ST. PATRICK'S Press

FALL 2021

Class of 2021 Commencement

Digital Rejuvenation Offers Fresh Possibilities for Communication

Infant-Toddler Center Celebrates 30 Years

CELEBRATING

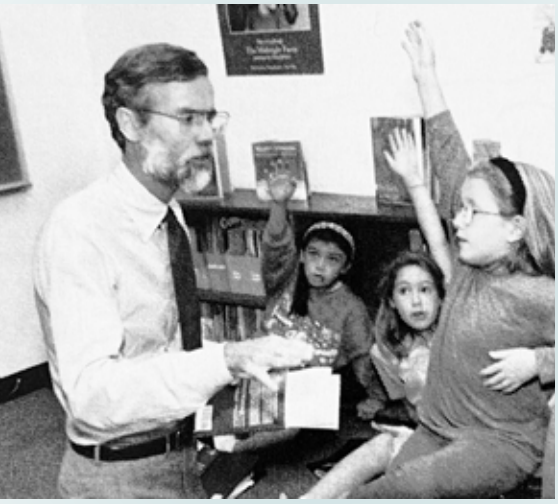
Peter A. Barrett

HEAD OF SCHOOL, 1994–2022

Save the Dates

APRIL 28, 2022
5:30 PM
Evensong at the
Washington National Cathedral
honoring Peter's nearly three decades
of leadership

MAY 19, 2022
6:00 PM
Gala Reception celebrating
Peter's legacy at St. Patrick's Gymnasium
& Performance Center



Sustaining Excellence: The Peter A. Barrett Fund for Access and Inclusion

An endowed fund was established by the Board of Trustees in 2021 to honor Peter A. Barrett's 28 years as Head of School and his lasting legacy of placing students at the heart of teaching and learning at St. Patrick's. Peter's mission-focused emphasis on the importance of a diverse and inclusive school community guided the creation of this Fund to provide financial aid to students and strengthen the long-term financial sustainability of the Day School. The Fund honors Peter, who served as Head of School from 1994–2022, and the conviction that enrolling students from a broad range of socioeconomic circumstances helps ensure the excellence of a St. Patrick's education for all students.

For more information or to make a gift in honor of Peter, please contact Suzanne Burrows, Assistant Head of School for Development, at 202-342-7005 or Burrowss@stpatsdc.org.

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ON THE COVER:
Adriana Bueno '26 sneaks a peek during a Grade 4 class.

St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School, 4700 Whitehaven Parkway, NW, Washington, D.C. 20007
202.342.2805 www.stpatsdc.org

Sebastian Elink-Schuurman '24 displays a Maryland blue crab during the Grade 6 trip to Echo Hill Outdoor School on the Eastern Shore.

From Peter A. Barrett, Head of School

Reclaiming the Rhythms and Routines That Shape Our Lives

I have observed, from time to time, that one of the many things I love about being in a school like St. Patrick's is that there is a real sense of rhythm that shapes our lives. From the very first days of school in the fall . . . through to Thanksgiving and then Christmas . . . on into spring . . . and then all of the excitement of finishing up in June and looking ahead to the next grade level as school resumes after the change of pace that summer brings, those rhythms move us joyfully through the year.

At the same time, I am mindful that rhythms can become routines, and routines can become ruts, and I'd like not to think about what ruts become. One of the other things that I love about being in a school like St. Patrick's is the determination and creativity that our faculty and staff bring to our quest for vitality and freshness in our shared work here, qualities that keep those rhythms joyful and inviting, and always challenging, for the young people with whom we are privileged to spend our days.

That quest for vitality and freshness must always guide us in our work with young people, and with each other, so that the cadences of the schoolhouse shape without constraining, reveal rather than obscure, so that they don't become mere routines or, worse, ruts that force eager wheels into tracks cut long ago, now hardened and unyielding.

In what is now our third academic year in the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic, one determination that we share is getting back to more of the rhythms and, for that matter, even the routines that appropriately mark our lives here—not for their own sake but for the sake of the children whose lives are shaped, enriched, and enlivened by them. Of course, our opening this fall—not "reopening," as we have been open onsite and, increasingly, in-person since the fall of 2020—represented a significant return to St. Patrick's rhythms and routines. Meanwhile, the pandemic has introduced its own rhythms and routines—Magnus checks during arrival, for example, and weekly COVID-19 PCR testing for all of us—although I imagine we all yearn for a time when those routines are not part of the mix.

Important among those rhythms and routines, over time, have been opportunities for students and teachers to get off-campus on field trips that invite them into the wider world, extend learning, and offer essential group-building possibilities. The return of valued, even beloved, grade-level field trips this fall, beginning in October and all of them involving outdoor destinations, was a welcome development for students who had not had such an opportunity since the winter of 2020.

