

Countryside Trees



NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE SCHOOL ALUMNI

Spring 2021

Letter from the Head



Krystal Young

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Countryside! Wow, what a year we have had. I write this as we are wrapping up our final days of instruction during what is arguably one of the most

challenging years in teaching. I am in awe of our faculty and staff this year for the creative and innovative ways they fulfilled our mission, Joy in Learning and Excellence in Education.

This year brought with it a number of challenges. Not only were faculty teaching socially distanced in-person learners but also teaching synchronous remote learners. Ms. Stambaugh led a sheep's eye dissection through Zoom. The traditional middle school dance in the fall was turned into an outdoor movie night.

Mrs. Woodcock and Mrs. Kyung held the first-ever 'Living History Museum' with online and in-person students performing live together. Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Kirby had the K/1 students build their own castles instead of one large castle together. I could give so many examples of the ways our teachers



Our first-ever Outdoor Movie Night - two screens - choice of *The Princess Bride* or *Shrek*

ensured that Covid didn't detract from their programs.

In addition to Covid, Countryside completed its Head of School search! It's me! I'm the new Head although, after a global pandemic, I don't feel new! I am honored and excited to be continuing in the work that I have helped lead over the past sixteen months.

In addition to fostering relationships with our current families, I look forward to building relationships with alumni families. Kristin Feddersen and I are so excited about the prospect of hosting alumni events again when it's safer for travel.

Wishing you a healthy and happy summer filled with memories.

All the best,
Krystal Young
Head of School

Our 8th graders honored at graduation:

Adrian Blume	Central
Jack Braun	Academy
Max Chen	Centennial
Isabelle Hadjsaid	Undecided
Kenji Hayakawa	Central
Dillon Jones	Academy
David Konicek	Undecided
James Lee	Pomfret School (Connecticut)
Davis Mo	Concordia International School Shanghai
Staz Smith-Provezis	Central
Eric Tian	Centennial
Conrad Tichenor	Academy

Students matriculating as subfreshmen at University Laboratory High School:

Andres Bross	Will Miller
Cali Cooper	Chloe Noronja-Hostler
Helen Fu	Madison Young
Sasha Goncalo	

Accolades

- OUR TEACHERS TAUGHT BOTH IN-PERSON AND SYNCHRONOUS REMOTE LEARNING DUE TO COVID-19 CHANGES
- WE SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATED THIS UNUSUAL YEAR WITH NO COVID TRANSMISSION AT THE SCHOOL

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Countryside Trees

BIG Changes This Year

The MPR as the science room? Social sciences in the gym? We opened our doors this August with a very different look from previous years. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we spent the summer redesigning our interior spaces, upgrading our HVAC units, and installing room air purifiers.

In order to keep our students with their grade-level cohort, every classroom was reduced to just one grade and redesigned with six-foot spacing between desks. This meant, for example, that the K/1 room became just the Kindergarten room. With 1st grade moving to the 2/3 room, 3rd grade took over LWW, and LWW moved to the gym. And so on and so on forth. Whew!



We were fortunate to be able to offer our families a choice of 5-day-a-week in-person learning **or** remote learning. And families could choose which option they preferred by the month. Our teachers worked to ensure they could simultaneously teach to their in-person students - known as "Roomies" - and to their remote students - known as "Zoomies".

We offered lunch in our three event tents on the back lawn with the students on yoga mats. In addition, these spaces were used for outdoor classroom space.

Masks were (and still are) required for anyone in the building, and we restricted those in the building to students and faculty/

staff only. Our students entered their classrooms by the exterior doors, and we used the sidewalks to move between classes instead of the interior corridors. Everyone was subjected to a temperature check upon entering the building. And for our remote students, our front vestibule was utilized for supply pick up and drop off.

All our faculty and staff were fully vaccinated as of the first week in March. In fact, we are fortunate to be a small school so that we could plan ahead to close the school the day after the vaccine to account for possible reactions. We are proud that our entire faculty and staff are fully vaccinated. And that we have *had no cases of COVID transmission at school this year among students, faculty or staff!*



Above: 3rd grade in "old" LWW

Below: LWW in the gym



ALUMNI:
BE SURE WE
HAVE YOUR
EMAIL ADDRESS
TO RECEIVE
INVITATIONS

Spring 2021

Graduating in a Pandemic

Planning a graduation ceremony during a pandemic lockdown led to innovation. Last May we celebrated our Class of 2020 with several firsts - social media spotlights, a car parade, and our first outdoor graduation.

We featured each of our 8th graders on our Instagram and Facebook pages in May with photos and quotes about memorable moments and what they will miss about Countryside.

We held our first-ever graduation parade with cars decorated for the occasion and our faculty cheering on the graduates. We enjoyed this parking lot celebration so much that we have decided to make it a tradition.



Although our original May graduation had to be postponed, when the State allowed outdoor gatherings in June we jumped on the opportunity to celebrate our graduates.

We battled wind, the setting sun, and technical difficulties to bring our "pods" of in-person families and our grandparents & friends on Zoom to create a memorable celebration of our 8th graders! (photo below)



Feeling the Love

A special thank you to our current families, alumni families, board, and even some of our ALUMNI for sponsoring/providing many lunches for faculty and staff this year.

