

Taft

BULLETIN



*A Good Ending
-and Beginnings*

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Virtual Alumni Week

A week of virtual class reunions and other live events.



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2021 Commencement

Photography by Robert Falcetti and Seamus Conway



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Play ball! A spring day at Rockwell Field with a view from the Lawrence H. Stone Baseball Pavilion.
ROBERT FALCETTI

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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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SEND ALUMNI NEWS TO

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

DEADLINES FOR CLASS NOTES

Winter–November 15
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COMMENTS? TELL US!

We'd love to hear what you think about the stories in this *Bulletin*. We may edit your letters for length, clarity, and content, but please write.

Linda Hedman Beyus, editor
Taft Bulletin
110 Woodbury Road
Watertown, CT 06795-2100
beyusl@taftschoo.org

SEND ADDRESS CORRECTIONS TO

Alumni Records
The Taft School
110 Woodbury Road
Watertown, CT 06795-2100
taftrhino@taftschoo.org

860-945-7777
WWW.TAFTALUMNI.COM

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ON THE COVER

Proud graduate and class speaker Sarah Katz '21 at Commencement.

ROBERT FALCETTI

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On MAIN HALL

A WORD FROM HEAD
OF SCHOOL WILLY
MACMULLEN '78

“COVID reminded us that we are all, as members of this school, as inhabitants of this globe, inseparably linked in a common destiny as we spin through the universal darkness. We all share a hunger for justice, a desire to be heard, a need to belong, an insistence on opportunity. Despite really strong forces that work to separate, we keep seeing the stubborn fact that we are connected.”



An excerpt from Taft's 2021 Commencement Remarks

Nine months ago, I stood outside the Main Gates as many of you arrived on campus and others began to log on. Everything pointed to the inescapable fact that this would be a year unlike any.

It was as if an ill and angry universe was intent on performing a cruel and dispiriting experiment on you. You followed the spring term of remote learning, two months of disruption and loss. You returned, virtually or really, after a summer of isolation, cut off from friends, waving to grandparents in windows, trapped in your room. You watched this nation in its racial reckoning—the deaths of Black men and women at the hands of police, the Black Lives Matter marches around small town

greens and large city streets—and for all, this was painful and confusing, for Black students especially, a weight I can only imagine and will never know. You witnessed the final months of the most divisive and volatile presidential election in our history, with leaders you look to literally and figuratively screaming at each other as if tribes talking in tongues. And when you began, the world was gripped by a terrifying global pandemic, the list of unknowns long, the fears deep, the losses many.

For remote students, you began a purgatory where you were not quite away but also not quite here. You sat in classes from your bedroom, shaking off sleep, and tried to listen to voices you sometimes could barely hear. You saw friends you missed and loved. You saw campus scenes you longed to be part of.

The experiment had conditions never seen before. On the Main Hall, you saw a sign saying, “No handshakes, hugs, or high fives,” a demand which might have been paraphrased as, “Hey, Taft, you need to be everything you've never been.” Collegium voices were recorded from dorm rooms; the fall musical became a radio broadcast; your clarinet was an instrument of spread; your team practiced in grids and cohorts, with no games on the schedule; you sat apart at lunch, three at a large table, blue-taped X's on the floor; you hung out in the Faculty Room longing to visit a friend in the dorm; you twisted in your seat to hear a classmate behind a mask; you tentatively raised a hand on Zoom hoping your teacher would acknowledge you.

You were asked to deny your most basic, human urges: to gather in groups, to press lips in love, hold hands in sadness, wrap arms in celebration. Most days ended without even witnessing a smile.

Who would ever ask this of a school, of students, of teachers? If this was an experiment, it seemed unending, cruel, unethical.

If the purpose of an experiment is to test a hypothesis, this was to test whether this school had the strength and unity to succeed.

This experiment yielded us two conclusions.

First, it showed that you are more resilient than you ever thought and stronger than any class I have seen. After this year, I ask rhetorically, Is there any challenge you cannot meet?

You showed there may be nothing through which you cannot persevere. The list of setbacks was long, the catalogue of loss thick, the weight of sadness heavy. And yet you are here—whole, sound, centered, triumphant. You are here because you bravely raised your hand and said, “I watched George Floyd die, and I am hurting”; because you found love and laughter in your friends; because you were dogged in your efforts to learn and stubborn in your refusal to give up; because when frustrated, dispirited, and exhausted, from your homes and rooms, you still rose each morning; and you are here because this faculty gave every ounce of itself to support you, and your parents never left your side.

You are here because this year asked questions of you which have never been asked, and *you answered them*. You said, “I am. I can. I will.”



And second, this experiment told us that to be human *is to be connected*. In a moment in human history when both nation and globe seem fractured and when the pandemic forced distance, our future will depend on citizens and leaders who say, “No. This cannot be.” COVID reminded us that we are all, as members of this school, as inhabitants of this globe, inseparably linked in a common destiny as we spin through the universal darkness. We all share a hunger for justice, a desire to be heard, a need to belong, an insistence on opportunity. Despite really strong forces that work to separate, we keep seeing the stubborn fact that we are connected.

COVID showed us this. It is the terrible, beautiful truth of a virus. We share the very air we breathe: You exhale; I inhale.

And now I will say something that rings like heresy: I don’t regret or resent this year we neither wanted nor asked for. Perhaps we should see it as a gift. This year has brought me today to a place of gratitude, like all blessings certainly unexpected and unsolicited. Maybe every one of you here and watching know this state. How can I not feel this when I reflect on the passion of the faculty, the dedication of staff, the support of parents, the loyalty of alumni, the wisdom of the board—and the resilience of students? In this dark and dispiriting year, we at Taft were the lucky ones.

And so, seniors, you are the gift, an heirloom you are bequeathing this very hour, both sturdy and fragile, which we adults accept with gratitude, and which you will still be holding and passing on, in 2071, when you are here together at your 50th Reunion, walking the same tiled halls and green fields. I say only this: *Thank you.*

William R. MacMullen '78

SOCIAL SCENE

Follow @thetaftschool on Facebook, @taftschool on Instagram and Twitter for daily glimpses of Taft life.

Twitter



Members of the Taft community were invited to share elements of their cultural heritage today during WorldFest, an annual Taft tradition. #worldfest21 #lifeattaft



Taft golfers played in the annual Daniel J. Wilcox Sadie Hawkins Golf Team event on Friday. Started in 2009, the event benefits children of domestic violence by making donations to support summer camp attendance. This year’s winners: Hayley Guittard and Jack Eastman. GO BIG RED! #nonutsibi #nottobeservedbuttoserve

Instagram



facebook

Taft’s Community Service Board hosted a Spring Sunset event this week featuring food, fun, and music on Centen Quad. The event was also a fundraiser; proceeds from t-shirt sales will be donated to The St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Waterbury, which “aids, supports and empowers people experiencing poverty, homelessness, hunger, and mental health challenges so they may recover with dignity and develop sustainable solutions for a brighter future.” #nonutsibi #nottobeservedbuttoserve

Alumni SPOTLIGHT



Above: Blake DiMarco Herrera '00, product manager of school services at Bezos Academy.

Top: Herrera, far right, in 2013 with her team at Akili Academy in New Orleans (on Nerd Day) in front of their main office. The campus was comprised entirely of modular buildings following Hurricane Katrina. (Akili Academy is now located in the historic William Frantz Building. Frantz was one of the first sites of school integration in New Orleans when 6-year-old Ruby Bridges attended the school in 1960.)

In the Education Business

GROWING UP, Blake DiMarco Herrera '00 never thought she'd work in education, let alone that she'd one day be helping to launch a national network of free preschools.

"I never anticipated working in education," she says. "I was never that person who wanted to be a teacher."

The Watertown native studied finance at Tulane University, then spent six years at Goldman Sachs doing client service work for a team that traded credit derivatives. It was a far cry from her current work serving low-income students, Herrera recalls—the job involved liaising with billionaire hedge fund managers who had business with the bank.

Herrera's career path changed after she went on a corporate service trip to New Orleans two years after Hurricane Katrina and was shocked to see how much the city where she'd gone to college was still struggling.

She also learned that New Orleans' public school system was radically changing. Charter schools, which are privately managed but publicly funded, were replacing local schools with big plans to improve education quality. A friend told her that the new schools needed people with finance and operations skills, and Herrera's interest was piqued.

"I made this big, life-changing kind of career transition," Herrera says, "and I got a job at a charter school."

As director of finance and operations for Akili Academy in New Orleans, Herrera was in charge of the business side for the K-8 school, from managing food service and janitorial contracts to processing payroll and filing annual financial reports. "It was a lot, but I loved it," Herrera says.

Akili Academy students were mostly low-income students of color. "It felt like we were creating opportunities that these students otherwise would not have," Herrera says, either because their local school had closed after the storm or because it was failing to meet state education standards.

Herrera has helped run schools for underserved children ever since. After a stint leading finance and operations for a network of charter schools in Seattle, she's now in a similar role at Bezos Academy, a nonprofit funded by (and named for) Amazon founder Jeff Bezos that plans to open tuition-free, Montessori-inspired preschools nationwide.

The preschools will serve low-income

and middle-class families, including families who earn too much to qualify for Head Start, the federally funded public preschool program for children living in or near poverty, but not enough to afford private programs, Herrera explains.

The first Bezos Academy school, which has just one classroom and will eventually serve 20 children, opened in October. The nonprofit plans to open four more schools in Washington state this fall, and then to expand elsewhere. (To learn more visit www.bezosacademy.org.)

Herrera is developing a plan for how to provide services such as food, maintenance, security, and internet access as the network grows. "It's maybe applying more of a strategic approach to what I've done in the past," she says.

It's also an opportunity to think creatively, Herrera says, because as a privately funded network, Bezos Academy schools won't be bound by rules for spending taxpayer dollars. For instance, she wants to make sure students have more access to fresh fruits and vegetables. "I think

that's really exciting," she says, "just the ability to innovate in this work."

Herrera says she's learned over the years that a strong finance and operations team can be the difference between a school's success and failure. And she's learned that it's crucial for nonprofits that serve low-income families to listen to their clients and gain their trust, rather than just showing up and saying, "I'm here to help you."

"That's a challenge, to do it well, to do it right, and in a way that feels respectful and authentic," she says.

Looking back, her time at Taft has motivated her career in education, Herrera says, because it showed her the importance of a high-quality education. Although education can't solve all society's problems, she's convinced that it can help people experiencing poverty achieve socioeconomic mobility. "Education is really a tool to help people," she says. ■

—Sophie Quinton '06

Below: The Bezos Academy team, including Herrera, at the launch of its first preschool in October.



Moving in the Write Direction

JARED JACKSON '10 can't overestimate the value of writing. "I think it's an essential skill, full stop," he says. "Just on a basic level, being able to sit with your thoughts and express yourself is crucially important, and writing equips us with the ability to think critically and refine our ideas." In his work as literary programs manager for the New York branch of PEN America, Jackson fosters thought-provoking conversations with some of today's leading minds and works to promote

free expression and effect social change. Jackson joined PEN in fall 2019, while still in his final year in Columbia University's MFA program, serving first as literary programs coordinator before being promoted to programs manager this past January. "I curate and produce events that aim to bring out nourishing reflections on literature, society, and what we're reckoning with," he explains. In this capacity, he oversees the weekly PEN Ten online interview series and PEN Out

Loud, a conversation series that focuses on amplifying diverse voices by bringing authors, poets, journalists, artists, and activists into dialogue with each other. He also leads the Emerging Voices Fellowship, an immersive five-month program that looks to cultivate promising writers and diversify the publishing and media landscapes. "I've always valued teaching and mentorship, and this role gives me the opportunity to almost administer my own creative writing program,"

Below: Jared Jackson '10 opening an event at the Strand bookstore just before the pandemic (February 2020) for a conversation he curated between bestselling author Mitchell S. Jackson and distinguished scholar and writer Imani Perry.



Above: Jared Jackson '10, far right, literary programs manager for the New York branch of PEN America, at a 2019 event with Lindy West, center, the author of *Shrill*. West was joined by comedian Hari Kondabolu, second from right, to discuss her essay collection, *The Witches Are Coming*; Also pictured are Jackson's PEN America colleagues.

he says. "We pair our fellows with mentors and bring in publishing professionals to speak about their craft and their artistic life. But more than just focusing on the fellows' writing, we want to provide them the foundations for the business of books and demystify the publishing industry."

Jackson's passion for writing stems from his time at Taft, where he found a home in the English Department. "I loved the minds that were in that department and just wanted to soak up as much as I could," he says. "And outside of the classroom, I wrote poetry, loved reading, and formed a rap group called Split Second with my friends Doug Profenius '11 and Louie Reed '11. We even converted one of our closets into a makeshift studio."

He carried this love of language with him when he enrolled at Trinity College, majoring in political science with a minor in English, and then on to Columbia. Jackson used his time in graduate school not only to hone his writing but also to think about the impact he wanted to have on the world. "I started looking into industries that aligned with the things that I'm interested in, particularly literature and publishing," he says. "That's how I landed at PEN America, which stands at the intersection

of literature and human rights."

Most recently, Jackson helped organize the 2021 World Voices Festival, PEN's largest annual event, which typically encompasses 50 different events across New York City (though this year's installment was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic). "We bring in writers and activists from around the world and put them together to try to find common ground while engaging in honest discussions," he says. "After a year in which we experienced so much division, the festival tried to celebrate writers and thinkers who exemplify resilience, courage, and radical imagination—and to encourage the kinds of vital discussions that challenge us, make us think deeper, and maybe even reconsider our stances."

Outside of his work with PEN, Jackson volunteers with a creative writing program, LiveWrite, teaching (virtually, because of the pandemic) in New York City jails on Rikers Island. Additionally, Jackson is gaining recognition as a writer in his own right, and is represented by Meredith Kaffel Simonoff of Manhattan's DeFiore and Company. In September 2020, *The Yale Review* published his debut short story, "Blanca," and in June, another of his works

made its way into the pages of *Guernica*. Both pieces will appear in *Locals*, his forthcoming debut book. "It will be a collection of nine to 10 stories that follow adolescents in different neighborhoods throughout Hartford," he explains. "I had some of the fondest moments of my life growing up in Hartford. It can be a rough city, but it's also a beautiful city, and I wanted to reflect that on the page. I really wanted to be particular about the young people I was portraying, who experience life in a working-class way that's both tragic and wonderful."

For Jackson, writing has become much more than a pastime, or even a career: "Writing is really rewriting, and I try to do revision in my life every day," he points out. "It provides me an opportunity to reevaluate my thoughts, my ideas, my convictions, and I think that is essential in our world today." ■

—Christopher Browner '12



longer needed,' and she was let go just shy of being able to receive her full pension.