Leading the way were our Middle Schoolers, who savored day trips to Echo Hill Outdoor School on Maryland's Eastern Shore for outdoor learning and activities, and our Kindergartners, who resumed the annual trip to Butler's Orchard in Germantown to enjoy a hayride and pumpkin-picking, all of them occurring on glorious fall days. Next up were trips for Grade 1 students to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens for a wetlands nature walk as they studied Washington wildlife and Grade 4 students making the annual trip to Chestertown, Maryland, to sail on the *Sultana* and learn about life in this region during the late 1700s and early 1800s as well as about Chesapeake Bay ecology. Grade 2 students ventured to Gulf Branch Nature Center for outdoor education activities of fort-building and exploring life under a log, Grade 3 students to Calleva for team-building and wilderness exploration, and Grade 5 students to their usual destination of Camp Horizons but for a day trip of outdoor challenges, environmental education, and fire-building and outdoor cooking.

We might observe that any one of these moments, in and of itself, is a small one, but they cumulatively signal a return to more normal ways of school life. They also remind us of the many resources available in the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to enrich our studies, especially in natural environments, and the overall student experience.

There are more rhythms, more traditions, to reclaim as we move through the 2021–2022 school year, which we will do safely and enthusiastically. And we recognize that not only our students and their teachers, but also their parents and families, find structure and meaning and delight in those traditions, moments of performance and song, of shared worship and shared laughter, of experiencing the Day School community in all of its fullness. Now that's something to love about being in a place like St. Patrick's!

Digital Rejuvenation Offers Fresh Possibilities for Communication

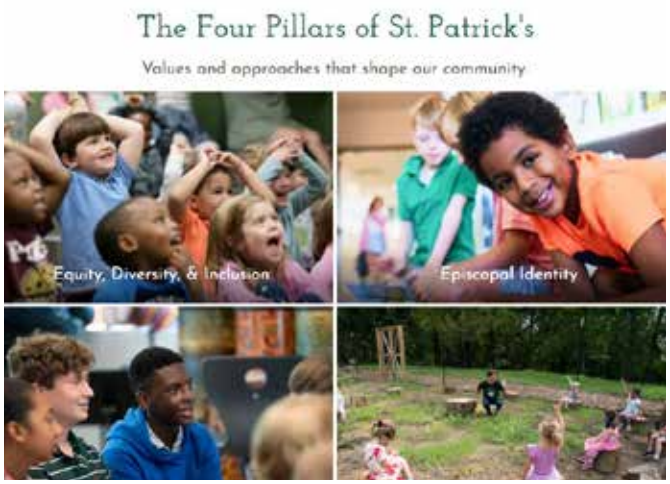
St. Patrick's has made an imprint on the Washington, D.C., area for 65 years. Along the way, our publications, materials, and platforms have evolved and matured and been refreshed innumerable times as we have strived to tell the story of the Day School in a manner that is authentic and compelling and to take advantage of emerging digital possibilities. The last two years have been a period of particular refinement and refreshment. At the outset, we asked ourselves, Who are we as a community? What are our current values and are they reflected not only in our day-to-day lives with our students, faculty and staff, and current parents, but also in our publications and other materials? Updating our ever-evolving Day School website and Admission Viewbook offered an opportunity to drill down to the core of everything we do and shine a light on what drives us as a community: Recognizing the infinite value of every child.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Our work on the Admission Viewbook laid the groundwork for a "digital refresh." Working with our marketing consultant from Finalsite, we built on our four community pillars of Episcopal Identity; Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Service and Social Justice; and Sustainability, all in the context of Academic Excellence—indeed, necessary components of that excellence. These values, and the initiatives they spark, foster growth and understanding as our students become global citizens.

After developing new Viewbook materials for prospective families, with the mission-based theme of Infinite Value, we began the process of reimagining the Day School website.

With COVID-19 spreading rapidly and access to our facilities limited, we also had to think of new ways to communicate with prospective families eager to view our facilities and experience our campus during the application process. In came Circlescapes, who swiftly and innovatively developed an online virtual tour influenced by the look and feel of the Viewbook design and reflecting new website elements to create a coordinated, cohesive admission experience for prospective families. This effort supported and extended the exceptional work of our Office of Enrollment Management, even in the midst of a variety of pandemic-based obstacles.