We enjoyed lunches from several locally-owned restaurants including Papa Del's, Original Pancake House, Rainbow Garden, El Toro, San Maru, Dish Passionate Cuisine, Neil St. Blues and more.

Another anonymous benefactor made Countryside masks for EVERY single faculty and staff member. They even made an oversized mask for our mascot, Kirby the Comet!

These gestures of kindness were greatly appreciated.



Face masks from custom Countryside logo material handmade by an anonymous family

Countryside Trees

Celebrations from the Past Year

October: Instead of our traditional Halloween parties, we instituted a Fall Day Celebration. In elementary school, our remote learners joined us for outdoor games, Halloween parade, and fresh kettle corn. In middle school, our remote learners joined us for lunch, a costume contest, and pumpkin hunt.



November: Our wonderful South Asian families provided lovely gifts (a candle in a glass votive) for every student in the school to celebrate the Festival of Lights. "Every year we make our homes glow with candles to show how light triumphs over darkness."



December: Our middle schoolers celebrated with an Ugly Sweater Lunch where all students got their own pizza! (Well, a miscommunication turned "pizza for 50" into 50 pizzas!) Our remote students were invited to join us in-person and even students not in attendance enjoyed Jackbox games together.

February: Our Chinese classes celebrated the Lunar New Year by performing at school. Our elementary Chinese classes made individual (socially distanced) dragons this year from recycled materials.



Watch them parade through the 1st grade classroom: tinyurl.com/ClassroomParade

March: Our middle schoolers had full run of the school for our first-ever Laser Tag Night. The celebration included a Chipotle dinner in the gym followed by roaming the darkened school in competitive rounds of laser tag.



April: Our mascot, Kirby the Comet, finally made an appearance and met our Kindergarteners. Without our monthly Comet Fest all-school assembly, we have missed Kirby. (Even Kirby wears a mask!)



Departing Faculty

We typically hold a Farewell Reception for our departing faculty. Unfortunately, due to ongoing restrictions on gatherings, we are not holding one this year. We will miss you!

Grace (Kennedy) Woodcock



Mrs. Woodcock taught 5th grade here for five years.

Where are you headed next?

I am taking a year off to have a baby and stay home with my daughters.

What will you miss most about Countryside?

I will miss working with all of the students. I will also miss creating so many new units and traditions with Mrs. Kyung. I especially enjoyed building our US History unit.

What is your favorite memory from your time at Countryside? I could not choose just one memory. I have special moments that I will treasure from each group of students I taught at Countryside. Although watching the students participate in Decade Day was memorable.

You may contact Mrs. Woodcock at:
gkkenne@gmail.com

Ruby Bridges Speaks

In March Ruby Bridges, civil rights activist, spoke to our 2nd through 8th graders via Zoom. Ms. Bridges was the first African-American child to desegregate the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans in November 1960. She spoke of her experience and answered our students' questions.



Service Projects

Last fall our middle schoolers completed a clothing drive to benefit Francis Nelson Heath Center. This spring they worked to weed and clean up the landscaping and our gaga pit. In addition, our Chinese classes held a bubble tea sale to benefit Cunningham Children's Home.



How do we lay over 300 carpet squares to turn the gym into classrooms?



Watch the process in 22 seconds:

tinyurl.com/gym-to-classroom

WE ARE ON:

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Countryside Trees

Reimagining PE - Socially-Distanced

Due to social distancing restrictions, our typical PE activities could not take place this year. **Shane Woodcock**, our PE teacher and Athletic Director, worked to reimagine several activities. The results were that our students tried many new and exciting sports.

In addition to sports highlighted here, students did golf, badminton (4-square style), and backyard games like cornhole, washers, and ladder ball. Middle school also did an orienteering scavenger hunt, lacrosse, and a rec room games unit where they learned how to play pool, darts, ping pong, and air hockey.

Cosmic Bowling

With music blaring and LED lights glowing, an amazing backwards strike:

tinyurl.com/CosmicStrike



Frisbee Golf

This is the perfect socially-distanced middle school PE activity - and it utilizes our full 14 acres for our 9 hole course.



Yoga Ball Drumming

Utilizing jumps, squats, and drumming in unison, our K-5th graders enjoyed Yoga Ball Drumming. Video of drumming to Queen's "We Will Rock You":

tinyurl.com/YogaBallDrumming



Pool Noodle Battle

Students in PE became accustomed to using six-foot pool noodles to supplement several of our activities. These noodles allowed students to play tag without making contact, as well as complete various types of relays.



According to Mr. Woodcock, "The biggest challenge in PE this year was not having a gym to teach in. We made the best out of our spacious outdoor space, but when the weather didn't cooperate, we had to get creative with what to do inside the classroom."

But some parts worked well as Mr. Woodcock states, "I also had to get more creative with how we did fitness activities and relied more on technology. I was able to try things like Guitar Hero fitness and Beat Saber fitness to celebrate Star Wars Day, which were two of my favorite activities of the year."

HOMECOMING FALL PICNIC

SATURDAY,
AUGUST 21

AT THE
SCHOOL
(IF PERMITTED)

CSA Happenings

Countryside School Association switched gears this year. Although they normally sponsor wonderful family events including our Fall Picnic/Homecoming and Winter Ice Skating Party, these events were not possible due to Covid precautions. Instead our teachers and staff were the lucky recipients of some incredible teacher appreciation moments.