"Elizebeth's story is one of sexism and secrecy," Steinman adds. "She could have leaked it, but she didn't because she was a patriot. She could have worked in commercial industry making cipher devices, but Elizebeth and her husband chose to work in government because they were patriots. She could have quit, but there were Nazis to fight, there was a war to win, so she stayed and was the unofficial leader of her codebreaking unit.

Documentary filmmaking has been Steinman's passion, particularly those films showcasing social justice issues, including her work as a coproducer on the first episode of the PBS series *Slavery and the Making of America*, a four-part

documentary reexamining the lives of enslaved people through their own stories.

"I love working on social justice documentaries because it is great to be able to look at an issue from the point of view of personal stories that shine a light on problems in the world, help inform and educate people, and hopefully add to the conversation about how to do better in the future," Steinman says.

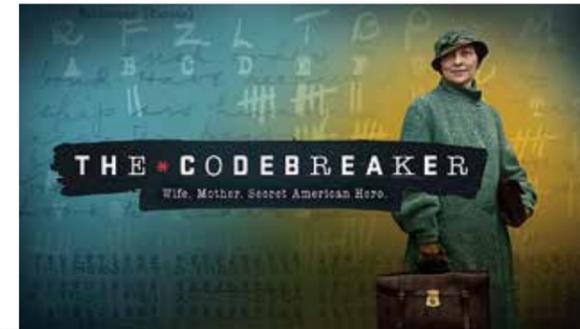
In May, Steinman began working with Engel Entertainment, which creates everything from unscripted reality to history programming feature-length documentaries to digital content, and more.

She is the senior vice president and executive producer of the documentary division, and will be developing and overseeing documentary projects

for the new small start-up division.

Steinman also has her own production company, Napatree Films, and has been working on a documentary about the hunger-fighting "community fridges" that have sprung up in communities hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Putting a documentary together is a logistical puzzle according to Steinman.



The Lure & Logistics

of Producing Documentaries

WHAT DOES A CHINESE HISTORY class at Taft in the 1980s have to do with an unsung World War II cryptologist? Both triggered the imagination of Hilary Klotz Steinman '86, who produces documentary films about historical social issues that continue to affect us today.

Steinman studied modern Chinese history with Headmaster Emeritus Lance Odden and continued those studies after Taft, majoring in Asian studies at Williams College. Steinman had a teaching fellowship in China, and while there, she lived across the street from the Pearl River Film Company. Intrigued, she became a "fixer" (someone who helps local film and TV crews with scouting, booking, and interpreting for foreign talent), eventually leaving teaching to work on a PBS series about modern Chinese history, *China: A Century of Revolution*, and to work for Bill Moyers developing *Become*

American: The Chinese Experience, a PBS series about Chinese American history.

Steinman has been producing documentary films for more than 20 years, with subjects as varied as contraception (*The Pill*, for which she won an Emmy) and the environmental toll of the digital revolution (*Death by Design*).

Her most recent release is *The Codebreaker*, the story of the untold hero of cryptology, Elizebeth Smith Friedman. The documentary explores the life of Friedman, the groundbreaking cryptanalyst whose painstaking work to decode thousands of messages for the U.S. government helped send gangsters to prison in the 1930s and brought down a massive, nearly invisible Nazi spy ring in World War II. Friedman, whose husband, William Friedman, was also a cryptanalyst, was bound by secrecy agreements, meaning she could never reveal

her role in taking down Nazi spies during her lifetime. In fact, J. Edgar Hoover, the infamous FBI director, claimed credit for Friedman's work, claiming that the FBI had brought down the spy ring.

"In this film, like many others, yet again J. Edgar is the No. 1 villain," Steinman says. "The FBI is getting all their messages encrypted by Elizebeth's...unit. What J. Edgar does is write Elizebeth's unit out of history so it looks like the work of the FBI. After the war, Elizebeth is bound by a code of silence. She could never talk about it—it was a deep tomb of silence she could never get out of. To add insult to injury, Elizebeth is a civilian hire, and at the end of the war, she's told, 'Your services are no

Above: Hilary Klotz Steinman '86 producing an interview remotely during the pandemic in June 2020 for her documentary film *The Codebreaker* for *American Experience* on PBS.



"You're getting deep into the story and the issues—who are the storytellers, why tell this story now, why is it meaningful, and why would people watch it. Every new film is a new topic, a new group of people.

"In documentaries, you are not even as good as your last film. You still have to fight to get that next film. It doesn't matter how great the idea is, it's still hard to get funding."

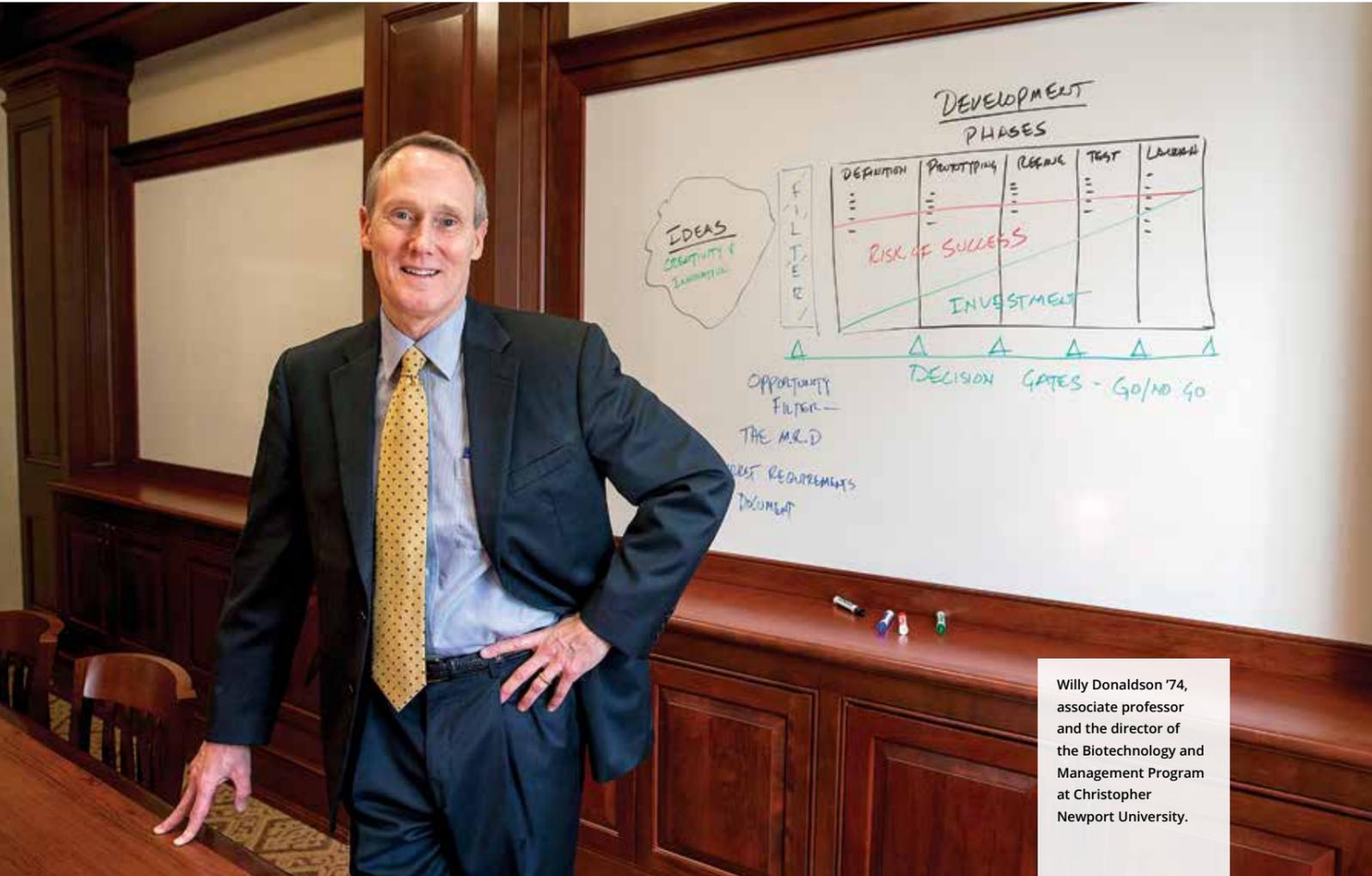
To get funding, you have to spend money to make a trailer or a sizzle reel to show "proof of concept" and demonstrate it is a compelling story. Developing a documentary involves many moving pieces, such as historical research, then finding source materials, documents, photos, letters, and more. The really fun thing is to find a gem no one has seen before, she says.

"As a director, you have an artistic vision," she says. "You have to invest so much to get each film rolling and to attract funding. Once you get funding, that's the fun part." ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84

Left: Hilary Klotz Steinman '86, producing and directing a shoot on location in Mott Haven, South Bronx, for her *Community Fridge* documentary, about the hunger-fighting "community fridges" that have sprung up in communities hard hit by the pandemic, for her production company, Napatree Films.

Seeing Beyond Artificial Boundaries



Willy Donaldson '74, associate professor and the director of the Biotechnology and Management Program at Christopher Newport University.

OK, WE MIGHT AS WELL START WITH Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher. Don't worry if the name doesn't ring a bell. The claim to fame of this 19th-century German philosopher was a somewhat obscure method of interpreting the world known as the hermeneutic circle. The gist was that you can't know the parts of something unless you know the whole. But you can't know the whole

unless you understand the parts. Yes, it's a head-scratcher. But here's a contemporary example. You're watching a movie. Partway through, you know some of the characters and some of the plot line, but you're lost. It's only after it finishes that it all begins to make sense. You watch it again, noticing this time the little clues and side plots that will eventually marry together. You say, Now I see it. I see the whole.

That's systems thinking, said Willy Donaldson '74, who has devoted almost his entire working life to getting himself and others to see the larger picture. Across more than 35 years as a board member, president, and chief executive at eight different companies, as well as more than three decades of teaching, Donaldson has bucked the conventional corporate ideology and worked to avoid

the pitfalls of myopic management. "Systems thinking forces you to step back and get out of your silos, get out of your divisions, and think about things holistically," Donaldson says. "Then dive in and look at the parts. Then step back again." As an associate professor and the director of the Biotechnology and Management Program at Christopher Newport University, in Newport News, Virginia, Donaldson has tried to get students to see beyond our artificial boundaries. It doesn't matter what they're studying.

"The world, in most contexts, is too large and complex for anybody to grasp," Donaldson says. "So we parse them into different pieces. For a long time, the idea was that if I just optimize the pieces, they'll come back together and work perfectly. But that's not the way systems work." Donaldson was introduced to the philosophy by his father when he was a student at Taft. Donaldson's dad, Coleman, a renowned aeronautical engineer, gave him early texts from systems thinkers like Ludwig von Bertalanffy and Russell Ackoff. And when he wasn't on the ice playing hockey or on the lacrosse field, he was reading. Donaldson ended up studying engineering at North Carolina State, but he

Below: Donaldson at the inaugural session of a training academy that he developed with a local nonprofit, Smart Beginnings, for owners of day-care centers. Note the "No Whining Zone" symbol he brought from his office door to this session.



got to apply his management knowledge early on. At age 26, he took over two businesses run by his father after his father became ill. He clearly had a knack for it. He later joined a tiny video projection company, nVIEW Corp., in 1986, and took it public in five years with \$60 million in sales. From there, he became a specialist in strategic management, leading companies involved in everything from naval ships to energy harvesting to conveyor belts. At each stop, Donaldson would establish a Corporate University, where employees

least one famous reader: New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick. Donaldson sent a letter praising him for how seamlessly he managed to mix controversial free agents into the roster. Without knowing it, Belichick was a systems thinker. In a note back, the coach agreed. Donaldson has a new book, *Estimated Time of Departure*, about his experiences with grief and talking his parents through their end-of-life periods. He wrote most of it during the past year, when COVID-19 shut down most of the world.



could observe the various departments in the company. The goal was to help them better understand how they fit into the whole. "Gallup did a poll and found that upwards of 80 percent of people said that they were disengaged or actively disengaged at work," Donaldson says. "They don't know the system. You bring somebody in, you put them in the accounting department, and that's all they ever see." His 2017 book, *Simple Complexity*, synthesized those larger theoretical concepts with his real-world experiences. It had at

There's a lesson to be learned from the pandemic, too. "Coronavirus is a system," Donaldson says. "It's a series of proteins and RNA strands that interact with a purpose, infecting hosts and replicating. And it doesn't care about any of the fictitious borders we care about." ■

—Zach Schonbrun '05

To listen to a recording of a Taft Rhino Crash conversation with Donaldson visit www.taftschool.org/rhino-crash-20 and click on Previous Events.





student
SPOTLIGHT

Muffin Prakittiphoom '21

Connecting Engineering, Medicine, and Entrepreneurship

"I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED interdisciplinary topics that connect multiple subjects, mimicking the interconnected nature of our society," says Muffin Prakittiphoom '21.

It seemed natural, then, that Muffin's Independent Tutorial (IT) should reflect that passion for connection: Muffin has developed a prosthetic arm—connecting, she says, engineering, medicine, and entrepreneurship.

While looking for ways to apply her skills and interest in robotics to service-type initiatives, Muffin came across the story of a

teen who had built an arm out of Legos.

"I was immediately fascinated by the idea of designing and building prosthetics," says Muffin who, after experimenting with things like Legos, pipes, and wooden pallets, soon had a rough design for a prosthetic arm. That design, coupled with her strong academic background in STEM at Taft, helped Muffin secure internships, first in the prosthetics and orthotics department at the Police General Hospital in Bangkok, then at the Sirindhorn School

of Prosthetics and Orthotics, the largest prosthetic provider in Thailand.

"I was introduced to 'professional' prosthetics at Police General Hospital. I applied the theory I learned in the field to my design and implemented existing control techniques," Muffin explains. "The following summer, I interned at the Sirindhorn School of Prosthetics and Orthotics, where I shadowed surgeons, prosthetists, and technicians throughout the prosthetics development process. At the same time, I was also able



to receive guidance from professors at the affiliated university [Mahidol University] on my own project, while observing the process of publishing an academic journal."

Muffin's vision was to create an affordable, functional alternative to the high-priced prosthetic arms most readily available to patients. With affordability, accessibility, and functionality as the foundational principles driving her work, Muffin produced a three-dimensional-printed arm with six degrees of motion—five fingers and a rotating wrist. It is controlled by electromyography sensors connected to the user's remaining limb, which detect electrical activity in the muscle. Her work is far from done.

"The next step I envision for the project is to mass-produce the hand on a small scale by making the design more modular and interchangeable, allowing me to quickly customize for each patient," Muffin explains.

"I would also like to reduce the weight and cost of the arm by streamlining processes in the design, and also add more sensors."

Adding a force sensor in the fingertip will help users detect pressure, temperature sensors detect changes in heat and cooling, and accelerometers will allow users to sense orientation.