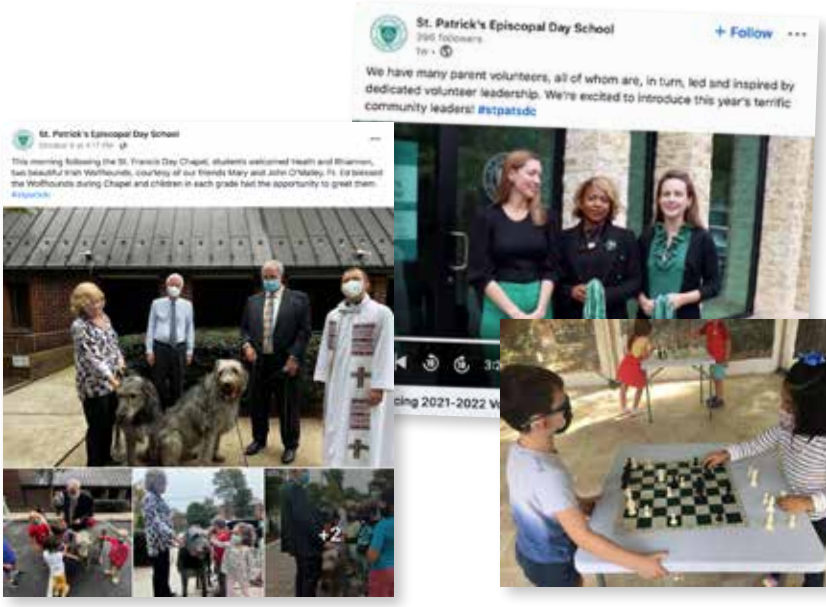


The goal of the new website was to enhance the way we relay information to both prospective families and current members of our community. How could we make the experience user-friendly, inviting, persuasive, and expressive of the Day School mission? How could the organizing theme of Infinite Value permeate the design? Our work with Finalsite helped us weave our values in the most purposeful ways throughout the site, from the highlights in our News Center to the simple infinite line trailing down our home page.

NEW INTERNAL COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES FOR FAMILIES AND FACULTY AND STAFF

The onset of the coronavirus pandemic was also an opportune moment to advance our internal communications with faculty and staff and our current parent community. Years ago, our newsletter came in the form of the *Thursday Bulletin*, a hardcopy publication, stapled in the upper left-hand corner and stuffed into or pinned onto the backpacks of students each week. With sustainability in mind, a major shift to a digital newsletter was the first step toward more convenient and communicative content. *HoundsTruth*, the current weekly St. Patrick's e-newsletter, has been the primary tool used to relay important information to the community for more than a decade. As we continued our efforts to limit the number of standalone emails and updates during the pandemic, we introduced a new *HoundsTruth* alongside our redesigned website. It received both an aesthetic and purpose-driven update: Our community receives relevant information from leadership and segmented sections of the newsletter based on academic division (Nursery School, Lower School, Middle School). We immediately saw an increase in engagement as a result and have continued to fine-tune the process for efficient messaging.

But reimagining our beloved *HoundsTruth* wasn't enough. We had to look at where the newsletter was housed and how families revisited the information we were sharing. Parents expressed difficulty in finding previous messages and recovering important emails and articles over time. Having to search and review each newsletter for one segment relating to their student or an upcoming event was a challenge. Building out the Parent Zone and Faculty & Staff Zone was the logical solution. We implemented an internal hub for each of our current communities



Community engagement with social media has increased by 150% over the last six months alone!

(Current Parents, Faculty & Staff, Trustees, New Families, etc.) to access archived content as well as once again highlighting information based on categories and audience targeting. These all-encompassing hubs were part of a significant step in improving our community's communication experience.

THE EXPANDING REACH OF OUR DIGITAL PRESENCE

An extension, and extremely effective part, of our marketing strategy has been our ability to build and maintain community connections online. Our social media efforts have transformed over the years as the importance of engagement and interaction increased. We understood the power of social media, not only for its ability to showcase all the wonderful work and accomplishments of our faculty and staff but also for the window into the soul of community with our students. Since 2017, our following has more than quadrupled, with steady growth each year on our channels. Engagement has increased by 150% over the last six months, and reach among our audiences is higher than ever. Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, along with the addition of our Vimeo channel, fuel our digital presence through relevant and consistent content in these spaces.

NEW WEBSITE RECOGNIZED FOR CREATIVE EXCELLENCE

This fall, the Day School's redesigned website earned a w3 Gold Award from the Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts (AIVA), which honors creative excellence on the web and recognizes the people behind award-winning sites, marketing programs, social content, mobile site/apps, and online video. In celebrating the best of the web, the w3 Awards is the first major web competition to be accessible to the biggest agencies, the smallest schools, and everyone in between, this year numbering more than 3,000 entries from advertising agencies, public relations firms, digital agencies, in-house creative professionals, web designers, and graphic designers.

Knowing the rigorous evaluation process ahead, Finalsite moved to submit our small-school website to be reviewed by a panel of experts by category and standards of excellence. AIVA judged websites on creativity, usability, navigation, functionality, visual design, and ease of use, yielding three tiers—Best in Show, Gold, and Silver—and noted that "to uphold a high standard of excellence, a category may have multiple winners or may have no winners at all." Fewer than 10% of the entries earned a Gold Award (and 1% for Best in Show). Other Gold winners include Forbes.com, Dell Technologies Education Services for "You are the Producer," Code and Theory for Adidas—Impossible Is Nothing, BORN Group for Oreo iD, and IBM.org. We are thrilled to have earned this recognition.