When our traditional Parent Work Day could not be held, CSA arranged for a small group of parent volunteers to assist teachers with setting up classrooms prior to school starting. Throughout the year CSA provided lunches for the faculty and staff from locally owned Dish Passionate Cuisine, and the faculty and staff enjoyed gift baskets featuring coffee, tea, and treats from local establishments.

During Teacher Appreciation Week, the teachers and staff were treated to personal Bundt cakes, lunch from Whisk, and Wacky Facts posted around the school (Did you know that fish cough or that sunsets on Mars are blue?) CSA also provided an extraordinary Egg Hunt all over the school with gift cards awarded in certain eggs! Who knew they could be so clever in where they hid the eggs!

Our school would not be the special place it is without our CSA. Thank you, CSA volunteers!



CHECK OUT
OUR
REDESIGNED
WEBSITE

New Logos and Alumni Logo



After more than 25 years, it was time for us to update our look. We worked hard to design a look that reflects the forward-thinking philosophy of Countryside School and in addition, we updated our athletic Comets logo.

We acknowledge “new” feels different to our alumni, but we are still the same incredible school you attended!

We will continue to use our “retro” tree logo to represent our alumni!



COUNTRYSIDE ALUMNI

Countryside Trees

Alumni Updates

ALUMNI:
PLEASE SEND US
YOUR UPDATES!

WE'D LOVE TO
FEATURE YOU

***Please note:** Students are listed by "affiliated class year" - the year a student graduated 8th grade or would have graduated had he or she remained at Countryside.*

David Kaplan (2000) Leigh and David were married in October 2020 in a Zoom wedding in Austin, TX. They had friends and relatives join them from all over the globe and are excited to begin their new life together!

Rose Kearns' (2000) adaptation of Jane Austen's *PERSUASION* will be opening Off Broadway this coming fall or spring. The production will be directed by the Bedlam Theatre's Eric Tucker. Rose will play Anne Elliot.

Brian Eckstein (2001) is currently a postdoctoral researcher in the chemistry department at the Colorado School of Mines, where he is developing new ways to construct porous materials for applications such as hydrogen fuel storage and CO2 capture.

Nate Graham (2001) left Apple after seven years and now works on the KDE project, an international volunteer technology cooperative dedicated to producing the finest free software on planet Earth. He blogs about it at <https://pointieststick.com> and lives with his wife and two children in New Mexico.

Arthur Baker (2002) After years of working at a large national law firm and global real estate services company, Arthur Baker founded the law office of [Concord Advantage Legal PLLC](#) to help Florida businesses and property owners.

Michael Belmont (2003) After finishing residency training in Internal Medicine, he is now an attending physician at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

Maria Nelson (2004) got married this past September. Her partner, Samantha Welter, works for Alaska Airlines. She is currently doing her clinical clerkships (last two years of medical school).

Carl Pearson (2005) received his PhD in electrical and computer engineering from the University of Illinois, and has started as a postdoc at Sandia National Labs in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Erika Belmont (2006) After graduating from medical school in May this year, she will start residency training in Internal Medicine at University of Chicago in June.

Alexandra Warwick (2006) In addition to continuing her graduate studies in bilingual education at the University of Illinois, she is currently co-teaching 4th and 5th graders at University Primary School in Champaign (under the direction of her former 2nd grade teacher at Countryside, **Ali Sweeney Lewis**). She has been engaged in a Zoom theater production project with her remote students and will perform their fourth Zoom play, *Jack and the Celery Stalk*, written and performed

Julie Strauss (2009) stopped by the school recently with Coconut - their Berniedoodle (mini Bernese Mountain Dog/mini poodle mix.)

Coconut has her own Instagram page: [@misscoconutthedood](#)



Alumni Updates

entirely by students! When not teaching, she is studying Spanish and working on her goal of being able to speak three languages fluently by age 30!

John Kearns (2007) is in Melbourne, Australia. He is working toward an engineering PhD at Monash University and is associated with the cardiac research division at The Alfred Hospital.

Alex Grubele (2008) received his PhD in mechanical engineering from Stanford University specializing in soft robotics. He founded a startup aiming to bring healthy food at prices everyone can afford using automation.

Milee Nelson (2008) is now a 4th year student at Emory Medical School. She plans to apply for residencies in either Neurology or Internal Medicine.

Hannah Gottlieb-Graham (2009) is the founder and director of an arts PR firm, [ALMA Communications](#). She is based in Brooklyn, NY, and works with a combination of artists, brands, galleries and institutions. Instagram: [@hannahgottliebgraham](#)

Madelyn Gunn (2009) is working at Parkland College and writing literature.

Angelita Repetto (2009) is finishing the third year of her Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of California, Davis. She is researching the economic integration of Latinx immigrants as a function of country of origin, intersectional hashtag activism on twitter, and the human downgrading effects of social media algorithms.

Anna Kanfer (2010) is on the talent team of Cameo, a Chicago based start-up offering an online platform for celebrities to connect with fans, recently named the world's most innovative social media company by Fast Company. She and Eric recently adopted Webster, the world's most adorable mini dachshund puppy.

Liam Nelson (2010) joined the Army last August. He is at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, and doing cyber technology.

Ben Chapman (2011) is working on bringing ranked-choice voting and other electoral reforms to Washington State.

Jordan Gunn (2011) is playing in The Orchestra Now (TON) at Bard College.