"In the distant future, I also hope to incorporate emerging technologies in soft robots, to mimic the flexible properties of human anatomy," she adds.

While clinical-setting regulations and connections with doctors and some patients posed challenges for Muffin in her work, she was able to connect with amputees who were eager to test her prosthetic arm outside of a clinical setting, while providing valuable insight and feedback.

"This was also the most rewarding aspect of my work," says Muffin, "seeing the smiles

on their faces as they opened a jar on their own for the first time, or hammered a nail. On the side, I have also been making hands for children with leprosy (Hansen's disease). While far simpler, the outcome was equally, if not more, rewarding."

Muffin notes that her work has been entirely "self-led and facilitated," with invaluable support and guidance from others, including her IT advisor, Taft Science Teacher Dan Calore.

"Muffin was incredibly thoughtful in her approach and did a lot of research about what would make the prosthetic hand successful," says Calore. "She was incredibly committed to the project and worked hard to find connections that could help her develop the project to the next level and to offer critical feedback. Ultimately, it was her attention to every detail on the project that led to its success." ■

Celebrating Excellence

DESPITE THE CHALLENGES FACING STUDENTS AT TAFT AND ACROSS THE GLOBE THIS YEAR, ACADEMIC EXPLORATION, ACHIEVEMENT, CONNECTION, AND RECOGNITION REACHED NEW HEIGHTS, AND TAFTIES WERE REWARDED FOR THEIR PERSISTENCE AND DEDICATION. HERE'S A LOOK AT SOME OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS TAFT STUDENTS LOGGED DURING THE 2020-21 ACADEMIC YEAR.



↓ Scholastic Art and Writing Awards

Rena Shao '23 earned a prestigious Gold Key Award for her flash fiction piece, "Staying Strong," in the regional 2021 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. "Staying Strong" was inspired by current events, and explores a young immigrant's experience with Islamophobia in the United States. Rena also earned Honorable Mention recognition for her poem "Burnt Honey," and another flash fiction piece, "Lonely Mouse."



National Merit Scholarship Program

Eight Taft students achieved PSAT scores in 2020 that placed them among the 50,000 highest-scoring students tested worldwide. They will be honored in the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program as semifinalists or commended students.

↑ National Latin Exam

"Taft had a really great year," says Latin Teacher and new World Language Department Chair Lisa Parente. "We had 44 students sit for the exam, and 27 of them earned awards, including eight gold medals (*summa cum laude*) and nine silver medals (*maxima cum laude*)."

The NLE is given annually to Latin students around the world. Individual tests include general exams at the introductory, beginning, and intermediate levels, as

well as intermediate and advanced reading comprehension exams, and advanced prose and poetry testing. Taft students earned medals in each of those categories.

Le Grand Concours

Le Grand Concours, the National French Contest, is an annual competition sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of French. This year, nearly 30,000 students sat for proctored, remote exams, most at the secondary level. Twelve Taft students earned honors, including two gold (95th percentile) and three silver (90th percentile) medals.



Debate Team

Taft's Debate Team had a successful virtual season, with two competitors rising to the top. Over the course of the academic year, Leyla Zhaksybek '23 and Drew Niewinski '23 competed in five New York Parliamentary Debate League Championship events. They accumulated enough points in each to merit an invitation to the NYPDLC Championship Tournament, where they faced off against 550 debaters from schools from across the nation. Leyla and Drew finished in the top one-third of all competitors.



Connecticut Science Olympiad

Nearly 50 schools from around the state competed in 17 events in this year's remote Connecticut Science Olympiad. Fourteen Taft students tackled the events in pairs or small teams. Events covered topics like anatomy and physiology, designer genes, forensics, protein modeling, and a circuit lab. Tafties earned top honors in the designer genes event, second-place finishes in protein modeling and water quality, third-place honors in ornithology, and fourth-place awards in geological mapping and anatomy and physiology.

New England Mathematics League

Taft's mathletes finished this year's New England Mathematics League competition with a first-place regional win and in third place overall; it was Taft's fifth consecutive regional win.

AMC/AIME

The American Mathematics Competition is a series of increasingly selective and competitive exams that draws more than 300,000 competitors from 6,000-plus schools each year. Six Taft students scored high enough during the early rounds of testing to earn invitations to sit for the prestigious American Invitational Mathematics Examination.

↓ Girls in Math at Yale

Defending champion Team Coup d'État earned a sixth-place finish in the annual Girls in Math at Yale competition. The event draws competitors from public and private high schools across New England, and features both team and individual rounds of competition.

"The remote aspect of the contest—all the team members not being in the same room and other associated challenges—conspired to make the usual teamwork and back and forth a little more difficult," says Mathematics Teacher and Team Coach Joseph Zipoli '84. "Still, the team did very well under the circumstances."

M^3 Challenge

Two Taft teams competed in Moody's Mega Math Challenge—also known as the M^3 Challenge—sponsored by the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics. Team Taft produced a paper that was advanced through the second round of the challenge, a position achieved by fewer than 20 percent of the competing teams.

"The problems are fascinating in that they model real-world situations, and ones that are quite relevant," explains Zipoli. "One has to do a lot of data analysis and assign priorities to certain factors and make empirical arguments about what constitutes the best solution. It is very interesting because it's authentic in terms of what problem-solving looks like in the scientific community."

For more details about these and other student achievements, visit TaftSchool.org/News



student
SPOTLIGHT

Angie Montambault '23

A Drop in the Ocean



ANGIE MONTAMBAULT '23 is passionate about creating positive change in the world around her.

"If it were possible, I would dedicate my life's work to solving every issue in the world," Angie says. "Alone, I am only capable of making a very small impact. I love making advocacy work a community effort, because when people work together, the probability of going far increases."

In her two years at Taft, Angie has brought her passion and energy to community service initiatives, the Admission Council, and the Religion and Spiritual Life Council. She is also an active

member of Mosaics and Black Alliance, affinity groups on Taft's campus.

"Mosaics has been a particularly meaningful experience for me," Angie notes. "It has been a supportive group to turn to while navigating Taft. The faculty and students have made it a safe space for women of color to rely upon and uplift each other."

This year, Angie expanded her commitment to understanding and impacting global issues through a 12-week academic fellowship sponsored by Miss Porter's School. The fellowship program—Miss Porter's ChangeMaker's Institute—brought together 20 passionate, driven young women from around the world for a challenging fellowship experience. Together, they worked to define a "shared vision for a better future," by exploring their lives, belief systems, and understanding of the communities that surround them. The fellows worked with global experts to gain strategies for moving from vision to action to reality. Their work culminated in the development and delivery of an implementable blueprint for social change.

Angie was one of three Taft students to participate: Lulu Brauer '21 and

"We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean *would be less because of that missing drop.*"

Maria Hogenkamp '23 also completed the fellowship program. Together, the trio determined that their blueprint would broadly target equality and equity in America for people of color, while focusing specifically on the study of maternal mortality rates for women of

color. Over the course of the program, Angie conducted detailed research, participated in information panels, and interviewed stakeholders and experts.

"We came across intersecting issues relevant to our problem statement, which established investments to reduce maternal mortality rates for women of color in America," Angie explains. "From there, we addressed the racial disparities in the health care system, obstetric violence (also referred to as 'invisible wounds inflicted by discrimination'), and various causes of oppression. I was specifically interested in this topic beforehand, and I was overjoyed to be researching and establishing a plan for effective improvement."

Angie notes that contributing to social change is challenging work. Seeing how much truly needs to be done to effect change, she says, can be overwhelming. As a ChangeMaker's Institute fellow, Angie was grateful for the support the program offered.

"The Institute offered mentors who were more than willing to support the fellows during this process. One of them shared a quote from Mother Teresa and

talked to us about how that perspective keeps them going. It says, 'We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean *would be less because of that missing drop.*' Now, I share that quote with whoever will listen. It has become my daily motivator." ■



College Bound

THE CLASS OF 2021 BEGINS THE NEXT STEP IN THEIR EDUCATION AT EXCEPTIONAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND AROUND THE WORLD. EIGHT RHINOS ARE HEADING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND, MAKING IT THE TOP PICK FOR THE CLASS OF 2021. BUCKNELL, CORNELL, AND GEORGETOWN WILL EACH WELCOME SIX RHINOS THIS FALL.

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 (2) | Gettysburg College | Sarah Lawrence College | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2) |
| Babson College | Grinnell College | Savannah College of Art and Design | University of Notre Dame (2) |
| Barnard College | Harvard University (4) | Scripps College | University of Pennsylvania (4) |
| Bates College | Haverford College | Skidmore College (2) | University of Richmond (8) |
| Boston College (4) | Indiana University, Bloomington | Southern Methodist University (3) | University of Rochester (3) |
| Boston University (3) | Johns Hopkins University (2) | St. Lawrence University | University of San Diego |
| Brown University (5) | King's College London (University of London) | Stanford University | University of South Carolina, Columbia |
| Bucknell University (6) | Lafayette College | SUNY College at Plattsburgh | University of Southern California (2) |
| Champlain College | Louisiana State University | Texas Christian University | University of St Andrews (2) |
| Claremont McKenna College | McGill University (2) | The University of Alabama | University of Virginia (2) |
| Clark University (2) | Merrimack College | The University of Tampa | University of Wisconsin, Madison |
| Colby College (2) | Middlebury College | The University of Texas at Austin | University of Wisconsin, Madison |
| Colgate University | Muhlenberg College | Trinity College (3) | Vassar College |
| College of Charleston | New York University (3) | Tufts University (2) | Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University |
| College of the Holy Cross (3) | Northeastern University (5) | Tulane University of Louisiana | Wake Forest University (5) |
| Colorado College (3) | Northwestern University | Union College | Washington and Lee University (2) |
| Colorado School of Mines | Occidental College | United States Naval Academy | Washington University in St Louis |
| Connecticut College | Pennsylvania State University | University of California, Berkeley (2) | Wesleyan University (2) |
| Cornell University (6) | Princeton University | University of California, Los Angeles | Whitman College |
| Dartmouth College | Providence College | University of California, Santa Barbara | Williams College |
| Dickinson College | Purdue University | University of Chicago | Yale University (3) ■ |
| Duke University (4) | Rice University | University of Connecticut (2) | |
| Elon University | Sacred Heart University (3) | University of Kentucky | |
| George Washington University (2) | Salve Regina | University of Miami (2) | |
| Georgetown University (6) | | University of Michigan, Ann Arbor | |

Dance Ensemble Spring Concert

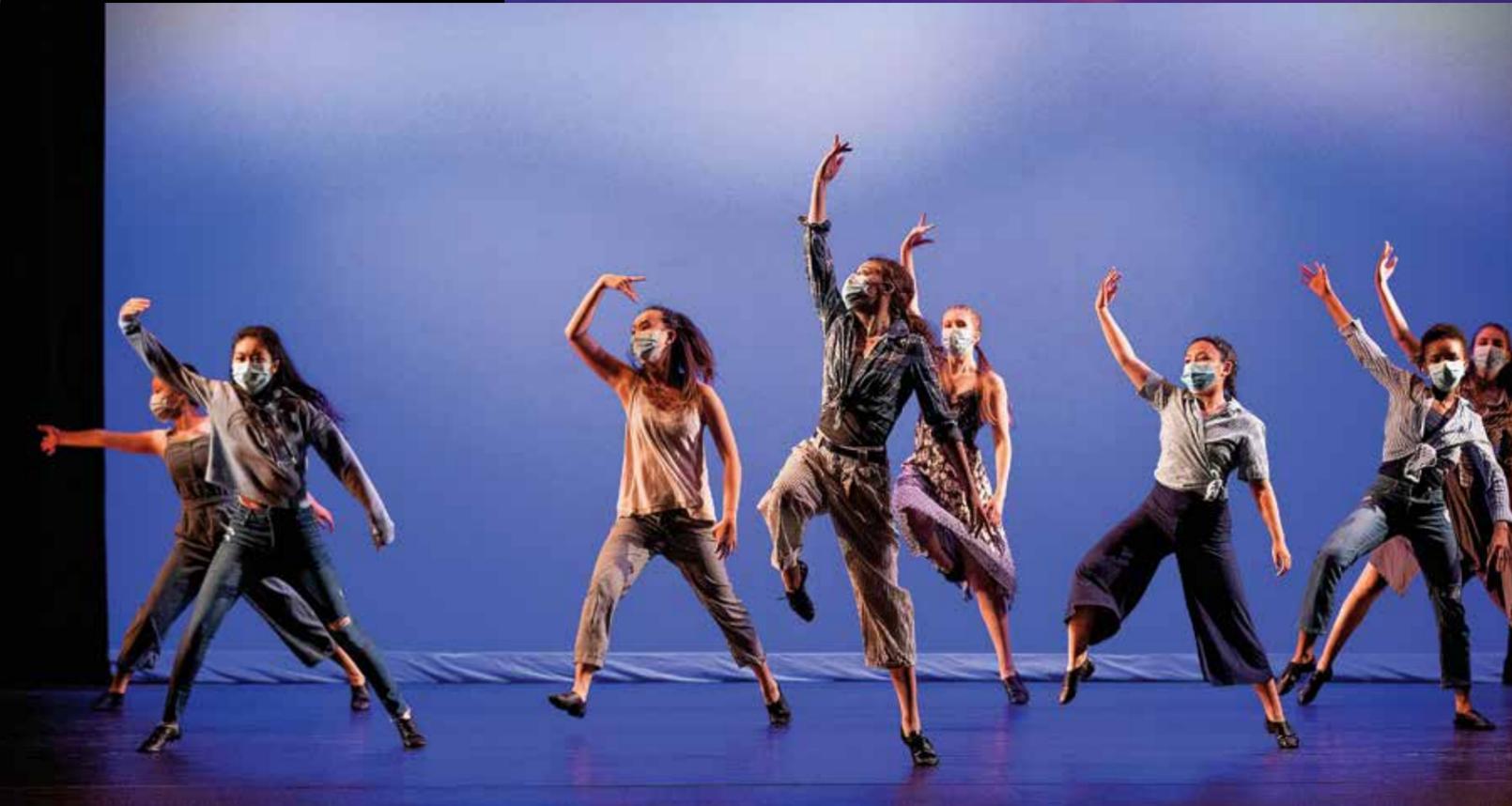


DIRECTED BY
SARAH SURBER

LIGHT DESIGN BY
DAVID KIEVIT

COSTUME DESIGN BY
LESLEY NEILSON BOWMAN

FEATURING
CHOREOGRAPHY BY
AMANDA BENEDICT,
AMBER CAMERON,
GRACE DENG '23,
SHANE FOWLER, AND
SARAH SURBER



Bringing the World to Taft

THE RANGE OF OUTSIDE SPEAKERS SHARING WISDOM, EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING WITH OUR STUDENTS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HALLMARK OF THE TAFT EXPERIENCE. AND WHILE CAMPUS REMAINED CLOSED TO VISITORS IN THE SPRING, VIRTUAL SPEAKERS CONTINUED TO INFORM AND INSPIRE OUR COMMUNITY.