The engagement data and the AIVA award reflect our recent success in achieving our communication goals, all in support of our determination to unite past, current, and prospective members of our community during an unprecedented and a most disconnected time. During the pandemic, our digital channels have become new locations for retrieving vital information while continuing to illustrate St. Patrick's traditions and the daily lives of our students. As our digital presence continues to grow, we will be rolling out a new blog, *HoundBites*, with articles from experts within our community. And, for those who would like to receive the St. Patrick's Alumni Quarterly Newsletters, please do reach out to Director of Parent and Alumni Relations Chris Bolger at bolgerc@stpatsdc.org. We hope to see you at one of our upcoming events and to have you engage with us online!

Infant-Toddler Center Celebrates 30 Years

This year we are excited to mark the 30th anniversary of St. Patrick's Infant-Toddler Center (ITC)! The ITC has provided exceptional childcare since it opened in the fall of 1991. Originally established to provide care for children of Day School faculty and staff, the ITC has recently expanded its enrollment to include children from the broader community. There are currently 25 children aged six weeks to three years old enrolled in the ITC.

The ITC is a warm, engaging, play-based program that promotes the social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development of young children in a loving and inclusive community. Grounded in the Day School's mission and philosophy, the ITC begins and ends its work with the recognition of the infinite value of every individual as a child of God. Located in the main Church and Day School building on the Whitehaven Campus, the program runs from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday, during the academic year and also provides a summer enrollment option.

With 30 years of institutional experience in caring for and fostering the development of infants and toddlers, the ITC remains a nurturing, secure, and caring environment. We regard the program as "teacher tested," given the original purpose of the ITC. Under the watchful eyes of Day School faculty and staff, the ITC has grown into the attentive and enriched developmental environment that it is today. Our ITC caregivers are dedicated early childhood professionals who are passionate about working with children at this important developmental stage of their lives.

Applicants to the ITC must be at least six weeks of age to begin the program. Available spaces are first allocated to children of Day School faculty and staff, and remaining spaces are allocated to the wider community based on availability, date of application, and age of child at time of enrollment.

Contact Paul Lorenzo-Giguere (giguerep@stpatsdc.org or 202-342-2806), Head of Nursery School and Infant-Toddler Center Director, for more information about the ITC.

ITC REFLECTIONS

As we looked back on the success of the ITC over the past 30 years, we spoke to longtime ITC teacher Tinia Duckett, as well as three faculty members whose children attended ITC, including Mary Beth James, whose children were among the first students; Rachel Levin; and Jamila Felton, whose son is currently enrolled in the program.

TINIA DUCKETT
ITC Teacher

As a longtime ITC caregiver, what are you earliest memories of the program?
It feels like it was yesterday that we opened with just four students (two infants and two toddlers). I remember Mariah James and Gracie Robinson in our early days. There was one time we were teaching them manners and not chewing with their mouths open. I was surprised to hear from their parents the next day when they said they had brought this lesson home to their parents. It felt amazing knowing what kind of impact I was having on their children.

What are some of your greatest joys as you see the infants and toddlers grow in the program?
I'm always in awe when they start walking and communicating. It's amazing how fast they can grow and rewarding to watch them develop in front of our eyes. Mariah James was our first baby at 18 months, and now I can't believe she's finished school and teaching too!

How has this program evolved over the years?
There's been a lot of change in the program over the last 30 years. As I mentioned, we started with just four children, and we have grown to 21 to 25 children. With that growth came new facilities and staff that have created a synergy and warmth in the center. We're growing with the students, and it has been a beautiful experience as someone who has been here from the beginning.

MARY BETH JAMES
Lower School Learning Specialist

What made the experience for Clinton and Mariah such a positive one?
There were always highly capable and loving teachers involved in the ITC.

How did the ITC experience shape your children's learning and development?
Developmental formation is as much about who you are with as what you do. The tremendously caring environment, loving adults, daily notes, and advice made us feel so comfortable leaving our youngsters. Combined with St. Patrick's Nursery School, the youngsters were born into the word "lifers" at St. Patrick's.

What growth have you seen in the program over time? Do you remember the size of the program when you first started?
In 1991, my son Clinton entered the ITC at eight weeks in the inaugural year. Clinton is turning 30 this year, with a one-and-a-half-year-old of his own. He is now a vice principal of a middle school. There were three other infants and toddlers at the time. Kathy and Fran implemented a wonderfully warm and welcoming program from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm daily. My daughter Mariah joined the ITC at five months in the fall of 1994. Allison Tracy joined the ITC and ultimately became a Nursery School teacher. When Mariah joined, Tinia Duckett took over leadership of the ITC. Mariah is now 27 years old and a teacher at DC Prep. As parents, we believe their early experience at St. Patrick's helped form them both into the nurturing educators they are today.