Ryan Mondak (2011) played guitar on all five tracks on Emmaline's most recent EP, *Necessity*, and Ryan also co-wrote two of the songs. Ryan will be touring with Emmaline this summer, with several stops in the Midwest. Ryan also served as producer for his brother Chris's newest jazz CD, which will be released in early 2022 by Summit Records.

Mac Dressman (2012) graduated from Georgetown University in May. He is working remotely for U.S. PIRG (Public Interest Advocacy Group) as part of the transportation team. They work to solve problems related to the environment and advocate to "reduce the need to drive, electrify buses and electrify cars - so the easiest, cheapest and most pleasant ways to travel are also the cleanest and healthiest." He will be moving to Chicago to continue work this summer.

Taylor Feddersen (2012) is a software developer at Microsoft working for Minecraft Education Edition. After a year of working remotely from Champaign, she will relocate to Seattle this fall when Microsoft moves back into the office.

Chunjoo (David) Ko (2012) is finishing his gap-year in New Jersey as a tech consultant and will be going to New York University College of Dentistry for the next four years starting July 2021. He is planning on practicing dentistry in the East Coast, particularly in Delaware.

Maddie Nelson (2012) still lives in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. She still works at the "Foundry" inpatient drug and alcohol addiction rehabilitation center as a behavioral health tech. She is now a Colorado resident and applying to PA programs (Physician Assistant).

Alumni Updates continued on page 10

**RECENTLY
GRADUATED
COLLEGE?**
LET US KNOW
YOUR FUTURE
PLANS

Countryside Trees

Alumni Updates Continued

Alumni Updates continued from page 9

Abby Potesman (2012) was selected for a highly competitive Department of Energy Computational Science Graduate Fellowship. Abby is a PhD student at the University of Chicago studying computational and applied mathematics.

Ailin Valdivia-McCarthy (2012) continues to work as a software engineer at McMaster-Carr and has begun her MBA at the University of Chicago.

Katie Bostaph (2013) graduated from Arizona State University this month and is looking for employment in the Phoenix area.

Isaac Freund (2013) is in his last semester at RWTH Aachen, Germany, graduating in computer science.

Carl Guo (2013) will intern at Amazon in Seattle during the summer, then start graduate school in the fall.

Sam Hotchkiss (2013) graduated from Vanderbilt in May with a major in economics and minor in business. Sam was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. In July he moves on to New York to start a job as financial analyst at Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation.

Austin Chen (2014) is currently a junior at NYU studying finance and applied mathematics. He will begin an internship at EY - Parthenon this summer.

Dylan Gunn (2014) is studying history, languages, and religion at the University of Illinois.

Daniel Konicek (2014) will be starting his senior year in Materials Science Engineering at the University of Illinois this fall. He spent the last year working in the Micro-Nano-Mechanical Systems Cleanroom Laboratory on campus and will be spending the summer as an engineering intern for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory.

Aditi Mehta (2014) is graduating Summa Cum Laude from UIC with a BS in Neuroscience with highest distinction. She will be going abroad to the University of Oxford in the fall to earn an MSc in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation.

Megan Bostaph (2015) completed her second year at Ithaca College and will be working a summer internship focused on media literacy education. Currently, she is scheduled to spend her fall internship in London, assuming that restrictions in London continue to be reduced.

Dante Freund (2015) is finishing his sophomore year at Baldwin Wallace University, majoring in composition and violin performance.

Lucy Potesman (2015) is completing her sophomore year at Northwestern. This summer she will serve as a research assistant on a project with her English professor that examines how the marketing and targeting of Global South novels around the world shapes the political climate of the postcolonial literary scene. Lucy plans to spend the next academic year studying abroad at Waseda University in Tokyo.

CHECK US OUT ON
INSTAGRAM
@COUNTRYSIDEK8

Director of Alumni Relations

Kristin Feddersen is your Director of Alumni Relations. She also has been Countryside's Director of Communications for the past 14 years and is the parent of two alumnae - Taylor (2012) and Lauren (2015).

Please email her with updates about what you are doing. So often we know where you are headed to college and what you *might* major in, but we never hear when those plans change.



Spring 2021

Mariah Winterbottom (2015) will be a junior at the University of Illinois studying accounting. This summer she will move to Hawaii for the month of July for vacation, while taking online summer classes!

Nicholas Gunn (2016) is studying economics and international relations at Illinois Wesleyan and playing football.

Olivia Gunn (2016) is majoring in global studies at the University of Illinois.

Kayla Israel (2016) is finishing her freshman year at the University of Central Florida where she is majoring in industrial engineering and minoring in computer science and mathematics. She was elected Speakers & Tours Chair for the UCF chapter of Themed Entertainment Association, named a future Jewish leader of Central Florida, and accepted into an internship at Lockheed Martin as a Supply Quality Engineer

David Kanfer (2016) is finishing his freshman year at the University of Illinois majoring in nuclear, plasma & radiological engineering. He was elected vice president of his fraternity, Phi Kappa Psi. He has also been working at the Illinois Plasma Institute for Prof. Ruzics' research group as an undergrad research assistant.

Angela Xu (2016) just finished her freshman year at University of Illinois-Chicago where she started an organization, Preventative Dental Care Project, that focuses on improving oral health accessibility and awareness for children in lower-income areas. She has been doing research at labs centered around wound healing and through a couple jobs, continued her interest in engineering.