PHOTO COURTESY BETTINALOVE.COM

Leone and Liberia—who used cultural knowledge, suffering, and creativity to find freedom and joy through coded language in music.

“We have to start seeing beauty in Black culture, in Black creativity, because if you see our beauty, you will realize we don’t need saving. What we need are individuals who are ready to fight with us,” said Love.

↓ Helen Zia Asian Americans in the Time of COVID

Author and activist Helen Zia’s virtual visit to Taft was the central piece and culminating event of Taft’s celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, and part of the school’s ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

“Asian Americans are fighting two pandemics: COVID and intense racism,” Zia told the Taft community. “Since December



2019—as soon as the virus was identified in China—Asian Americans have experienced an uptick in racism and violence, with Chinatowns under siege.”

Zia offered students background, context, history, and understanding about how Asian Americans have been viewed throughout history, with additional consideration of things “missing in history,” she said. She traced the early migration of Asian and Pacific Island people to the Spanish galleon trade in the 1500s, while noting that references to these groups don’t appear until the 1800s. The result, Zia explained, are exclusionary laws and actions based on “horrific stereotypes,” from the 1875 Page Act and 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, to the Japanese internment camps, the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin by displaced Detroit autoworkers, and distinct stereotypes—“one-dimensional images” that remain pervasive in our culture.

“We have to have a new vision in our minds—communities with unity,” concluded Zia. “This has been the 21st-century challenge: to imagine new visions of lived unity—new visions of openness and dialogue to explore and understand differences, and seek common values, not shut down because of differences. To change systems of oppression we must decolonize our minds, show the full humanity of all people, and know their stories with full rights and dignity. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, the arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice. We must help it bend.”

↗ Ethnobotanist Dr. Cassandra Quave The War on Antibiotic Resistance

Dr. Cassandra Quave is a world-renowned ethnobotanist whose work connects the health of humankind with the natural world around it.

“Ethnobotany is often referred to as the science of survival: If you are to exist in any environment, you have to have knowledge of how to use the resources in it,” Quave told Tafties during her virtual visit.



Noting that many of the drugs we see on medicine shelves have at least shared origins in plant life, Quave is looking at the more than 30,000 global plant species currently recorded as being of medicinal use to find the next big thing in antibiotics. Specifically, she and her team of chemists, microbiologists, pharmacologists, and botanists at Atlanta’s Emory University are working hard to resolve what she refers to as “one of mankind’s greatest challenges”—antibiotic resistance.

Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control show that more than 35,000 Americans lost their lives to antibiotic-resistant infections in 2019; in 2016, the worldwide number exceeded 700,000. Having mined all the “low-hanging fruit” in the second half of the 20th century, Quave said, we are in a period of “antibiotic discovery void.” That is, there have been no new registered classes of antibiotics since 1984. To bridge that gap, advance antibiotic discovery, and wage war on antibiotic-resistant pathogens, Quave and her team traverse the globe in

search of plants that may yield new antibiotics, antibiotic resensitizing adjuvants, and anti-virulence therapies. When the pandemic complicated travel, they turned their focus to mining years’ worth of research and data compiled by scientists around the world to help narrow the list of 30,000 known medicinal plants to a list of those holding true antibiotic potential. The team found antibiotic activity in plant extracts from 51 of 79 vascular plant orders. They shared their research in a database accessible to chemists and microbiologists for use in their own search for new antibiotics.

On a personal level, Quave also inspired Taft students with her own story:

“One thing you don’t know about me because I’m not standing in front of you is that I am not only a mom and a woman scientist, I’m also a disabled scientist—I have an artificial leg, making fieldwork challenging. The message here is that whatever the challenges, with careful planning and passion for your work, you can make things happen.” ■

↑ Dr. Bettina Love Seeing Beauty in Black Culture

Award-winning author and the Athletic Association Endowed Professor at the University of Georgia Dr. Bettina L. Love shared insights into cultural knowledge and history that can help create meaningful allyship and better understanding.

“What I want to do is start this conversation about the creativity, the ingenuity, the genius of Black folks,” Love said. “We oftentimes think a crisis—a pandemic—is a time to retreat. I want to tell you today that a pandemic, a time of multiple crises, is not a time to retreat. It is a time to double down on justice. And as you all are thinking about what justice means in your

lives as young adults, I want to offer this idea: You can’t do social justice work or liberation work or abolitionist work if you don’t know the beauty and the creativity of Black and Brown people. It’s not just about knowing our pain. It’s not just about knowing our trauma. You have to know who we are: why we are beautiful, why we are wonderful, where joy comes from.... You have to see us in our whole humanity to fight not just for us, but with us.”

Her talk, titled *Living a Hip Hop & Abolitionist Life: Resistance, Hip Hop Civics Ed, Intersectionality, & Black Joy*, featured elements of work done at Taft during Black History Month and MLK week. Love traced the history and evolution of hip hop and other musical genres to their origins with Creoles from west-central Africa—Sierra

Taft Theater
The 39 Steps

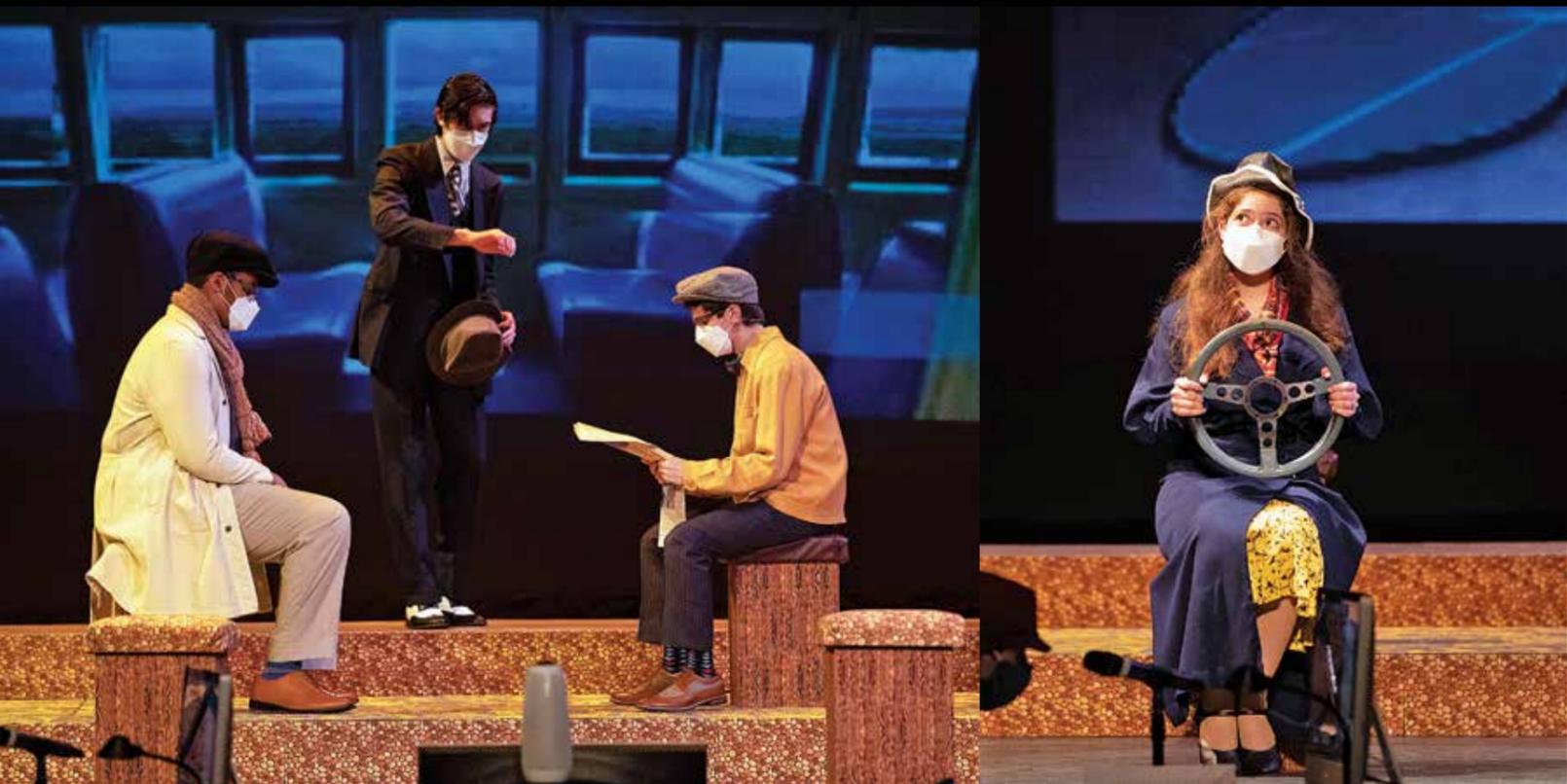


IF NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER of invention, then necessary adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols has been the impetus for invention and innovation all around us—and the Taft stage is no exception. Taft's spring play, *The 39 Steps: Escape From a Live Radio Play*, was invention at its finest.

"Our version of the play is an amalgamation of the 1915 book, the 1935 Hitchcock movie loosely based on the book, the 1937 radio play based on the movie, and the 2005 stage play based on the movie, with a large helping of British humor," explains Performing Arts Technical Director David Kievit. "The show begins on the radio set from this fall's *It's a Wonderful Life*, and then we leave the radio set behind as the story proceeds. Thus the 'escape' in the subtitle."

In building Taft's version of *The 39 Steps*, Kievit started with the 1937 radio play script, then added a bit of the book and a dash of the stage play. In all versions, the story revolves around a cryptic reference to "39 steps," spies, murder, and plenty of suspense.

The play starred Leo Kaplan '22, Elena Echavarria Gil '21, Benjamin White '22, and Simon Messineo '21. It was directed by Helena Fifer, with musical direction by T.J. Thompson, set design by David Kievit, and costumes by Lesley Neilson Bowman. ■



Spring!

GETTING OUTDOORS AFTER A LONG WINTER IS ALWAYS SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE. THIS YEAR, THAT CELEBRATION TOOK ON NEW MEANING AND BROUGHT NEW LEVELS OF APPRECIATION AND JOY. THE SPRING TERM WAS FILLED WITH OUTDOOR EVENTS, FUN FESTIVITIES, AND OVERDUE MOMENTS OF CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY.



1. WorldFest

Usually a winter event, WorldFest 2021 took place outdoors in the spring on a truly glorious day. The annual event is an opportunity for students to introduce the Taft community to the tastes, sights, and sounds of their heritage while celebrating the diverse cultures and traditions that make up our community.

2. Morning Meeting

Creativity and innovation were the hallmarks of the 2020–21 school year. With the close quarters of Bingham Auditorium not suitable for social distancing, Morning Meeting and Assembly made their way outdoors.

3. Taft Traditions

Seniors planted the Class of 2021 Sugar Maple in Head-of-School Circle during the annual Arbor Day tree planting. They also honored the Class of 2020 with the same in Centen Quad.

4. Spirit Week

The return of interscholastic athletics in the spring paved the way for a Taft-Hotchkiss Day of sorts, complete with Spirit Week and its traditional themed celebrations, including Twin Day.

5. Earth Day

The sun was shining on Taft's Earth Day event, which included campus cleanup, music, smoothies in compostable cups with straws made from avocados, and the creation and release of seed bombs to cultivate a pollinator field on campus.

6. Good Fun, Great Cause

Taft's Community Service Board hosted a Spring Sunset event on Centen Quad featuring food, fun, and music by Taft's faculty band—a swan song for band members John Piacenza and David Dethlefs (see the full retirement story on page 36.) The event was also a fundraiser; proceeds from T-shirt sales were donated to the St. Vincent de Paul Mission of Waterbury, which “aids, supports and empowers people experiencing poverty, homelessness, hunger, and mental health challenges so they may recover with dignity and develop sustainable solutions for a brighter future.”

7. Non ut Sibi

Taft golfers played in the annual Daniel J. Wilcox Sadie Hawkins Golf Team event in May. Started in 2009, the event benefits children of domestic violence by making donations to support summer camp attendance.

8. Spring Fling

Like nearly everything, Spring Fling looked a little different this year, with students gathering on Jig Patio and around Potter's Pond for the annual event.

9. Senior Skip Day

A barbecue, cotton candy, games, friends, and more atop the hill.

10. Senior Night

An evening of food trucks, Taft swag, games, friends, and yearbooks culminated on the hill, with the Class of 2021 wearing their “what's next” T's and sweats, and savoring moments that felt a lot like what truly makes Taft, Taft. ■



Community Health

TAFTIES 16 AND OLDER with parental consent received their second COVID vaccines during the spring term, doing their part to help keep our community safe throughout this most unusual school year.



Living Our Motto

→ Brian Bags

DURING THEIR FRESHMAN YEAR, Elise Moreira '22 and Lauren Villanueva '22 introduced the Taft community to the Brian O'Connell Homeless Project. Operating from the belief that "everyone deserves access to basic necessities," BOHP delivers essential items like food, clothing, first aid supplies, and hygiene products to the homeless in "Brian Bags." It is also currently raising funds to secure a mobile shower to serve the homeless population in greater Waterbury. At the end of the current school year, Elise and Lauren hosted a two-day BOHP support initiative at Taft, during which they collected enough money

to fill 33 Brian Bags. Taft students also wrote 65 letters of hope to be distributed with the bags. In May, Elise delivered those gifts to BOHP founder Donna Finneran.