What was your favorite part of the ITC?
When Clinton started in the ITC, both my husband Chuck and I were working at St. Patrick's. The ability to drop in and visit made the ITC feel like an extension of our family. At every event, the large two-level baby buggy carrying the ITC babies paraded the infants. Around every corner, they were greeted positively by everyone they met. They were so embedded in

the community. They were given so many opportunities, such as going to Chapel, playing on the playground, attending the Kindergarten Circus The friendships formed then are lasting. Mariah and Grace Robinson (daughter of Michael and Frances Robinson) remain friends today, as do Clinton and Emily Robinson.

RACHEL LEVIN
Grade 3

What made the experience for Maya and Noa such a positive one?
Maya and Noa loved the ITC. They felt and continue to feel a close emotional bond with their teachers and classmates. The warm, family-like environment created by the caregivers enabled them to thrive, have fun, and develop long-lasting friendships. During the year that both Noa and Maya were in the ITC in the older toddler and infant rooms, respectively, it was wonderful for them to be able to see, visit, and check in on each other during the day. I also think knowing that I was right down the hall was a comfort to them.

As a parent, I can't imagine having a more positive experience with daycare. No matter how supportive the environment (and St. Patrick's is VERY supportive!), going back to work as a new mom is incredibly difficult in so many ways. Being able to bring my children to work with me made it so much easier to make this transition knowing that I could check on them, feed them, or address a problem at a moment's notice. It made all the difference for me. Having Noa and Maya in the ITC also improved my ability to be present in the classroom for my students as it lessened my anxiety about my own children. Plus, being able to connect with colleagues whose children had been through the ITC already was also beneficial in that it allowed me to know what to expect on a day-to-day basis.

How was the somewhat recent transition from the ITC to Nursery School and beyond at St. Patrick's? Do you think the ITC set Maya and Noa up well to enter into school?
Noa and Maya were incredibly well-prepared for Nursery School because of their time in the ITC. Beyond the basics of being used to the structure and length of the school day, they also had so many social and academic skills that they gained from being in the ITC since infancy. They learned to share, follow directions, walk in a line, advocate for themselves, clean up, and be part of a community of learners. They also had lots of exposure to materials, playgrounds, and older students on a regular basis. In addition, I think both Noa and Maya feel "known" in this community since they have both been here for so long. This makes a difference in terms of their sense of belonging and ownership over the community that is so special. All of these things set both kids up for success in Nursery School and beyond.

What was your favorite part of ITC?
My favorite part of the ITC was undoubtedly the community. The support we received from the ITC teachers, from other parents, and the close, sibling-like relationships Noa and Maya have formed with their peers are irreplaceable.

JAMILA FELTON
Librarian

Currently, is Jahlil having a positive experience in the ITC?
Jahlil loves being in the ITC. Melvin and I get to see strong evidence of his daily joy when his teachers upload pictures of him eating, strolling, interacting with his peers, and playing.

What is your favorite part of having your child in the ITC?
My favorite part is the ability to see him at random times throughout my work day.

What value do you see in the ITC as a current faculty and staff member?
The greatest value is the love Jahlil receives from the entire, talented ITC team. There are also huge values in the diligent COVID protocols supported by our School Nurses and the convenience of the ITC location.

Fund-A-Scholar IDEALS Auction 2021 A Historic Success

From left: Host Brad Herman, Co-Chair Vee Solomon, Peter Barrett, Co-Chair Margret Nedelkoff, Host Elaine Del Cerro

The Fund-A-Scholar IDEALS Auction is an annual Day School event that engages the determination of our generous community to build a socioeconomically diverse student body. IDEALS is an acronym that represents the core tenets of St. Patrick's mission: Inclusion, Diversity, Excellence, Agency, Learning, and Scholarship. It is a fundraiser that benefits from broad community participation and dedicated volunteerism.

The St. Patrick's community tuned in on Saturday, March 6, 2021, for the first-ever virtual Fund-A-Scholar IDEALS Variety Show and Auction, called "Behind the Mask." It was everything that Co-Chairs Margret Nedelkoff (Pia '26) and Vee Solomon (Wesley '20, Christopher '22) imagined it could be: A celebration of St. Patrick's mission and core values; an opportunity for community members to showcase their talents, or just make us laugh; lively and profitable Silent and Live Auctions; and an inspirational Fund-A-Scholar virtual paddle-raise. Margret and Vee were dauntless in the face of a global pandemic. We, Wolfhounds, have a terrific sense of humor, and our generous hearts are definitely in the right place.

Thank you all for your fabulous support! The Fund-A-Scholar IDEALS Auction raised more than $528,000 in total to support socioeconomic diversity at the Day School, including more than $350,000 in Fund-A-Scholar gifts. These resources, in turn, support one in four of our students and help fund educational opportunities here at St. Patrick's that otherwise might be unavailable to them.