Holden Siena (2017) will attend Augustana College this fall as a Presidential Merit Scholar and member of the Viking swim team.

Joshua Stephens (2017) was attending University of Hawaii - Hilo studying marine science. He is taking a break from school to serve a two-year mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is

currently in Arcadia, California, and is speaking Armenian in order to serve the Armenian people living there.

Maddox Dempsey (2018) is finishing his junior year at Central High School. As a member of both the National Honor Society and Spanish National Honor Society, he is an IHSA Scholastic Achievement Award Winner and a Big 12 Conference Scholar Athlete. He is a member of the boys swim and dive team, and he was named to the Big 12 All Conference Team and earned *News-Gazette* Second Team All Area honors!

Yoon (Eve) Freund (2018) now goes by Yoon and has been enjoying making lots of art (drawing, digital, costume, spray painting... a wide variety!)

Sierra Freund (2019) will spend the summer playing her violin at a music camp in Vermont called Kinhaven.

Suhani Garg (2020) is wrapping up her freshman year at Academy High and started the Pen Palling club at the school. She is also the first student to participate in a new program at AH that the faculty are hoping to formalize into AH Scholars, an academic track for students looking for increased challenges in their work. Although Suhani is enjoying her time at AH, she still speaks with a great deal of fondness about all of her teachers at Countryside and her years there.

Lin Gilbertz (2020) recently started driving with her learners permit and got her first job as a lifeguard. She has been in several shows with Centennial and swam her first season for Centennial where the team won Sectionals.

Hadley Siena (2020) enjoyed her freshman year at Academy High School. She is looking forward to exchanging letters with her numerous domestic and international pen pals, studying Spanish and German, making art, & spending time on Lake Michigan this summer.

ALUMNI:
PLEASE SEND
US YOUR
UPDATES!

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TO FEATURE
YOU

Countryside Trees

Alumna Creates Shortbread Sensation

Ali Webber Griffin (2004) is the Founder and CEO of Alma Kitchen, a Boston-based gourmet cookie boutique. They create incredible shortbread cookies and chocolates, hand-decorated with edible flowers and herbs. These scrumptious sweets have been mentioned in *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Martha Stewart*, and *Town & Country*.



Classic Shortbread Assortment: Lemon Thyme, Pistachio, Lavender and Orange Blossom (photo credit: Alma Kitchen)

We asked Ali a bit about this new venture:

What inspired you to found Alma Kitchen?

While coming up with the idea for Alma, I came to realize two things: The first is that historically, nature-inspired food is often seen through the lenses of nutrition and taste. Both are incredibly important, but food should be just as beautiful as it is nutritious, and there may be new and exciting ways to integrate nature into our everyday lives through food.

The second is that as a society, we are becoming more conscious about our impact on the environment. It has never been more important to protect nature and the world around us, and as a brand that celebrates nature's beauty, we have a responsibility to help protect it. That's why for every box of Alma sold, a portion of the proceeds go towards planting a tree. We also employ a carbon-neutral shipping policy to offset the climate impact of carbon emissions and are constantly looking for ways to continue our sustainability initiatives.



Alexandra Griffin, founder and CEO of Alma Kitchen (photo credit: Alma Kitchen)

You have received a lot of positive press very quickly, what excites you most about this endeavor?

We originally started Alma to bring a bit of joy to people during the outset of the pandemic, and knowing we are accomplishing that has been the most rewarding gift of all. The positive press has been great, but it's really exciting to just see that the brand is resonating with people.

The brand features beautiful imagery and visuals. Follow [@almakitchenco](https://www.instagram.com/almakitchenco) on Instagram and learn more here: www.almakitchenco.com

