

The FALCON

ARBORBROOK CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Volume 3, Issue 2

RECORD FUNDRAISING HELPED ARBORBROOK THRIVE DESPITE PANDEMIC

Most headlines dominating education news over the last year detailed how schools and districts have managed remote learning schedules. Journalists reported countless stories of students struggling with Zoom classes and parents worried that online learning was leaving their children behind both academically and socially. Arborbrook, however, had a very different year.



While COVID did necessitate some adjustments, both upper and lower school remained in-session through the 2020-2021 school year without experiencing a coronavirus outbreak or interruption to in-person learning. The Upper School did choose to do one week of distance learning in January as a precaution but have been in person ever since. Much of the credit for that success goes to Arborbrook teachers and families who stepped up on multiple fronts.

One of the most significant factors keeping Arborbrook on track was an emphasis on outdoor education. Thanks in part to a record \$100,000 in fundraising, classes saw a boost to their already robust nature time.

With its cheerful painted rocks, picnic tables, and umbrella shades, the new Peace Garden has been an instant student favorite. Increased donations and the collaborative effort of multiple families and staff have transformed the once-disused, neglected patch of ground between two buildings into an open-air environment for writing, studying, and doing devotions. Without the sweat equity of parents who wrote grant proposals, installed turf, made tables, donated and installed stonework, and built a gate and patio, it wouldn't have been possible, says Nature Studies teacher Carina Brossy.

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Parents turned out to beautify other areas of campus as well, digging fence posts, putting up and staining fence panels, and providing general maintenance for nature trails. “Oh, the trails were done beautifully this year,” says PVC Coordinator Malana Ennis. “That was a huge project in the beginning of the year. We had a ‘trail workday’ and so many people came out, we were able to line the trails with logs, spread mulch, trim things up and create a couple of really lovely new outdoor areas on that part of campus for the kids.”

Brossy also highlights not a new space, but a refreshed one—the edible garden.



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RECORD FUNDRAISING HELPED ARBORBROOK THRIVE DESPITE PANDEMIC *(Continued from page 1)*

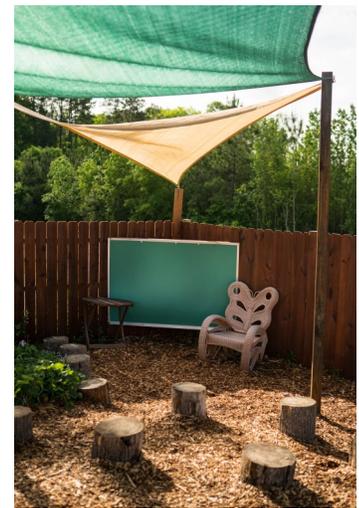
The eight ground-level garden beds were in need of a facelift, which inspired parent Emily Shepard to create a plan for eight raised wood beds. Another parent volunteered to build them over one weekend, and yet another volunteered to deliver them to the school in his flatbed truck. Finally, more parents installed arbors in between each pair of beds. “It all just gives the space additional layers that allow us to go vertical as well as horizontal and to take advantage of all four seasons,” Brossy says.



Lower School Principal Kristen Woodman says she’s felt inspired watching families pull together to not just weather the storm of Covid but flourish during it.

“So many in our community decided they simply weren’t going into survival mode or limp through the year,” she says. “Instead, they asked, ‘How can we be better? How can we use

this time to strengthen our school?’” She points out that, at least at Arborbrook, the pandemic brought out a quality that has disappeared from so many areas of modern life—grit. “One of the key Charlotte Mason habits we try to teach the students is fortitude, that is, to let not themselves be easily defeated,” Woodman explains. ■



ARBORBROOK INTRODUCES NEW SAFETY MEASURES

Though our ultimate protection comes from the Lord, as Proverbs 27:12 teaches, the prudent prepare for danger. So this year, a portion of Arborbrook donations fueled initiatives to help keep our campus safe. It started with hiring new Director of Safety and Security, Jason Janzer.

Parents have likely seen Officer Janzer directing traffic in the parking lot, but there’s a lot more to his job than keeping drop-off and pick-up orderly. He’s also leading the charge to beef up security protocols.

Though only 43-years-old, Janzer spent more than 20 years in the New

York City Police Department, specializing in firearm safety and tactics. Before he retired and took up the post to protect Arborbrook students and faculty, he served in details protecting presidents, senators, and dignitaries. A few weeks ago, I spent a few hours with him, taking a tour of his latest security improvements.



As Janzer walks me around campus, pointing out changes, he talks briskly and efficiently. We stop first at the building Arborbrook families have long called “the cottage”—the small structure that houses kindergarten classrooms and several administrative offices. The front door is now fitted with reinforced casings, and a second reinforced door is spaced only a few feet into the entrance. The large window looking into the kindergarten classroom will soon be replaced with strong plexiglass.