Our deep gratitude goes out to Margret and Vee for their imagination and creativity in developing a virtual event that captured the essence of St. Patrick's and to the talented leaders from across the Day School community who joined them in bringing that vision to life. More than 100 volunteers on the IDEALS team contributed their time to make this a great, COVID-19-safe evening, which did not feel socially distanced at all!

"Bounce Back to the '90s" Is Auction 2022 Theme

We are delighted to announce that our next Fund-A-Scholar IDEALS Auction will take place on Saturday, March 5, 2022. Our theme is "Bounce Back to the '90s." We hope you will join us for an epic night of community fundraising and lots of FUN!

Thank you in advance to our Co-Chairs—Elizabeth Engel (Anneliese '21 and Truett '23), Shannon Powell McCarter (Isla '22, Henry '24, and Adelaide '28), and Tashia Senn-Jones (Zoe '27)—for taking on a leadership role for what will be a fabulous Auction—and certainly so, in their hands.

Please reach out to us if you would like to be involved. We welcome your participation, your creativity, your energy, and your generosity

St. Patrick's Lays Foundation for Welcoming Head of School-Designate

The exciting process of drawing Head of School-designate Jalene Spain Thomas into the St. Patrick's community continues on a variety of fronts. Jalene will become only the fourth Head of School in St. Patrick's 65-year history when she begins her work on July 1, 2022.

"I am thrilled and honored to join St. Patrick's. Each conversation that I have had with members of the community has demonstrated a profound love and commitment to the school and its mission," said Jalene as she reflected on the lengthy, national search process that resulted in July in the enthusiastic, unanimous support of the Board of Trustees and, in turn, the Vestry of St. Patrick's Parish, which ratified the appointment.

She continued, "My steadfast confidence in the transformative nature of academic excellence, coupled with the benefits of learning and growing within a strong Episcopal tradition, make this an exciting next chapter for me. It is my highest honor to be selected to lead a school so palpably committed to its core values of inclusion, service, social justice, and sustainability."

Having completed a process led by a Search Committee co-chaired by Trustees Mashea Ashton and Rebecca Kim, the Board of Trustees has moved to appoint new ad hoc committees with the goals of continuing to introduce Jalene to the St. Patrick's community and of setting in place, well in advance of the 2022–2023 school year, the structures and support necessary to ensure a successful transition. In addition, Jalene and current Head of School Peter A. Barrett, whom she will succeed, meet regularly toward that same end. Jalene and Peter, along with Board Chair Mia Bass and other Day School and Church leaders, will continue to identify and promote critical relationships and important conversations during this period of transition.

"I am joyfully committed to working with you to continue to nurture the vibrant St. Patrick's of today while realizing the promise of the St. Patrick's of tomorrow."

— Jalene Spain Thomas

For his part, Peter marvels at St. Patrick's good fortune. "Having an educator of Jalene's stature assume the Headship here represents such a wonderful next step," he said. "Her deep experience in schools and her commitment to academic excellence, to the Episcopal values that shape St. Patrick's, to equity and belonging, and to the joy of learning will make her an exceptional leader of the Day School."

Jalene is the current Director of Lower School at St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School, a coeducational Age 3 to Grade 12 Episcopal day school in Alexandria, Virginia. Jalene oversees an independent campus of 400 students and 70 faculty members. In her time at SSSAS, she has inspired innovation in curriculum, expanded enrollment in the early childhood years, and furthered the development of a cohesive academic and social experience for students and parents across grade levels.

A lifelong learner and child-centered educator, Jalene brings her firsthand experience as a classroom teacher to her relationships with faculty and staff and fosters an environment of creativity and accountability in the pursuit of academic excellence. Jalene earned her undergraduate degrees in psychology and art history at Duke University and a Masters in Private School Leadership at Columbia University's Teachers College. Prior to joining SSSAS, Jalene spent 16 years at Beauvoir, beginning as a Kindergarten teacher, ultimately becoming Assistant Head of School, and serving as Acting Head of School during a time of leadership transition.

"To the entire St. Patrick's community—students, parents, faculty and staff, alumni, and leaders—I am joyfully committed to working with you to continue to nurture the vibrant St. Patrick's of today while realizing the promise of the St. Patrick's of tomorrow," observed Jalene. "For this and many other reasons, I am thrilled to begin the important work of building lasting and trusting relationships made whole by our shared integrity, empathy, and purpose."

Board Welcomes New Trustee and Honors Departing Trustee

As the 2020–2021 school year came to a conclusion, the Board of Trustees celebrated the remarkable service of Trustee David Roberts (Will ex.'19, George '21, Carlin '25) during his seven years on the Board, much of that time as Treasurer. At the same time, the Board welcomed past parent and parishioner Kate Meek P '19 as a new Rector's Appointee, succeeding Dave.