ALUMNI WITH
A NEW
BUSINESS?
WE WOULD
LOVE TO
FEATURE YOU

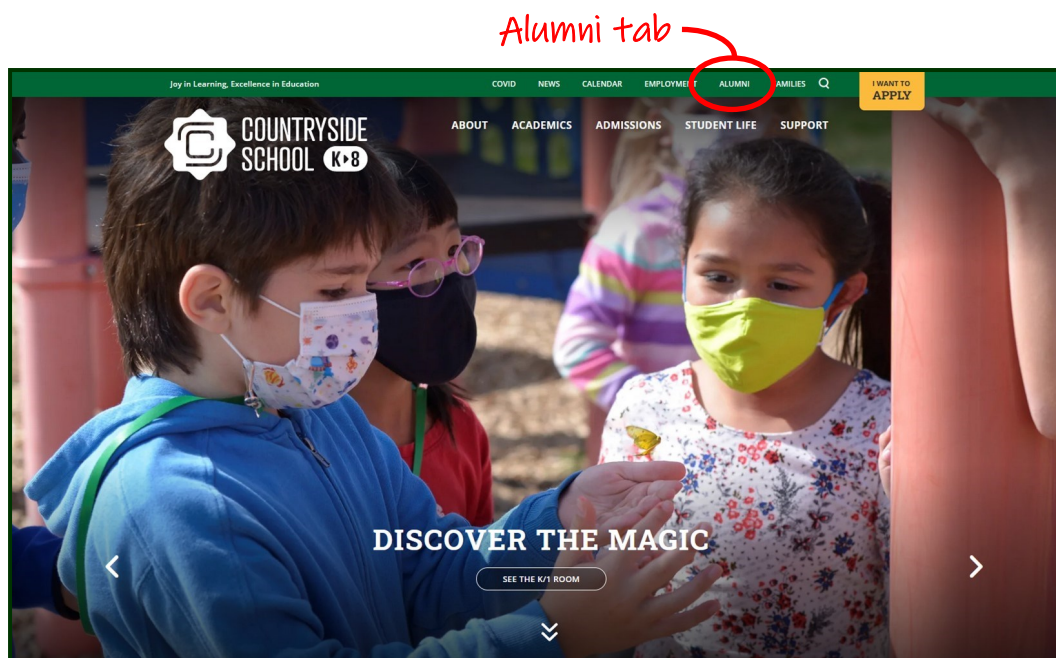
In the News

Lucas Wood (2017) was featured in *The News-Gazette* about his soccer success and film-making aspirations.
tinyurl.com/WoodSuccess

The News-Gazette featured **Holden Siena** (2017) about his academic and swimming success and how his family persevered through his Muenke Syndrome diagnosis.
tinyurl.com/SienaSuccess

Spring 2021

Redesigned Website Launched



In December we launched our redesigned website: www.countrysideschool.org. It is designed with prospective families in mind, but we hope you will enjoy the fresh interface - and maybe see some familiar faces in the photos.

Click on the Alumni tab to access our archive of *Trees* newsletters, see photos of alumni events, read about alumni in the news, and update your contact information.

If you haven't checked us out in a while, stop by the website to see what Countryside is doing now.

In addition, we are also now on LinkedIn. Connect with us!



Like us on Facebook for updates and event info @CountrysideK8



Follow us on Instagram @CountrysideK8



Connect with us on LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/company/countryside-school

CHECK OUT
OUR
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WEBSITE

Young Alumni & Student to be Published

Countryside alumnus **Marco Lu** (2019) and current 8th grader **Davis Mo** are co-authors on a paper with University of Illinois professor Dr. Fei Du. Their research paper was accepted for publication in the *Journal of Emerging Investigators*, a national science journal publishing original research by middle and high school students.

The title of their paper is "Exercise, grades, stress, and learning experience during remote learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic". This research project would not have been possible without the tremendous support of Mr. Antonsen and many Countryside School students who participated in the survey. www.emerginginvestigators.org

Countryside Trees

In Memoriam



Mary Breault

Remembering our beloved **Mary Breault** who passed away on June 6, 2020 after a two-year battle with cancer. Mary taught Literature and Writing Workshop from 1999-2008. She will be dearly missed.

From a 2008 interview with Mary when asked about her favorite Countryside moment:

"One from my early years was when the staff took part in *The Wizard of Oz* P.E. show. **Bill Fallon** and I were supposed to exit the side gym door and re-enter from the main door a few minutes later to deliver an important line. We stepped outside and started to chat about how well the play was going.

Then we realized that it was almost time for us to return to the stage. We ran breathlessly around the building to get back in, but unfortunately, the front door was locked and neither of us

had remembered a key. Our scene came and almost went, but **Susan Richardson** managed to holler from backstage: 'Look! It's a twister!' and the show went on without us!"

The Mary Breault Memorial Fund has been established to expand the middle school library she started. It will be named the Mary Breault Collection.



Wizard of Oz PE Show 2000

Back row: Bill Fallon, Mary Breault, Kosta Dussias, Susan Richardson, Chris Lukeman

Middle row: Stacy Kirby, Marty Stambaugh, Doey Gordon, Sharon Henson

Front row: Cathie Webber, Julie Miller, Ali Sweeney Lewis, Jan Harper

Alumnae in High School Create INSPIREus

INSPIREus is an educational and outreach initiative founded by Countryside alumnae (2019) **Emily Chen** and **Emma Donnini**. Their goal is to make STEM opportunities and resources accessible to every student.

INSPIREus hosts outreach events to promote science and engineering in the Champaign-Urbana area featuring demonstrations, competitions, and guest speakers. Their educational program, in collaboration with local organizations including the Urbana Free Library and DREAM house, provides hands-on activities in science and engineering in local middle schools. In addition, they are developing a one-on-one tutoring and mentoring program.

Emily and Emma are finishing their sophomore year at Uni High. For Emily, INSPIREus began as her passion project. She organizes new projects, event planning, & outreach, and she created the website. Emma handles event organization, coordinating volunteers, and initiating outreach. Countryside alumnus **Nate Jones** (2019) also recently joined the team as a leader.



Emma Donnini

What inspired you to create this initiative?

Emma: We've found that so many valuable STEM opportunities aren't accessible to a lot of students. I think it's easy for students who are interested in STEM to become

discouraged if they feel like the opportunities that they're most excited about aren't open or affordable to them, so it's really important to us that any student who wants to attend our programs can come and find fuel for their passion!

What has been your favorite part?

Emily: Seeing our events come to life is so exciting, and I love piecing projects together with the help of so many amazing people.

After we get everything into place, getting to showcase an initiative on the website is an amazing feeling because every single one started out as a blank piece of paper.



Emily Chen

What has been your biggest success?

Emily: Just this spring, we organized a weekly STEM Series over the course of two months, where each session was planned and hosted by a different group of

amazing leaders. We worked with 14 volunteer leaders and 40 students, which made this event a milestone for us since we were able to share a diverse snapshot of STEM with so many students.