↓ Non ut Sibi

THE SPRING TERM saw Taft students moving away from campus in service to the broader community. They removed invasive garlic mustard weeds from the Bent of the River Audubon property in Southbury; split wood, cleared weeds, and tended the garden at Flanders Nature Center in Woodbury; and cleared invasive species from the ponds at White Memorial

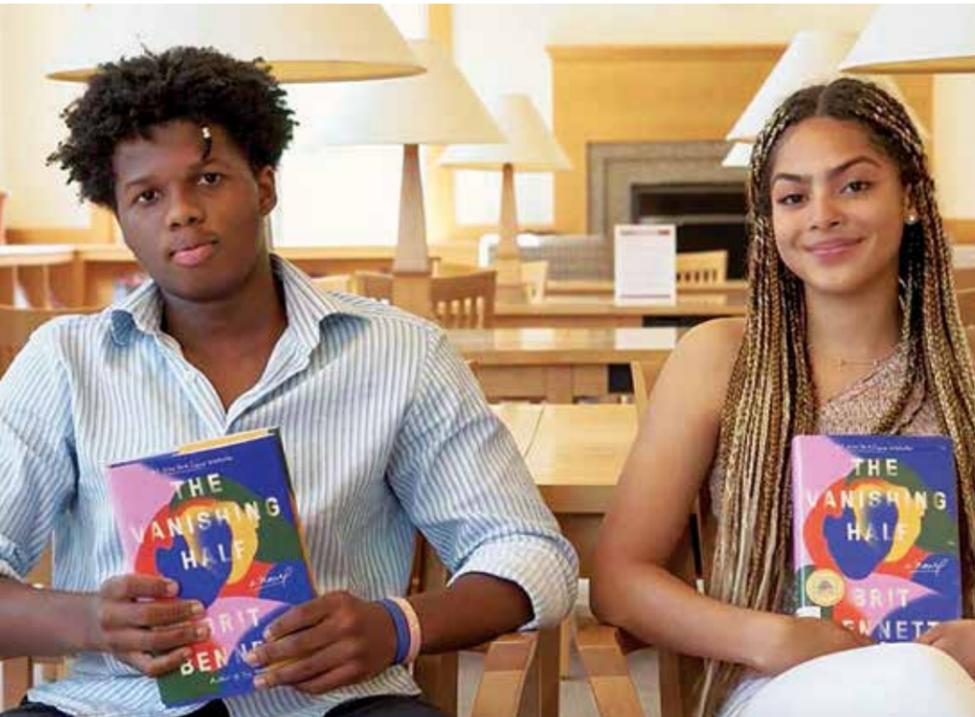


Conservation Center in Litchfield. Taft students participating in the Community Service afternoon program also traveled to Waterbury to continue the school's work with longtime service partner Neighborhood Housing Services of Waterbury, a nonprofit, HUD-certified organization founded in 1980 to help revitalize neighborhoods and create homeownership opportunities throughout the city. In addition to the cleanup at the Crown Brook Neighborhood Community Garden, Tafties raised \$500 on campus to help stock NHSW Little Pantries, which provide nonperishable foods and hygiene items to city residents. ■



All-School Summer Read 2021:

The Vanishing Half



TAFT'S ALL-SCHOOL SUMMER READ is *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. A No. 1 *New York Times* bestseller and highly acclaimed book club pick, *The Vanishing Half* traces the divergent paths of the Vignes sisters. Identical twins who run away in their teens, the sisters live very different adult lives: one sister lives with her Black daughter in the same Southern town she once tried to escape, while the other secretly passes for white, with a white husband who knows nothing of her past. From the Deep South to California, from the 1950s to the 1990s, Bennett traces the sisters' stories in a riveting, revelatory novel. Taft's summer reading selections are chosen carefully and often reflect current social issues, common campus themes, and matters of historical significance. ■

Left: 2021-22 Co-Head Mons Zobran Elias and Nicole Balbuena present the all-school summer read, *The Vanishing Half*, during a video announcement to the community.

Charmaine S. Lester '07

Elected to Taft's Board of Trustees



TAFT ALUMNI have elected Charmaine S. Lester '07 to serve her alma mater as the newest member of Taft's board of trustees.

Introduced to Taft through an academic enrichment program called New Jersey SEEDS, Lester arrived at Taft as a lower mid. Her time at Taft, she says, laid the foundation for a career dedicated to social impact.

While at Taft, Lester volunteered at a public school in Waterbury, served as co-lead for United Cultures at Taft, and was a corridor monitor for Mac House. After quick stints playing basketball and tennis, Lester discovered her passion for yoga, which she has practiced faithfully since graduating in 2007. Lester also credits Taft for her love of great literature and fondly remembers vibrant discussions

In the Field

STUDENTS IN CARLY BORKEN'S Aquatic Sciences class spent a beautiful morning on Bantam Lake studying the lake overturn phenomenon with White Memorial Conservation Center staff scientist Jamie Fischer.



about her favorite novelist, Toni Morrison, in English classes and with Mr. Mac.

After Taft, Lester attended Columbia University, where she majored in history. In her free time, she volunteered as a GED specialist for Columbia Community Impact, a program that offered education and health services to Upper Manhattan residents. During her senior year of college, Lester worked as a student advocate at Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy, a K-12 charter school.

After graduating from Columbia, Lester worked as a teacher for an alternative-to-incarceration nonprofit organization based in Brooklyn while enrolled at New York University, where she earned an M.A. in education and social policy. She then transitioned to working for the New York City Department of Education,

where she designed and led research and evaluation efforts for citywide education initiatives that reached 1,800 schools and 1.1 million students.

In 2017, Lester enrolled at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University to get her M.B.A. with a specialization in finance. Upon graduation, she joined McKinsey & Company in its New Jersey office. At the firm, she focuses on supporting universities and colleges through transformational improvements—including maintaining financial viability during COVID-19—and helping nonprofit organizations strategize and implement racial equity initiatives.

In her spare time, Lester enjoys reading, cycling indoors, and spending time with her family. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her partner, Aaron. ■



With Gratitude

DURING THIS MOST EXTRAORDINARY YEAR, THIS TRULY EXTRAORDINARY TEAM rose to every challenge, adapted and readapted to the ever-changing COVID landscape, and always kept the education of our students and well-being of the Taft community in the forefront. Thank you, Taft faculty, for an incredible year.



Potter Gallery Opening

POTTER GALLERY'S SPRING OPENING was not only the first of the school year but among the gallery's best. Organized and curated by Felicia Wang '21 and members of Fleeting Thoughts, Taft's student art collective, the show featured original and often deeply personal artwork created by Taft students. From ceramics, jewelry, textiles, and needlework to photography, paintings, and drawings, the gallery pieces reflected the vast creativity and depth of talent of Taft's student body. Read more about Fleeting Thoughts and see works from the show at TaftSchool.org/News.

Taft Traditions

EVERY YEAR TAFTIES give the seniors a fun send-off with chalk messages. This year was no exception.



Honoring a Legend

IT WAS A GREAT DAY TO CELEBRATE a legend as members of the Taft community gathered on the links for the Dick Cobb Memorial Golf Tournament.



Reflections from the Class of 2021

MR. MAC REALLY TOOK A SHINE to this year's senior prank. Everything in his office—right down to the individual paper clips—got the tin foil treatment, except the portrait of HDT himself. Says Mr. Mac: "Horace would have approved."



Taft Says Goodbye to Retiring Faculty

THREE TAFT FACULTY LEGENDS RETIRED AT THE END OF THE 2020–21 ACADEMIC YEAR. CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHER YEN-LUNG LIU, SCIENCE TEACHER JIM MOONEY, AND MATHEMATICS TEACHER JOHN PIACENZA TURNED OFF THEIR CLASSROOM LIGHTS FOR THE LAST TIME IN MAY. THEIR COMBINED TENURE REPRESENTS MORE THAN 100 YEARS OF TEACHING EXCELLENCE.

Yen-Lung Liu

YEN-LUNG LIU CAME TO TAFT in 1985 to serve as the school's first Chinese language teacher.

"Under [Headmaster Emeritus] Lance Odden's vision, Taft was one of the first schools to offer Chinese," notes Head of School Willy MacMullen '78, "and Yen Liu has been the face of Chinese

instruction at Taft since the program began. We were very fortunate that Yen, already a distinguished college professor, chose to teach at the secondary level."

Liu earned an undergraduate degree from Taiwan's Chung-Shing University and began his education career teaching Chinese at the Inter-University Program for Chinese Language Studies, administered by Stanford University on the National Taiwan University campus in Taipei. After coming to the United States and earning a master's degree, he taught Chinese at Princeton University for six years. During that time, he also taught at Middlebury College's Chinese Summer School. After Princeton, Liu taught Chinese at Wellesley College.

At Taft, Liu taught Chinese I, II, and III, as well as Honors Chinese IV and AP Chinese Language. The introductory-level courses

focused on the basics of Mandarin Chinese, and moved students through conversation skills, reading, and writing. At the honors and AP levels, Taft students studied Chinese culture, history, and economics, using essays and selections from the People's Republic of China and Taiwan as source material and working extensively in Taft's Pinto Language Lab. In 1998, Liu was named the first recipient of the Kathryn Wasserman Davis Chair in Distinguished Teaching.

"Yen Liu brought extraordinary ability, high expectations, and classroom commitment," notes MacMullen. "Scores of Taft graduates entered college incredibly well prepared—often finding themselves far ahead of their peers—and many developed fluency, which allowed them to travel and work in China. His classes were demanding, with an emphasis on details and mastery."



Jim Mooney

TAFT STUDENTS enrolled in physics courses often did a double-take when they received their required reading and textbook lists. Could their classroom teacher and the course's textbook author be one and the same? Indeed. Dr. James Mooney—Jim to his colleagues at Taft—wrote the introductory physics text used by Taft students, as well as three books designed to help students prepare for the AP exam.

"Jim's passion for the subject matter was incredible," says Head of School Willy MacMullen '78, "and students revered his knowledge, often talking of how he literally wrote the book."

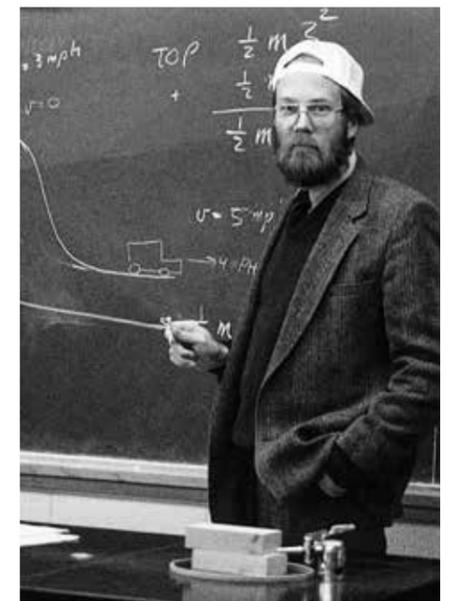
Mooney received a bachelor's degree with distinction in physics from Boston University in 1971. He attended graduate school at Wesleyan University and received his doctoral degree in 1977 following completion of his thesis on quantum field theory. Before joining the Taft faculty, he spent nine years teaching and coaching at Portsmouth Abbey in Rhode Island. At Taft, Mooney taught all levels of physics, as well as an elective course in electronics. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. During his 37-year tenure, which included time as Taft's Science Department Chair, Mooney helped

change the way science was taught at Taft.

"When I came to Taft, there was basically no lab program in physics," Mooney told the *Bulletin* in 2015. "I think I did a lot to create one. I have also set a precedent for extracurricular activities in science with the various competitions I have gotten students involved in."

Mooney has coached and guided many Taft students through a range of engineering competitions, including the annual Technology Student Association Tests of Engineering Aptitude, Mathematics, and Science, a national competition focused on engineering applications; the National Engineering Design Challenge; the Boston University Engineering Design Competition; American Association of Physics Teachers Physics Bowl; the Yale Physics Olympics; and the Connecticut Science Olympiad.

"Taft's global reputation as a school—which can challenge the strongest science students—comes in large part because of Jim," MacMullen says. "Someone who could have chosen a college career as a professor—his physics background is that strong—he chose to be at Taft because he wanted to serve high school students. Whether it was a young student new to the material or a



senior in AP physics C, Jim cared for and inspired his students. Demanding and challenging, he was also humble, empathic, and caring, a great colleague and instructor—an exemplar of the finest in Taft teaching."

Top right: For 20 years, Jim Mooney taught summer workshops for teaching professionals at the Taft Educational Center. At the other end of the spectrum, Mooney delighted in teaching elementary school students the fun side of physics during Taft's annual Community Service Day.

John Piacenza



Twenty-one years ago, Taft added a new mathematics course to the curriculum—Multivariable Calculus and Linear Algebra. It was and remains the highest-level math course offered at Taft, and for 21 years, John Piacenza has taught that course.

“John is a brilliant math teacher. That Taft has a reputation for serving high-level math students is in no small part due to John, who taught not only BC calculus, but also independent courses over the years,” notes Head of School Willy MacMullen ’78. “The math teams that competed so well in national competitions

all had students John had taught.”

Piacenza came to Taft in 1983, embarking on a storied teaching career that would span nearly 40 years. He graduated from Westborough High School in Massachusetts in 1975 and from Yale University in 1979. At Yale, he majored in applied mathematics with concentrations in electrical engineering and computer science. He also lettered in baseball.

After college, Piacenza worked for a computer company in Westborough as a programmer analyst. He left the high-tech world to take a teaching job at Taft in 1983 and has been teaching and coaching here ever since.

“John served Taft for nearly 40 years,” MacMullen says, “fully embodying our school motto. He was involved in every area of Taft life. John and his wife, Jean, ran Mac House for years and were the face of a dorm that was fun, spirited, and inclusive. He coached varsity and JV baseball and basketball, with a perfect perspective in the role of athletics at Taft. How many schools have a varsity coach who taught the most talented math students and sang in the faculty rock band?”

Piacenza also taught developmental workshops for professional educators each summer through the Taft Educational Center, and coached basketball and baseball in the town of Watertown. His four children with wife and alumna Jean ’75 (née Strumolo)—Emily ’00, Anthony ’01, Lucia ’04, and Tommy ’06—are all Taft grads.



Also Retiring



← Claudia Black

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, Claudia Black brought her superb talent and artistic eye to Taft’s Studio Art program. A talented ceramicist and hands-on teacher with a Master of Science from Parson’s School of Design/Bank Street, Black helped Taft students explore not only ceramics but also sculpture and glasswork. The work they produced was often intricate, advanced, and representative of a deep understanding of both the medium and personal nature of art. She also taught AP Art History at Taft, shepherded student artists as they advanced their skills through Taft’s independent tutorial program, and worked with student photographers, designers, artists, and editors to produce Taft’s celebrated yearbook, the *Annual*.

↓ David Dethlefs

DAVID DETHLEFS CAME TO TAFT in 2007 following teaching stints at the Sterne School and Tilton School. After serving as director of academic support at Lawrenceville, he continued his academic support work in Taft’s Moorhead Academic Center. Dethlefs brought more

than his passion for teaching to Taft: Over the course of 10 summers, he led student and faculty trips to Antigua, Guatemala, where they built more than 30 homes in the region. When U.S. State Department advisories precluded travel, Dethlefs rode his bicycle across the country to raise funds for the Guatemalan project. He was also among the faculty members escorting Taft students to President Obama’s first inauguration and a stalwart member of Taft’s faculty rock band.