"I am grateful to DAVE ROBERTS for the manner in which he has continuously, even relentlessly, kept the focus of this Board on matters of consequence to this institution, matters of health and well-being and vitality," remarked Head of School Peter A. Barrett at the May Board meeting. "While the way in may be finances, the outlines of the institution and the framework for the lives of our children come quickly into view." Recognizing that Dave's partnerships with, first, Assistant Head of School for Finance and Operations Terry Armstrong and, more recently, Rochelle Hargraves have been instrumental in ensuring the financial health of the Day School, we are deeply grateful for his service.

KATE MEEK P '19

KATE MEEK, who attended the May Board meeting as a new Rector's Appointee-elect in advance of the July 1 start to her term, is the mother of Alex Meek '19 and a longstanding member of St. Patrick's Church. Her husband JB serves on the Vestry of St. Patrick's Church. For 20 years, Kate worked in the information technology field, with a particular emphasis on web development. She has extensive professional experience in project and client relationship management as well as congressional web experience in the U.S. House of Representatives. Kate also serves on the Board of the Beaverdale Foundation. She received her bachelor's degree in history from Yale University. Kate enjoys sailing, skiing, running, and SCUBA diving.

The Day School's governing board, the Board of Trustees, provides the strategic vision and fiduciary oversight that strengthen St. Patrick's for current and future students. There are three Rector's Appointees on the 20-member Board of Trustees, 40 percent of whose membership comprises members of St. Patrick's Parish. We appreciate the Board of Trustees' volunteer leadership and dedication to the Day School community.

Welcome, New Faculty and Staff

Karen Breslin	Lower School Itinerant Teacher
Joan Carter	Director of Special Events
Mike Cooke	Junior Systems Administrator
Valentina Gabrielli	Grades 5/6 Spanish
Gordon Jones	Middle School Itinerant Teacher
Dean Lanois	Grade 4 Teacher
Brian O'Malley	Grades 5/8 Science
Shannon Page	Lower School Itinerant Teacher
Shuyi Peng	Nursery Assistant Teacher
Kyle Tyson	Development Associate

KAREN BRESLIN has joined the Day School as a Lower School itinerant teacher, supporting classroom teachers in a variety of ways. Karen has been an educator, primarily in the District of Columbia, for 14 years, most recently part-time as a substitute teacher in local independent and public schools and previously at Lafayette Elementary in Northwest and the Winston Educational Center in Southeast. Karen initially began teaching as part of the D.C. Teaching Fellows program, earning a master of arts in teaching from American University. In addition, Karen brings strong interests and experience in social justice, mindfulness, health and wellness, and spirituality from many traditions that influence her work as an educator. Karen has lived in Washington for more than 20 years and grew up in northern New Jersey.

JOAN CARTER, the new Director of Special Events in the Development Office, has extensive experience in independent schools, first as a Kindergarten teacher at Stone Ridge and then as a Lower School teacher at McLean. Prior to joining St. Patrick's, Joan was the Director of Alumnae Affairs at Oldfields School, a boarding and day school north of Baltimore. There, Joan directed all aspects of alumnae activity, including on-campus receptions, fundraisers, graduations, award ceremonies, campaign dinners, and social gatherings across the country. Joan earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood and elementary education from Lesley University. Joan grew up in the D.C. area and has two adult daughters, Rosie and Claire. She is excited to be back closer to her family and looks forward to working with everyone at St. Patrick's.

MICHAEL COOKE became part of the Day School Technology Team as junior systems administrator last spring. Mike has a bachelor's degree in cybersecurity, with a minor in criminal justice, from the University of Maryland Global Campus. Most recently, Mike has been an information technology specialist in the Office of the Inspector General for the District of Columbia Government. Prior to that position, Mike spent 10 years in technical support analyst and lead roles in three different corporate settings.

VALENTINA GABRIELLI now teaches Grades 5 and 6 Spanish. A teacher for the last 10 years, Valentina has taught Spanish in Grades 2 through 9 for six of those years and also been a homeroom teacher. Valentina was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and at a young age moved to Colombia with her family. She later moved to the United States to pursue her career as a teacher. Valentina has undergraduate degrees in psychology and art and, later, early childhood education from Georgia Southwestern State University. She earned her master's degree in curriculum and teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University. When she is not teaching, she is spending time with her two daughters and husband. Valentina is thrilled to be at St. Patricks!

GORDON JONES joined St. Patrick's last spring as a Middle School itinerant teacher and has returned this fall, bringing with him extensive experience as a private music teacher and professional musician. Gordon, who holds a bachelor's degree in music from Hampton University, has dedicated much of his professional life to playing the saxophone. With broad experience as a performer, Gordon has most recently been the saxophonist for the Corey Harris Band. Gordon returned to Washington, D.C., shortly after the pandemic started and resumed private music instruction at that time. In addition to serving as the itinerant teacher on the MacArthur Campus, Gordon has coached the Middle School boys soccer teams.