We know mentoring and tutoring can help the students you are trying to reach, but how does it benefit your peers who are doing the mentoring?

Emma: We hope that they come away with a better understanding of how to communicate about a topic - how to put themselves in a student's shoes and break a concept down in a way that clicks with them - because being equipped to teach and explain is so important. And we hope it benefits them in the way it benefits us: by giving back something small to a community that's given us so much over the years.

Where do you hope INSPIREus will go in the future?

Emily: Our immediate goal is to complete the non-profit registration process, which will allow us to fundraise towards establishing a grant program and further our impact by supporting students in outside endeavors. We are also looking forward to collaborating with other organizations to hold events and see students in person next year!

Learn more at: www.inspire-us.org

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Countryside Trees

Q & A with New Head of School Krystal Young

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The Young Family (left to right) Madison, Benji, Jeff, Krystal, Mallory, Kaitlyn

Following a national search, Krystal Young has been selected as our permanent Head of School. Mrs. Young has served as our Interim Head since last January, just prior to the pandemic. She successfully led our school through the COVID shut down last spring and our reopening in the fall with both in-person and remote learning.

Where and when did your passion for education start? What has your career path been like?

I started playing school when I was seven or eight. A friend and I could turn her sunroom into a classroom over the summer, and we would have our friends over to be our students. That lasted for a couple of summers before our students unenrolled. 😊

As an adult, my passion was rekindled when I started volunteer tutoring at a local school. I was able to see how a school and classroom function as an outsider on the inside. We all teach or are in education because we believe we can make a difference in the lives of the children we teach.

My career path has been interesting. I received my degree in English and was planning to attend law school before accepting a position as a recruiter in Chicago

(I really wanted to live IN the city). I met my husband, Jeff, and we decided to relocate back to CU 'for a couple of years' while he finished his MBA, and I completed my Master's in Curriculum and Instruction (that was 15 years ago!). I started teaching, and then Madison, Mallory, and Kaitlyn were born very close together. Teaching, the growth of our business, Codagami, plus three young daughters became too much.

I gave up teaching to have more flexibility and began working with Jeff at Codagami. Over the years, as our daughters grew and entered preschool, I took on more and more responsibility at Codagami. I always remained involved in our local schools and then became very active at Countryside when Madison and Mallory started school.

What strengths do you bring to Countryside?

My biggest strength is that I am part of this community and believed in this school and its mission long before I thought about becoming the Head of School. I will always see my previous business experience as an asset because Countryside occupies both school and business space.

What job are you leaving, and what will you miss most about it?

I left my job at Codagami, and my official title was 'Managing Partner.' I did a lot of work in human resources, accounting, strategic planning, and project management. I miss the people I worked with, hands down some of the smartest and funniest people I've ever known. I am lucky, though. I am still connected to Codagami because it is our family business.

Tell us about your family.

The First Gentleman of Countryside, also known as Jeff, is the CEO of Codagami when he isn't fulfilling his duties as FG. Jeff and I have been married almost 18 years, we live in Mahomet with our three amazing daughters, Madison, Mallory, and Kaitlyn and a tiny dog. We're in negotiations with him to add to the tiny dog population of our home!

Madison (our resident chef) is leaving Countryside this year to begin her subfreshman year at Uni, Mallory (my coconspirator in all things LEGO) will be an eighth grader at Countryside. As twins in a small community like Countryside the girls are looking forward to having separate experiences next year. Kaitlyn (the craft queen) will be in seventh grade at Countryside. We have enjoyed being together at school this year and they make working here a little more special for me.

As a family we love to travel, play games, and tease one another relentlessly. We are also all subject to the whims of our 10 pound dog Benji. This summer there will be lots of time spent by the pool while waiting for the girls to be eligible for the Covid vaccine.

Bernie and His Mittens



Bernie stopped by the school on inauguration day and promptly appeared on our Instagram and Facebook

Shout Out!

6th grader Kaitlyn's poem celebrating diversity was showcased as a Meemic Masterpieces Poetic Rap Contest winner!

tinyurl.com/KaitlynRapPoem

Young Alumni Shout Outs!



Congrats to alumni **Maher Adoni** and **May Yang** (both class of 2017) on their success in the Illinois 4-H COVID Idea Challenge! Their idea, called Cosignage, was developed after noticing that local restaurants were having difficulty in messaging what they offered during the pandemic. The signs use universal symbols to let customers know whether masks are required, what the restaurant's capacity is, if it is minority-owned, and whether there is outdoor seating.

Congratulations to Countryside alumni **Cassie Colmenares**, **Colette Tichenor**, and **Joey Kim** (all class of 2017) who are graduating in the *first graduating class* from Academy High School in Champaign.

Sophia Libman (2020) founded X-Time last year during the pandemic. X-Time offers free 30-minute classes over Zoom covering a variety of topics to expose students to new activities. Aimed at elementary students, classes include gymnastics, writing, performing arts, math, martial arts, yoga, acting, cooking, coding, and more.