↓ Kelsey Kerr P’07

FOR 21 YEARS, Taft alumni have gotten a lot of mail from Kelsey Kerr P’07. After four years as assistant director of Taft’s Annual Fund, Kerr was named fund director and quickly connected with Taft’s alumni community. Kerr has helmed highly successful fundraising campaigns each year, routinely introducing innovative approaches, and featuring assets that showcase her background in and eye for art. Each year, Kerr worked with teams of class agents, in-house colleagues, and volunteers to raise funds that supported nearly every aspect of Taft’s operating budget. A fixture at reunion dinners, holiday parties, Alumni Weekend, and other school events, Kerr’s work helped alumni engage with Taft long after graduation. ■



Spring SPORTS wrap-up

BY STEVE PALMER
Photography by Robert Falcetti



The GEICO National champs overpower Westminster at home.

Similar to the fall and winter sports seasons agreement, the Founders League made the decision that there would be no league play in the spring. However, Taft entered into a Competitive Agreement with four schools (Choate, Hotchkiss, Loomis Chaffee, and Westminster), whereby these schools agreed to COVID protocols, including twice-a-week testing. Taft was able to compete twice against each school, with adjusted formats for certain competitions. It was mostly varsity level teams that competed, though some JV level teams participated. In the final week of the school year when the five-school agreement concluded, Taft was able to play several other schools as well.

Boys' Lacrosse

Taft enjoyed a great season, spanning the preseason trip to Boston to scrimmage Belmont Hill and St. Sebastian's, to league play against traditional foes Westminster, Loomis Chaffee, Hotchkiss, Deerfield, and Brunswick, to the postseason as one of four teams invited to play in the Geico High School

Lacrosse Nationals in Washington, D.C. (See below.) Throughout the season, the program remained in the ESPN/Inside Lacrosse's national top 10, sitting at No. 1 for six consecutive weeks. The team was led by a really strong senior class, who will matriculate to play at some of the best programs in the country next year: Bryce Smith (Babson), Jeffery

Ricciardelli (Notre Dame), Richard O'Halloran (Bucknell), Sean Fox (Cornell), Tucker Mullen (UVA), Elijah Cohen (Harvard), Liam McLane (Duke), Teddy Schoenholtz (Trinity), Ryan Levy (UNC), Willard Anderson (Trinity), Kees van Wees (Michigan), Chris Kavanagh (Notre Dame), Griffin Elliott (Colorado College), and Dash Sachs (Brown University).

CHAMPIONS



Taft Boys' Lacrosse Wins GEICO Nationals

Taft boys' varsity lacrosse defeated St. John's College High School in late May to win the 2021 GEICO High School Lacrosse Nationals. The final score was 10 to 6.

Four teams were invited to compete in what has been billed as the biggest, most selective postseason lacrosse event. All were ranked in the top 10 nationally. Number 6 Taft defeated No. 9 Culver Military Academy by a score of 10 to 8 in the first-round matchup on May 30. St. John's knocked No. 5 Georgetown Prep out of the competition on the same day. Taft and St. John's faced off on May 31 for the title. All games were played on Carlini Field at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and aired on ESPN.

Congratulations, Rhinos! GO BIG RED!

For game breakdowns visit <http://geicolax.com/nationals/>



Taft about to score versus Canterbury at home.

Girls' Lacrosse

Taft finished the season with big wins against Deerfield (14–10), Loomis (8–7), and Choate (13–5). The Rhinos scored 120 goals, with 10 different players finding the back of the net, and goalie Chloe Meuse '22 made 95 saves. The home victory against Deerfield was exciting, a back-and-forth battle that was tied 4–4 at halftime. In the final 25 minutes of the season, Taft scored 10 goals, winning ground balls and turnovers, to pull out a 14–10 victory. Truus van Wees '24 (36 goals, 18 assists), Chase Melchionni '22 (26 goals, 18 assists), Caroline Messer '22 (15 goals, 6 assists), Maisy Ricciardelli '24 (16 goals, 6 assists), and Grace Denious '23 (10 goals, 5 assists) paced the attack, while Margo Kahler '22 and Paton Roberts '21 had 13 and 18 caused turnovers defensively. Captains Emma Hentemann '21 and Roberts led with grace, composure, and energy to bring forth a strong Taft squad.

Boys' Golf

With the Watertown Golf Club opening the first week of April, the golf team was fortunate to have the opportunity to practice and play throughout this spring. Led

by senior captain Sam Shaker, the team played some solid golf and performed well in matches versus traditional rivals Choate, Westminster, Hotchkiss, and Loomis. Contributions to the team's successful spring came from graduating seniors to lower mids, and with this team depth, the future looks bright for the golf team. At the conclusion of the season, Sam Shaker was awarded the Galeski Golf Award for his sportsmanship and love of golf, and upper mid Henry Kirkpatrick's teammates voted him captain of the 2022 golf team.

Girls' Golf

This spring Taft played mostly scramble formats rather than the typical match play and faced teams from Westminster, Loomis, Hotchkiss, Sacred Heart, and Choate. Coco Zhang '21 won the Golf Award, and co-captains Whitney Bartol '22 and Hayley Guittard '22 were terrific in keeping the season spirited. The Rhinos again raised funds to support the Daniel J.

Wilcox tournament with the boys' team to help support a child of domestic violence.

Softball

Taft enjoyed five scrimmages and two games and won the final game with a convincing victory over Miss Porter's. The Softball Award winner and captain Regan Bragg '21 served as the utility player, playing all of the infield positions, and as the leadoff hitter. Returning to the mound, Isabelle Johnson '22 picked up where she left off as a lower middle and pitched brilliantly. She also led the team at the plate with numerous extra-base hits. Captains Loren Lacruz '21 and Emily Riccardi '21 set the tone for the fun and inclusive team. Kami Dompier '21 and Audrey D'Autorio '22 contributed with a couple of big hits and steady presence in the field. Kayli Henderson '23, Celia Torino '23, and Hannah Englander '24 all made their Taft debuts. Johnson and Jenna Guglielmi '22 will lead the team next year as co-captains.



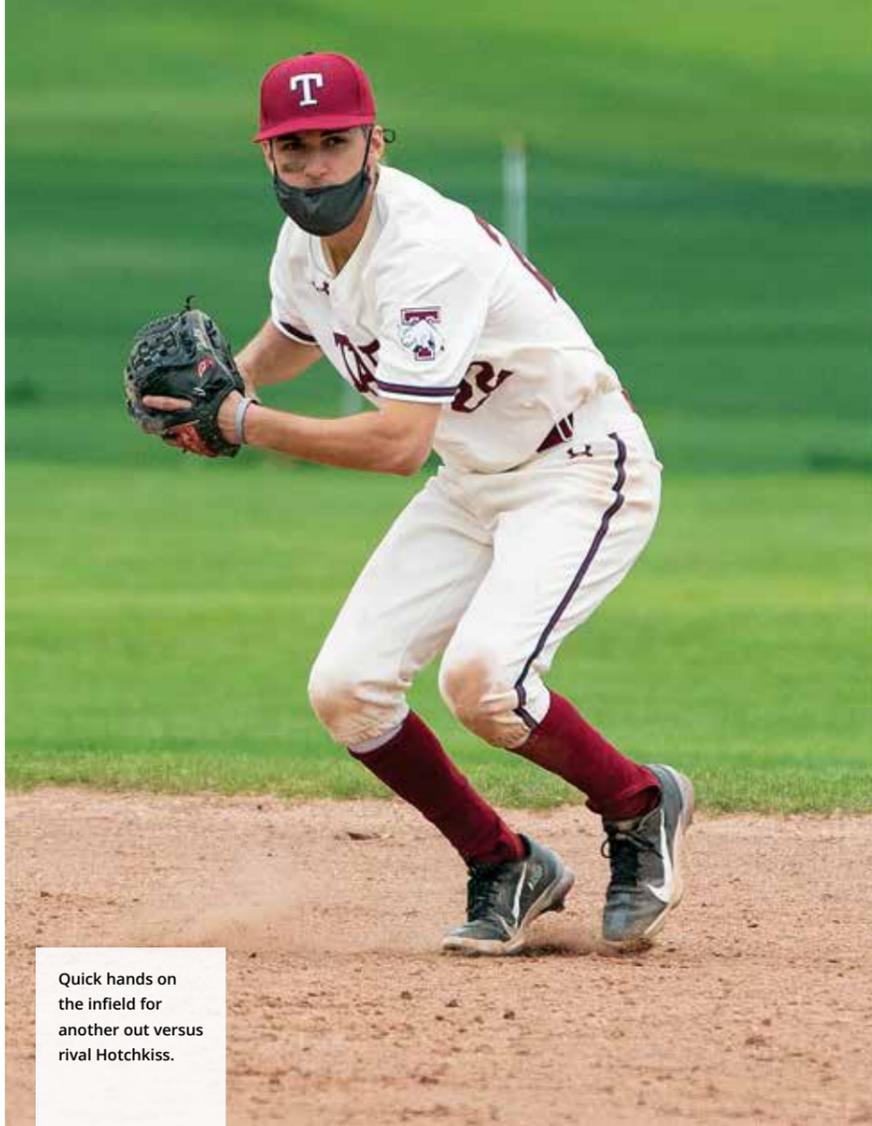
Driving off the No. 2 tee at the Watertown Golf Club versus Sacred Heart.



Chipping out of the sand at the Watertown Golf Club versus Brunswick.



A close out at first against rivals Westminster.



Quick hands on the infield for another out versus rival Hotchkiss.

Baseball

Taft put together a strong 2021 season finishing 6–5. The Rhinos’ best performance came at a Saturday doubleheader against Loomis Chaffee. Taft lost the first game of the series on Friday and then bounced back to sweep the Saturday doubleheader by scores of 5–2 and 4–2. Jack Cope ’21 and Ryan Egan ’22 were impressive on the mound, as they were all season, and several players came up big on offense with key at-bats and on defense with run-saving plays. Trent Price ’21, Jack Weiss ’21, and Ben Phillips ’22 were the other key members of the pitching staff, and the Rhinos were led offensively this season by multiple players, with Beck Milner ’22 leading the team in most offensive categories including a near .400 batting average. Team awards: Most Improved: Jacob Podhajsky ’23 and Steve Mayer ’22; Coaches Award: Trent Price; MVP: Jack Cope; Stone Award: Hunter Brogna ’21.

Girls’ Tennis

The girls’ varsity tennis team had an incredible season this year, finishing with a record of 7–1. Led by our enthusiastic and talented captains, Maddy Meister ’21, Leigh Root ’21, and Abby Hawkins ’21, the team defeated Choate (6–2), Westminster (7–2, 7–2), Loomis (6–3), Hotchkiss (8–1, 6–3),

and Sacred Heart (6–3). Even the team’s loss against Deerfield (1–8) showcased the resilience of this team, as many players fought their way back in matches. Although many contests were a fight to the finish, the Sacred Heart match was perhaps the most exciting. After splitting the singles matches 3–3, all of the doubles teams won thrillers to give Taft the victory. Meister and Root, who shared the No. 1 and No. 2 singles spots this year, were the recipients of the George D. Gould Tennis Award. Hawkins, who was the team’s No. 3 singles player, earned the Coaches Award. Overall, every player on this impressively gritty team contributed to a fun and successful season!

Boys’ Tennis

Young, talented, and masked, this year’s team worked very hard in practice, thanks to the inspirational leadership of co-captains

Congratulations to Steve Palmer, who has been named the 2021 winner of the Archibald A. Smith III Award.

The award is given by the Founders League each year to “a coach for lifetime achievement and commitment to the Founders League ideals of educational excellence, sportsmanship, and outstanding competition.” It is named for Arch Smith, a 40-year faculty member and 25-year school leader at Trinity-Pawling. Palmer joined the Taft faculty in 1985. Over the course of the next 35 years, he coached an incredible 86 athletic seasons, notably guiding cross-country runners and track competitors, and working with the girls’ hockey program. The award will be formally presented to Palmer in the fall.



Winning the triple jump with the team looking on during a virtual meet at home.

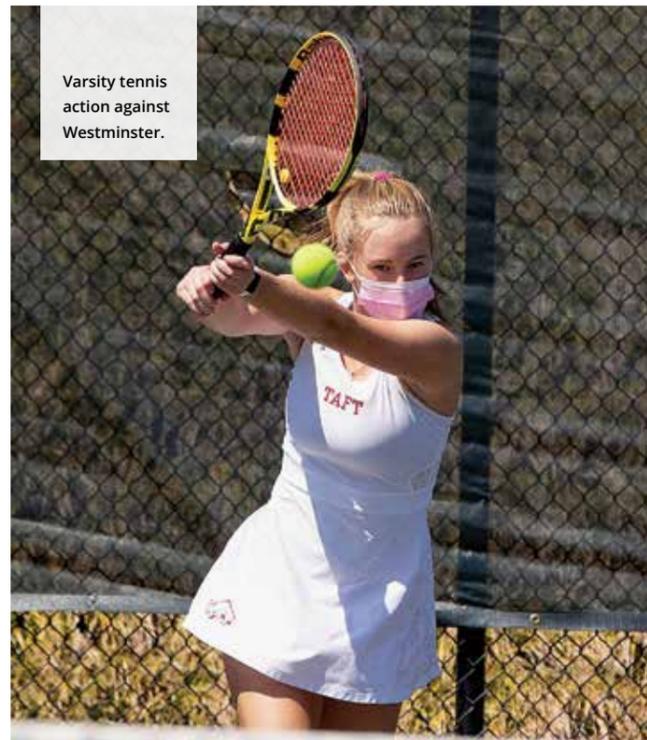
Jack Kreisberg ’22 and Scott Noh ’22. The last time Taft had three freshmen in the top six, as was the case this spring, the Rhinos went on to an undefeated and New England Championship season three years later. The future looks very bright for the team during the next few years, and their talent is matched by their enthusiasm. Despite the impact of the pandemic, the tennis squad had a ton of fun this spring.

Girls’ Track

The 80-plus athletes who made up the girls’ and boys’ track teams this spring brought the camaraderie and spirit of competition that Taft is known for back to Weaver Track. Co-captain Alexandra Preziotti ’21 and a host of young, talented runners led the way in the middle distance/distance races. Co-captain Patience Kum ’21 (sprints, relay, long and triple jumps), fellow senior Natalie Hodak ’21 (long jump, relay, javelin), Callis Ferraris ’22 (100, high jump, relay, discus), Annabel Pick ’22 (high jump, hurdles, middle distance), and Leah Wasserstein ’24 (100, 200, pole vault, relay) contributed significantly through their versatility. The captains-elect for 2022 are Susannah Brown ’22, Ferraris, Stella Oldakowski ’22, and Pick.



Hitting a backhand during a match against Choate.



Varsity tennis action against Westminster.



4x400-meter relay action at Weaver Track.

Boys' Track

Glad to be competing again, Taft's tri-captain Andrii Torchylo '21, fellow senior Joey Nihill, and newcomer Ben Osset '23 led the way in the middle distance/distance races. Tri-captain Justin McLeod '21, fellow senior Sky Bell '21, and Remy Reynolds '23 were top performers in the sprints, jumps, and relays. Away from the track, Tri-captain Peyton Hawes '21 (javelin) and Mason Frank '21 (shot put and discus) were consistently the top performers for the Rhinos, and Nico Schwikal '22 emerged as the team's most versatile performer, competing near the top in six different events over the course of the spring. The boys' captain-elect for 2022 is Edward Liu '22.