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VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIAN INTERVIEWS

The 2020-21 school year was a struggle across the globe as in-class learning was shuttered and largely driven online. When students were allowed to attend classes on campus, it was often only a day or two a week. Not so at Arborbrook—a point not lost on graduating seniors. *The Falcon* sat down with class valedictorian Elle Suprenant and salutatorian Shea Tyson to talk about what they will take away from their time at Arborbrook.

Falcon: *Elle, what was it like at the end of last year when in-class school closed and this year when it was open again?*

Elle: *I had a really hard time with online school at the end of last year with staying motivated to do things, so it's definitely better for me that I'm in person.*

Falcon: *And how about you, Shea?*

Shea: *The end of my junior year was a bit different, just because we were all at home doing homeschooling and on Zoom. I didn't like it as much because, obviously, I couldn't discuss too much when we're all on the video call.*

Falcon: *Elle, you've attended Arborbrook since first grade. What is it that you like about school here?*

Elle: *The small classes are nice. It's easier to understand what I'm learning because I'm able to ask my teacher for help without too much distraction from the rest of the class. And then you can have conversations and dialogue if you don't understand it. I think that's really nice.*

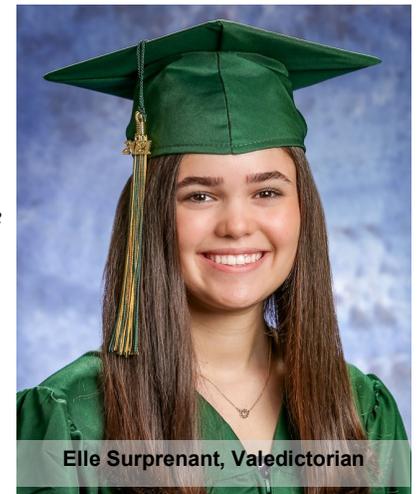


Shea Tyson, Salutatorian

Falcon: *Shea, you've home schooled and attended public school, too. Tell me what it is that separates Arborbrook from those experiences.*

Shea: *I like learning with other people and hearing their ideas*

and how they understand it, and also discussions. So, I think that's probably one of my favorite parts. I've taken some college courses and their approach is pretty much just lecturing while students listen, so it's not as fun or as engaging.



Elle Suprenant, Valedictorian

Falcon: *Shea, you say you have friends in a lot of other schools. What differences do you notice when you talk to them?*

Shea: *I know a lot of people around the world, and I've just seen how their education compares to Arborbrook's education, and I always feel like I'm saying, 'Why don't you know this? Why haven't they taught you this? Because you need this.' So I feel like I'm very well prepared academically, and it's definitely taught me to be hard working. I'd say almost every teacher expects pretty much every assignment to be well done, so there's no slacking off. And the classes are small so you can't hide! Obviously, some students still try to slack off, but teachers encourage and challenge them as opposed to just saying, "Oh well, whatever." So that's very helpful.*

Falcon: *Elle, let's talk about Covid this past year. It was really rough on you and a lot of the kids with state mask mandates saying you had to wear them at school. What kind of things did you guys do to alleviate some of that stress that went along with it?*

Elle: *It's been a real struggle. I think we've had to get a lot more creative this year with classes and stuff. I feel like we've been doing a lot more activities outside. We're based off of Charlotte Mason principles, so we've been doing a lot of outside teaching for so long already.*

Arborbrook is very proud of Elle and Shea and congratulates them on their many years of hard work! ■

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ARBORBROOK INTRODUCES NEW SAFETY MEASURES *(Continued from page 2)*

Stepping outside, I notice a large, unfamiliar “1” painted on the side of the cottage. Janzer tells me it’s part of the new strategy to streamline communication during emergencies. “People tend to confuse names of buildings,” he explains. “So if a situation were to arise where staff needed to convey information to one another quickly, we don’t want to lose any time on misunderstandings about location.” To that end, he assigned each building a number.

Next, Janzer takes me to the main building, now Building “2.” Each classroom has had one of the old wooden doors replaced with a steel door. Inside, he shows me areas marked off with tape that represent the safest spot in the room to hide from an intruder. The safety drills classes have been practicing are reinforced by the posters now hanging on the walls that offer detailed instructions to teachers and students. The next item on his agenda is to retrofit the doors in Building 3 with steel doors in the same way as those in Building 2.

The change moms and dads are most likely to notice, however, is outside. Janzer has diverted the flow of vehicle traffic. In the past, it would not have been surprising to see an occasional car speed across the parking lot. Now, Janzer has arranged for entryways to be blocked off or only opened at certain times of day to regulate speed and direction. “People are learning to turn around or avoid coming through here at all,” Janzer says.

The Old Testament describes the tribe of Issachar as men who understood their dangerous times and what Israel should do. With his eye for spotting security risks and addressing them, Jason Janzer likely would have fit in well with them. He has made incredibly important improvements to our campus to help keep our children safe. ■

