took this snap of a classmate during his own ninth grade year.

In 1947–48, students helped care for the five horses, three cows, and three pigs that lived in the Barn.



CARDIGAN
MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

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Fall clubs included a dog walking group, providing students with a sense of purpose while offering them equal doses of affection and exercise. Pairing boys with The Point's furriest residents is just one of the creative outlets Cardigan has offered during this unusual year.