Girls' Crew

Rowers and coxswains began practices indoors in early April, making the most of the indoor facilities to prepare to take the water. Led by captains Mare Gandarela '21 and Eliza Ford '22, 26 rowers and coxswains eagerly learned the sport in nine- and five-person shells amid the wind and rain of late April. On the final day of the season, Taft competed in two eights against a combination Berkshire-Taft crew on a glorious afternoon in Lakeville. The

scrimmage included two 1,000-meter and two 500-meter races. In the scrimmage, Taft "A" bested Berkshire and Taft "B" by considerable margins on all of the pieces, while Taft "B" and Berkshire exchanged victories. All in all, it was a fitting conclusion to the season with all team members receiving an opportunity to race. Eagerness for spring 2022 and more racing opportunities abound!

Boys' Crew

The team spent the first three weeks of the spring season working out on land. When they were finally cleared to head to the lake, weather kept the team on land

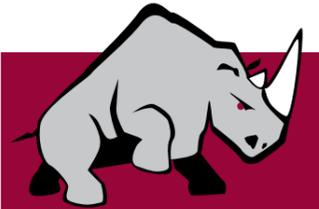
for half of the next two weeks, and ultimately they only rowed 14 days. Rowers and coxswains showed great spirit in the face of such adversity, with novices learning to row and cox in eights in a short space of time. They then transitioned to the more challenging fours for a few days before traveling to Lakeville for a Saturday afternoon of competitive pieces against Berkshire's squad—721 days after the team's previous race in 2019. Seniors Scott Williams (co-captain) and Jack Nogales got one last taste of competition before departing for college, while the rest of the team enjoyed a preview of what we hope will be a full slate of races in 2022. ■

CONGRATULATIONS!



A number of Taft's student-athletes announced in May that they will continue their academic and athletic careers at Division III schools. Congratulations to Nur Adhikarie, Gettysburg, soccer; Willard Anderson (pictured), Trinity College, lacrosse; Heath Bostick, Rochester, football; Jake Cope, Washington and Lee, baseball; Oury Diane, Connecticut College, soccer; Libby Dolan, Skidmore, field hockey; Kamilla Dompier, Plattsburgh, ice hockey; Marwan ElBorolossy, Trinity College, squash; Griffin Elliott, Colorado College, lacrosse; Alex Erbstein, McGill University, lacrosse; Jayce Fraser, Clark University, soccer; Jackson Gould, Dickinson College, soccer; Patience Kum, Amherst College, soccer; Jackson Leone, Grinnell College, basketball; Richie Licursi, Sacred Heart University, baseball; Alex Preziotti, Washington and Lee, track & field; Donovan Price, Clark University, basketball; Harris Ramlee, Bates, squash; Teddy Schoenholtz, Trinity College, lacrosse; Bryce Smith, Babson College, lacrosse; and Joe Townsend, Holy Cross, football.

GO BIG RED!



SPRING 2021 ATHLETIC AWARDS

Crew Award
Scott Williams '21
Maria Gandarela-Lamas '21

Stone Baseball Award
Hunter Brogna '21

Galeski Golf Award
Samuel Shaker '21

Girls' Golf Award
Yixin Zhang '21

Odden Lacrosse Award
Dashiell Sachs '21
Elijah Cohen '21

Wandelt Lacrosse Award
Paton Roberts '21
Emma Hentemann '21

Softball Award
Regan Bragg '21

Alrick H. Man Jr. '09 Award
Jack Kreisberg '22
Wonseok Noh '22

George D. Gould Tennis Award
Leigh Root '21
Madeline Meister '21

Seymour Willis Beardsley Track Award
Alexandra Preziotti '21
Justin McLeod '21
Andrii Torchylo '21



Ready for an all-out 1,000 meters at Bantam Lake versus Berkshire.



THANKS TO YOU, WE ARE TAFT.

Needless to say, this past year has been extraordinary. Taft surmounted unprecedented obstacles to keep the community healthy and safe while delivering in-person learning on campus and remote instruction to students across the country and around the world. While the students, teachers, and staff gave their all to make the most of challenging circumstances, donors to the Annual Fund demonstrated their steadfast generosity by contributing an impressive \$5,760,737—with 37% alumni and 90% current parent participation. We are eternally grateful to our loyal and dedicated alumni, parents, and friends who continue to prove that the Taft community always rises to the occasion.

On behalf of all of Taft, we want to take this opportunity to offer special thanks to our friend and departing Annual Fund director, Kelsey Kerr P'07, who has deftly and passionately championed our annual fundraising efforts for 21 years. This year, we also owe a debt of gratitude to our amazing Annual Fund volunteers, including Neile and Chad Messer '90, P'20,'22, 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. They are supported, as always, by the best development staff ever assembled. We are grateful to them all.

Looking ahead, we are eager to put all that we have learned over the past year into practice—engaging more regularly with our alumni, parent, and friend populations, soliciting thoughtful feedback, and collaborating with our diverse community to improve the important work we undertake. We hope that you are as optimistic as we are that we have turned the corner on this historic pandemic and that the best lies ahead for Taft. Thank you for supporting Taft and living its motto every day.



With warm regards and sincere gratitude,
Dylan Simonds '89 and Tamara Sinclair '05, *Annual Fund Co-Chairs*

ANNUAL FUND CLASS AWARDS

Chair of the Board Award

Highest percent participation
from a class 50 or fewer years out
Class of 1971: 44%
Head Class Agent: Tom Gronauer

Class of 1920 Award

Greatest increase in Annual Fund dollars
from a non-reunion class
Class of 1983: Increase of \$92,320
Head Class Agent: Bill Tillinghast

Kerr Award

Highest percent participation
from a class more than 50 years out
Class of 1958: 83%
Class Agents:
Richard Dranitzke and Charlie Yonkers

McCabe Award

Largest Annual Fund amount
contributed by a non-reunion class
Class of 1990: \$189,714
Class Agents:
Fleming McCoy Ackermann, Will Porteous,
Tim Rasic, Mike Robinson, and Larry Salz

Romano Award

Greatest increase in participation from a
non-reunion class 50 or fewer years out
Class of 1979: 37% from 30%
Head Class Agents:
Patty Buttenheim and Pamela Cole

Spencer Award

Highest percent of gifts from classmates
who have not given in the last five years
Class of 1971: 26%
Head Class Agent: Tom Gronauer

Young Alumni Dollars Award

Largest Annual Fund amount contributed
from a class 10 or fewer years out
Class of 2013: \$8,590
Head Class Agents: Jagger Riefler and Elizabeth Shea

Young Alumni Participation Award

Highest percent participation
from a class 10 or fewer years out
Class of 2018: 43%
Head Class Agents: Joe Hardison and Maddie Savage

Awards determined by gifts and pledges
raised as of June 30, 2021.

PARENTS' COMMITTEE



Neile and Chad Messer '90, P'20,'22,
Chairs
Hilary and David Allen, P'18,'20,'23
Anne and Eric Baurmeister, P'19,'21,'24
Marjaleena and Jonathan Berger, P'23
Kate Betts and Chip Brown, P'23

Lisa and Tim Broadbent, P'21
Alisa and Curt Brockelman, P'19,'23
Kim and John Church, P'21
Steve Cohen and
Lisa Kitterman-Cohen, P'21,'22
Leslie and Kevin Coleman, P'17,'19,'23
Deysi and Ed Costanzo, P'22
Carrie and Beau Delafield '87, P'20,'21,'22
Liz and Dean Durling, P'21
Allison and Rick Elfman, P'22
Bonita and Howard Erbstein, P'19,'21,'24
Malia and David Frame, P'22
Margot and Dan Good, P'21
William Graham, P'23
Alissa and Ron Henderson, P'21,'23
Jane and Chris Hentemann, P'19,'21,'24

Sue Hostetler and Beau Wrigley, P'22
Yunfeng Hu and Qiong Liu, P'21
Holly and Jim Hughes, P'21
Andrea and Christopher Ip, P'20,'23
Keiko and Yatsumi Kawakami, P'20,'24
Diane and Joe Koziol, P'20,'22
Amie and Louis Kreisberg, P'22
Courtney and Chris Kunzelmann, P'20,'23
Lindy and Warren Lilien, P'21
Chad Liu and Wendy Chen, P'22
Caroline and Gian Matteo Lo Faro, P'21
Paige and Chad Meuse, P'22
Cindy Nie and Zheng Lian, P'20,'22
Kay Noh and Chloe Kang, P'22
Wensheng Peng and Xueyun Zhu, P'22
Betsey and Ted Pick, P'22

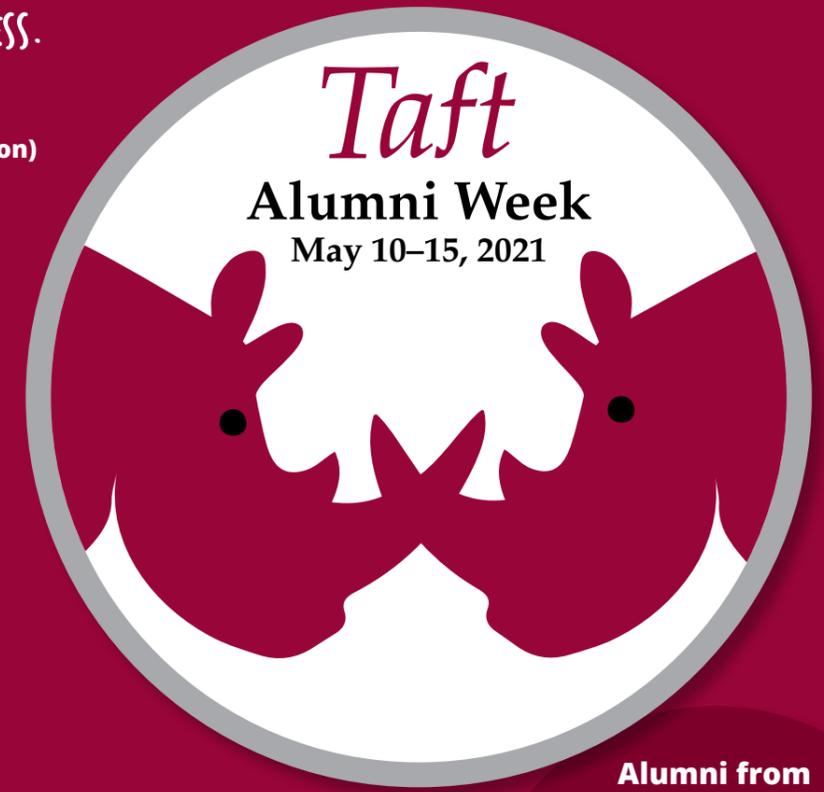
Lee and Michael Profenius, P'11,'13,'21
Lindsay and John Purcell, P'21
Kara and Rusty Reed '93, P'21,'23
Annie '90 and Alex Sacerdote '90, P'22
Marni and Bill Schwartz, P'18,'20,'23
Lisa and Harry Segalas, P'18,'21
Hyun Young Shin and Wonsun Lee, P'21
Catherine and Compton Spain, P'19,'21
Kate and Toby Symonds, P'23
Anne and Wally Sze, P'18,'21,'23
Jiraporn and Varun
Taepaisitphongse, P'21,'23
Sharon and Xiaoyong Tong, P'23
Lu Wang and Xiaojin Xiang, P'23
Anne and Charlie Watson '88, P'21,'24
Lida Yan and Zheng Wan, P'22

VIRTUAL

2021^ Alumni Week

"THE EVENT WAS A ROARING SUCCESS.
JUST ABOUT TWO FULL HOURS."

—Lou Frank '71 (50th Reunion)



THANKS FOR SHOWING UP...

Yes, it could be done! Alumni reconnected for virtual class reunions that were still fun and deeply moving. Some shared that even while apart, they felt closer than ever in this unusual year. Hundreds joined in for a week of live events, on-demand videos, alumni discussions, and programs with faculty and the head of school. The virtual get-togethers made it easy for alumni to join in from all over the world and different time zones.

To view recorded videos of events visit
www.taftschool.org/alumni/reunions/rhino-recordings

45
virtual events
30
were reunion
gatherings

640
alumni registered for
one or more events

1,100
total event
registrations

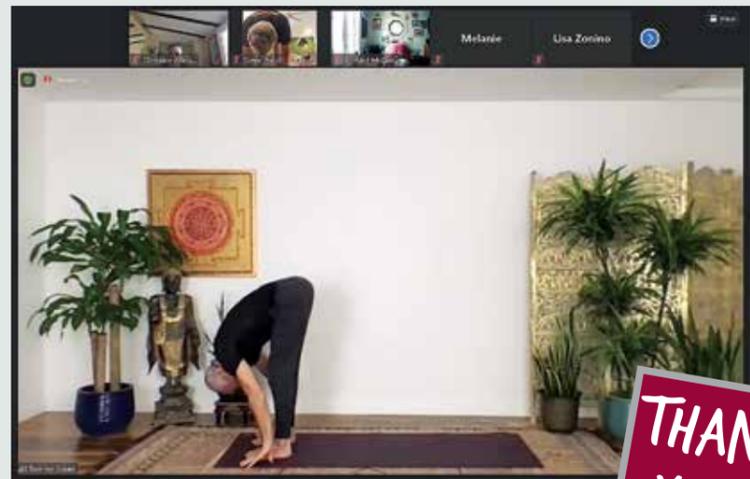
Alumni from
46
states and
22
countries
participated



BEAUX ARTS PHOTOGRAPHIE

YOGA SESSION
with **Tommy Rosen '85**

Tommy Rosen '85, an internationally renowned yoga teacher and addiction recovery expert who holds advanced certifications in both Kundalini and hatha yoga, led a virtual yoga session for Taft alumni.



THANK YOU!

THANK YOU TOMMY ROSEN '85 FOR AN "OM" SO WONDERFUL YOGA PRACTICE. ALUMNI OF ALL AGES AND FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD (EVEN TOKYO), JOINED THE 60-MINUTE SESSION. IT WAS A PERFECT PREVIEW OF VIRTUAL ALUMNI WEEK FESTIVITIES.

"I CERTAINLY ENJOYED OUR SEGMENT- INCLUDING ART HILSINGER '45 WAS A BIG PLUS!"

—Tony Allerton '46 (75th Reunion)



- 1945
 - 1946
 - 1950
 - 1951
 - 1955
 - 1956
- Reunion Gatherings

VIRTUAL ^



MAY 10

MONDAY



"I KNOW OUR SMALL GROUP OF CLASSMATES ENJOYED GETTING TOGETHER AND HAVING A CHANCE TO CATCH UP WITH EACH OTHER. I CERTAINLY ENJOYED DOING SO."