<https://x-time.org/>

In Memoriam

John McWilliams, husband of our retired Spanish teacher **Gail McWilliams** and father of our former lunch/extended day supervisor **Kelli Bush**, passed away on March 28, 2021. Our thoughts are with the families. View his obituary here:

tinyurl.com/JohnMcWilliams

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Countryside Trees

Current and Former Faculty Updates

**FACULTY &
STAFF:
SHARE YOUR
UPDATE
WITH US**

Donna Battershell (former Visual Arts teacher) In the last year, I have had more time for artistic endeavors including quilting! One of my favorite things was doing a stitched self-portrait from bits of fabric. Also, spent time exploring parks and forest preserves and enjoying the outdoors, including a trip to Southern Illinois in the fall. So much to be thankful for!

Sho-Yin Chen-Berry (former Chinese teacher) I am currently teaching Chinese/Mandarin at Binghamton City's high school and middle school in New York State.

Sharon Henson (former 4th grade teacher) We have enjoyed another winter in our Florida villa. We found a perfect place for a weekly picnic at Lake McKethan Forest Preserve Park. The park gets little use on week days, so we could relax and enjoy the beauty of Florida. The park is a bird sanctuary, so it is fun to watch both water birds and tree nesters. We will once again spend our summer in Iowa and return to Florida at the end of October.

Rich Morton (former middle school social sciences teacher) The Mortons welcomed their second child, Lillian (Lily) and are overjoyed and excited about their growing family. Cheryl and I are both teaching at Central High School and are very happy to see Countryside alumni in the halls.

Marty Stambaugh (current middle school science teacher) As I finish my 33rd year of teaching, I can honestly say that I am still learning how to be a better teacher every year. Social distancing and remote learning have created so many challenges for Countryside's hands-on science program, but the students and I have made the best of it, digging into our binder clip catapults, Fast Plants, squid and sheep eyeball dissection, plus so much more. On the home front, I remain content to tend my flower garden using my new bionic knees, spoil my big grouchy cat, Clovis, in every imaginable way, and watching my niece, Paige, who is now

15, grow into a kind-hearted, stubborn, goal-oriented, and capable young woman.

Adrielle Stapleton (former Latin teacher) After moving around quite a bit and taking the opportunity to learn German in immersion (2014-2017), I am now settled with my spouse in Lexington, Kentucky, and working as a freelance copy editor.

Katrina Widholm (former visual arts teacher) After teaching at Countryside for 13 years, my daughter and I were thrilled to spend the past school year in Busan, South Korea, where I was the Maker Space teacher at an International School. We had an incredible adventure learning about Korean culture, language, and food and spending a lot of time hiking in the surrounding mountains and walking on the beach!

Susan Richardson (current Associate Head of School) I am now a grandmother! Countryside alumna **Devin Richardson** (2002) and her husband, Jordan Lietz, welcomed their daughter, Jane Irene Emily Lietz, in September 2020. How cool is that?



College Bound

Congratulations to our alumni headed to the following universities: If you are not listed here, we do not have your contact information. Please let us know your post high school plans.

Nabeel Bashir	Illinois
Andrew Chen	Illinois - consumer economics and finance
Ethan Cho	Illinois - mechanical engineering
Cassie Colmenares	Tufts University - chemistry and environmental studies
Zachary Donnini	Yale University - economics and statistics/data science
Zoe Eichorn	University of North Florida - health sciences
Edward Kong	Yale - economics and chemistry
Terry Ma	Georgia Tech - computer science
John Rogers	Northwestern University - economics
Teddy Sammons	Brandeis University - psychology
Mirielle Shah	Illinois - brain and cognitive science
Holden Siena	Augustana College
Charlotte Smith	Williams College - English
Jyoti Sundaram	University of Illinois (Chicago) - biology - GPPA program medicine
Colette Tichenor	Tulane University - biochemistry
Lucas Wood	Macalester College - media and cultural studies (film)
May Yang	Cornell University - business
Edwin Zishiri	Yale University

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HIGH SCHOOL
PLANS

Alumnus Receives Mayo Award

Gordon Ruan (2006) received the 2021 "Outstanding Research Achievement Award" for the Internal Medicine Residency Training program of the Mayo Clinic School of Graduate Medical Education. Awarded to only two members of the graduating internal medicine class, this award is based on achievement and excellence in research conducted during residency.

According to Mayo, "His Academic accomplishments during residency include 20 peer reviewed papers with 10 being either

first or last author. His work has been published in journals including Mayo Clinic Proceedings and Blood Cancer Journal. He is co-investigator on multiple research protocols and grants. In addition, Dr. Ruan has mentored junior residents interested in Hematology-Oncology and has involved them in research projects and publications."

Dr. Ruan will begin a fellowship in hematology/oncology at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN in July. Congratulations, Gordon!



Countryside School

Joy in Learning, Excellence in Education

NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE SCHOOL ALUMNI

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4301 W. Kirby Avenue
Champaign, IL 61822
217.355.1253
E-mail: alumni@countrysideschool.org

We don't want to lose contact!

Please send us your email address:
alumni@countrysideschool.org

We Need Your Pennant

We LOVE displaying pennants from all our alumni's colleges and universities. Although we have about 80 on display, we are still missing several. **Our most recent additions: Carleton College and Illinois Wesleyan University!**

Drop us an e-mail if you can provide us with a pennant (12" x 30") or to ask if we already have it! alumni@countrysideschool.org



Mark your calendars:

Graduation
Homecoming/Fall Picnic
Winter Alumni Reunion

May 13 - closed ceremony - 8th grade families only
August 21
TBD - December 2021/January 2022