—Carl Henrich '65 (55th Reunion)

ALUMNI BOOK CLUB
Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel
 Hosted by Faculty Emeritae Robin Blackburn Osborn and Linda Saarnijoki.

- 1960
- 1961
- 1965
- 1966
- 1970
- 1971

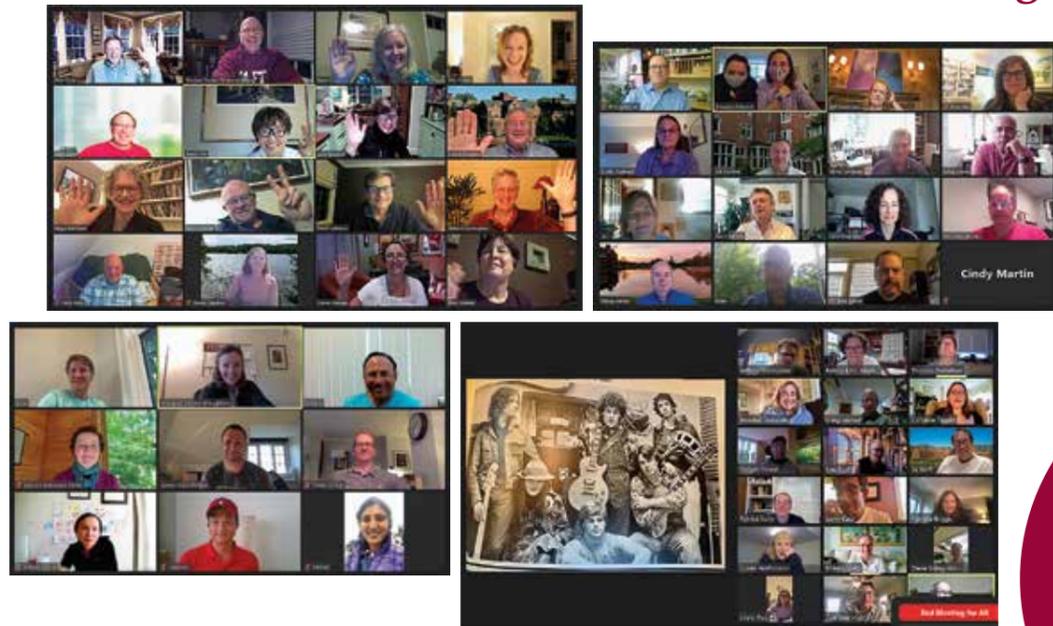
VIRTUAL
 ^
 Reunion
 Gatherings

TUESDAY **MAY 11**

ALUMNI BOOK CLUB
The Way of Wanderlust by Don George '71
 A conversation facilitated by Patience Smith Bloom '86.

- 1975
- 1976
- 1980
- 1981
- 1995
- 1996

VIRTUAL
 ^
 Reunion
 Gatherings



"THANKS AGAIN FOR HELP WITH OUR REUNION. I WAS HAPPY TO SEE 20-PLUS FACES ON THE CALL, SOME OF WHOM HAVE NOT BEEN IN TOUCH SINCE GRADUATION."

—Jane Rosenberg '81 (40th Reunion)

WEDNESDAY **MAY 12**

FRIDAY

MAY 14



VIRTUAL COOKING CLASS
with **Serena Wolf '05**
Fiesta Lasagna and Clementine Jalapeño Margaritas were on the menu. Participants were not required to cook to attend.

AFFINITY SPACE
for **Alumni of Color**
Hosted by Dean of Multicultural Education Andrew Prince and Director of Multicultural Recruitment Shanique Garcia.




MORNING COFFEE
with **Mr. Mac**



"ONCE AGAIN A HUGE THANK YOU FOR MAKING IT INCREDIBLY SEAMLESS FOR OUR CLASS TO GATHER FOR A 15TH REUNION. WE HAD AN AMAZING TIME FILLED WITH LOTS OF LAUGHS."
—Orlando Watson '06 (15th Reunion)

JOURNALISM
in the **Age of Globalization**
A conversation with Steven Erlanger '70, chief diplomatic correspondent for Europe for *The New York Times* and recipient of the 2020 Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal, and fellow journalists Susie Banikarim '93, and Neil Vigdor '95.




1985
1986
1990
1991
2000
2001

VIRTUAL
^
Reunion
Gatherings



2005
2006
2010
2011
2016

VIRTUAL
^
Reunion
Gatherings



"RISE & SHINE RHINOS"
Yoga/Stretch Session

THURSDAY

MAY 13

MAY

16

SUNDAY

VIRTUAL

2015 Reunion Gathering



MORNING COFFEE with Mr. Mac

Taft Virtual RHINO RUN/WALK

Walk, run, skip! Tafties showed their BIG RED pride and shared photos that the school posted on social media.



Amanda Costanzo McGovern '93 and her boys were among the runners who joined in.

ADMISSIONS 101

Access and Affordability

A presentation by Director of Admissions Peter Frew '75, Director of Financial Aid Mike Hoffman '97, and Admissions Officer Jessica Goldmark Shannon '01.



Taft's Global Leadership Institute STUDENT PRESENTATION



Taft's GLI is a competitive and rigorous cocurricular program that brings students from Taft and Waterbury public schools together, both in and out of the classroom, for shared learning and leadership experiences. A discussion with student leaders and hosted by Faculty Advisor Baba Frew.



"RISE & SHINE RHINOS" Yoga/Stretch Session

AFFINITY SPACE for Alumni of Color

Hosted by Dean of Multicultural Education Andrew Prince and Director of Multicultural Recruitment Shanique Garcia.

TAFT TOGETHER Volunteer Appreciation Gathering

Thank you to Reunion Chairs, Class Agents, and Class Secretaries



THE RHINORITA An alumni gatherings favorite!

Do not try this at home—or anywhere else—if you are under 21.

- 1 part fresh lime and grapefruit juices
- 2 parts of your favorite tequila
- 1/2 part agave nectar
- Muddled jalapeño to taste
- Garnish: a grapefruit wedge and chili-salt rim

Build up all ingredients in a shaker with ice, shake, and strain into an ice-filled glass.

To add to the fun, special cocktail recipes were posted on the reunions website.

Several prerecorded VIDEOS were available throughout the week:

A Student Parade and State of the School by Taft's head of school, Service of Remembrance, Meet the Faculty and Virtual Classes, Life at Taft, Gallery Tour, and a Campus Tour. Livestreaming of sports was also offered during the week.

Taft volunteer students held a virtual Alumni Parade using signs representing reunion years, and alumni could watch the video on demand.



This year, Head of School Willy MacMullen '78 and The Reverend Robert Ganung, school chaplain, shared their prerecorded remarks to honor those members of the wider Taft community who have passed away in recent years, along with a choral piece by Collegium Musicum. Each year on Alumni Weekend, a Service of Remembrance is usually held in Woodward Chapel.

To view recorded videos of several events visit www.taftschool.org/alumni/reunions/rhino-recordings

SATURDAY MAY 15

131st COMMENCEMENT

A Good Ending—



and Beginnings

On a beautiful spring day, Taft held its Commencement, with guests attending the May 22 event in person in a spacious tent on Rockwell Field. The ceremonies were also livestreamed so those who weren't able to be on campus could enjoy it. A Prize Night and Dinner for the senior class were held the evening before, which were also livestreamed and recorded for family members to view.

Enjoy our photo essay, and to view more photos visit www.taftphotos.com/2020-2021-/Commencement.



learned early on that we were all in the same boat at Taft. Young, scared, and a bit awkward. I learned to rely on my peers for the familial setting I was missing. We learned how to study together, we learned how to do laundry together, we learned how to be teenagers together, and we learned how to innovate and persevere to make the best out of anything. Tafties are a special breed—we are all tied together even if we are quite different. Our formative experiences here together shaped us as people and as a family. Taft is my home and you are all my family. So congratulations to the Class of 2021, I love you all.”

—Carter Amaden '21, Co-Head Monitor



Dr. Lisa Damour, a psychologist specializing in education and child development as well as an author, was the guest speaker at Commencement.

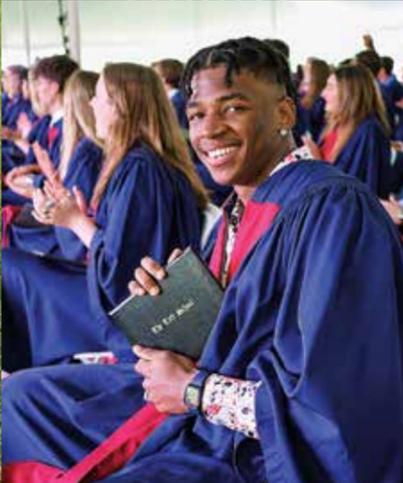


believe that what you have been through will make you more resilient, and that resilience will fortify you for the rest of your lives....”

“So the bad news is that you’re not quite done with all of this resilience-building business. The good news is that the hard part is behind you. You just had the psychological workout of a lifetime—enduring a global pandemic while, oh, by the way, doing senior year at Taft and applying and getting into college and all that—and now you are due for some restorative downtime. I promise that once you’ve had a chance to rest a bit—to sleep, to play, to have time to just be—the resilience will come.

“This is a critical thing to understand about stress: when followed by a period to rest—stress is *growth-giving*.”

—Lisa Damour, Ph.D., Commencement Speaker





Co-head Monitors Jack Church '21 and Carter Amaden '21, who both spoke at the ceremonies, hold the Class of 2020 commemorative brick to be placed on campus.



faculty

"I'd like to thank the
You have not only helped us grow in the classroom, but you have helped us grow into better people. The energy, enthusiasm, and behind-the-scenes efforts that you all brought day in and day out will forever be appreciated. Furthermore, the student-faculty relationships that we have built during our time here at Taft will absolutely continue past today. We view you as our teachers, but also as mentors, role models, friends, and heroes. Especially this year, a year like no other, none of this would be possible without you all. One year ago today, we didn't know if we would step onto campus this year, and here we are, in huge thanks to your selflessness."

—Jack Church '21, Co-Head Monitor



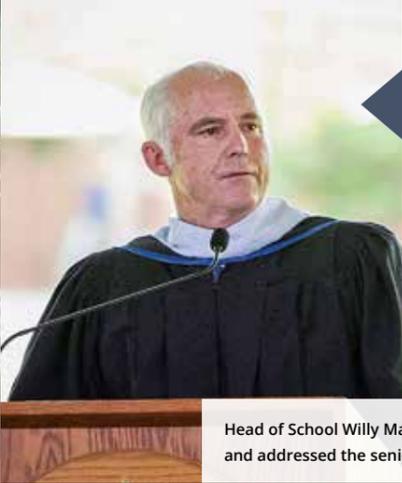
Class speaker Justin McLeod '21 shares the happy day with family members.



Live

a life that you and only you deem worth living. Don't stand in the shadow of others' expectations of you, but rather live in the light of who you truly are and what you love to do. Some of you know what you already love to do. For those of you who don't know, it may take four minutes or four years, but keep searching, keep exploring, and find what gets you up in the morning and keeps you coming back for more. Once you've found that passion, that drive, the fire in your soul, never let anyone, even yourself, extinguish that flame. You're your own worst critic, but in spite of all of that you must keep fighting and never throw in the towel. Don't fear change, even in the worst circumstances. Use it as a mechanism to craft a better you."

—Justin McLeod '21, Class Speaker



Head of School Willy MacMullen '78 welcomed and addressed the seniors, guests, and faculty.

nothing through which you cannot persevere. The list of setbacks was long, the catalogue of loss thick, the weight of sadness heavy. And yet you are here—whole, sound, centered, triumphant.... You are here because this year asked questions of you which have never been asked, and *you answered them*. You said, "I am. I can. I will."

—William R. MacMullen '78, Head of School



Sarah Katz '21 speaks at Commencement.

hard, there's no denying it. But somehow, in spite of the masks, the Zoom learning curve, the posters lining the walls that reminded us not to hug, shake hands, or high five—in spite of all these obstacles that could have made beauty unattainable—we still made beautiful happen. We still gathered around the jig patio fire pit on Saturday nights and danced to songs that made us feel like the main characters of a coming of age movie....We still put on all our wildest, reddest outfits to scream our support at spring sports games, and we still stormed the fields after we earned those victories. This year tried to take beauty away from us, but instead, beauty thrived."

—Sarah Katz '21, Class Speaker



"This year tried to take beauty away from us but instead beauty

thrived."

—Sarah Katz '21

Photography by Robert Falcetti, Seamus Conway, and Bonnie Welch.

“A Sentimental and Useful Memento”

This set of four Wedgwood plates was commissioned in 1953 as a fundraiser for the Taft Alumni Association. The sepia images on the plates were designed by Clare Leighton, a well-known artist, engraver, and author who settled in the area near Watertown. Her images of HDT and CPT capture a quietness on campus. These plates were “sold without profit,” as the 1954 *Taft Bulletin* said, at \$12 a set and were only available to alumni and friends of the school.

—Beth Nolan Lovallo '93,
The Leslie D. Manning Archives



The plates are named:
1. The Pond and Building
2. School from the Hill
3. Headmaster's Circle
4. Front Campus

The set of four plates was dedicated to former headmasters Horace Taft and Paul Cruikshank. They were released about halfway through Mr. Cruikshank's tenure.



This original ad is from the back inside cover of the winter 1954 *Bulletin*. The plates must have sold out quickly, as the only two ads were in the fall 1953 and winter 1954 *Bulletins*.



Gift Real Estate to *Taft* can enhance your income, provide tax benefits, and protect your family.

If you are considering downsizing but need income from your property, please consider a gift of real estate to Taft. Whether you make a charitable gift of your marketable, mortgage-free residence, vacation home, or investment realty, you can use strategies to:

- Receive a stream of income
- Shelter the appreciation
- Protect your family's financial assets and security
- Avoid real estate's major obstacle and surprise—the liquidity crunch

Take this example of a recent gift of real estate to Taft: an alumnus gifted a summer home on the Connecticut shore to Taft. Taxes and operating costs for the house had exceeded \$30,000 per year, and the house had become financially burdensome. By gifting the property to Taft, the donor and his spouse received a 6% lifetime remainder trust income stream. The remainder ultimately provided a full boarding scholarship named in the donors' honor, as well as ensuring perpetual remembrance of the donor and his spouse.

Request Your Complimentary Guide to Unlock the Benefits of Giving Real Estate

How to Realize Maximum Benefits from Your Real Estate explains all of these creative ways to give:

- Give It Now
- Give It and Receive Income
- Give It and Sell It
- Give It Later

To request your complimentary guide, visit: www.taftschool.giftplans.org/RealEstate



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