DEAN LANOIS has joined the Day School as a Grade 4 homeroom teacher. Dean has spent the last decade teaching at international schools, including schools in Jakarta, Indonesia; Yangon, Myanmar; and Luanda, Angola. He was head of the Primary English Department at the Singapore International School in Jakarta and a Grade 1 teacher at the ACS International School, also in Jakarta; the Grade 5 team leader at the International School Myanmar; and an International Baccalaureate PYP Year 5 teacher at the Luanda International School. He earned his bachelor's degree in education from the University of Southern Mississippi and his master's degree in education from Bethel University.

BRIAN O'MALLEY has joined St. Patrick's as the Grades 5 and 8 science teacher. Brian has extensive experience as an independent school educator, including as a teacher, dean, and coach at St. Albans for 12 years, and most recently as Director of Advancement at the National Child Research Center. Brian holds an undergraduate degree in environmental studies from Connecticut College, a master's degree in environmental science from Yale, and a master's degree in independent school leadership from Teachers College. When not teaching, Brian can be found hiking or gardening or cheering on his favorite hometown team, the Boston Red Sox. As the parent of a former Wolfhound (Lucy ex. '22), Brian is thrilled to be back in the St. Patrick's community as a teacher and advisor.

SHANNON PAGE has assumed the varied responsibilities of a Lower School itinerant teacher. She loves the challenge of varying classes and classrooms and brings experience working with K–12 students in-person as well as in virtual settings. As a lifelong learner, she has explored local streams and waterways; enjoys kayaking, snowboarding, indoor-skydiving, and camping; and thrives on bringing active learning into her lesson plans. When not participating in outdoor activities, she can be heard performing violin or oboe in local groups or working with community organizations. She has a bachelor's degree in American studies from Mary Washington, a master's degree in education from George Mason, and a master's in library and information science from Catholic.

SHUYI PENG, a native of Liuzhou, China, has become a Nursery School assistant teacher. Shuyi has spent the last eight years working in early childhood education settings in Nanning, China, and Washington, D.C. She has a bachelor's degree in English literature from Guangxi University for Nationalities in Nanning and has completed coursework in curriculum design at the Harvard Extension School. Shuyi enjoys cooking and baking various international foods and spending time outdoors. She is grateful for this opportunity to be a member of the St. Patrick's community.

KYLE TYSON has joined the Development Office as the Development Associate. He comes to St. Patrick's after spending several years as the Associate Director of Advancement at the National Child Research Center, where he co-led the school's fundraising activities and served on the administration team. Kyle has a bachelor's degree in political science from Baldwin Wallace University in Berea, Ohio.

Following are excerpts from Head of School Peter A. Barrett's remarks at the Chapel Honoring Faculty and Staff in May, during which he announced Middle School Director of Studies/Director, Writing & Learning Center Leah Corradi as the recipient of the Love of Teaching Award in Honor of Mark Humphreys and Director of Sustainability Sam Mason as the recipient of the Jeff Keffer Service Award.

FACULTY AWARDS

Love of Teaching Award in Honor of Mark Humphreys

LEAH CORRADI, MIDDLE SCHOOL DIRECTOR OF STUDIES AND DIRECTOR OF THE WRITING & LEARNING CENTER

In the many testimonials we received regarding this year's recipient, faculty and administrators talked about her first and foremost as a teacher deeply committed to her students but also as an exceptional colleague. On that score, one observer noted just how easy it is to work with this teacher, continuing, "When you think about the amount of time that we spend with colleagues, you really shouldn't underestimate how important that is. She is a positive presence and is always willing to do her part. She embraces fresh ideas." Just as she works to refine her own craft in order to meet the needs of each one of her students, she has become an excellent sounding board for colleagues as they work to do the same, as another observer noted. Said yet a third, "Although I don't teach with her, I admire the patience and positivity that she exudes in her interactions with students and colleagues."

Or another: "What makes [her] such a gifted teacher is her daily determination to draw out the best qualities in each and every student and to highlight them again and again with the students themselves and with their teachers." Or another, "She holds herself to high standards—at times, needing reminders to allow herself to be human!—but she does so out of deep love for her students and desire to do right by each and every one of them." As one of those colleagues continued, "She believes deeply in the ability of her students and is consistently finding ways to hold them up and help them to see what they are capable of."

There is something of a triangle that emerges here, a healthy and powerful one, with those "each and every students" on one leg of that triangle, colleagues on another, and craft on the third. As one contributor observed, capturing that triangle in full, "She is constantly thinking about how she can find new and creative ways to better her craft in order to better support her students. She is a team player who finds ways to collaborate with her colleagues and is always the first to step in and provide a colleague support, when needed. Despite all of the challenges this year brought us, she forged ahead with optimism and commitment to finding new and unique ways to do her job and support everyone around her. I am proud to call her my colleague!"

While there is always a professional educator in evidence here, there is also a particular human being, whose laugh, as one contributor observed, "is infectious and [whose] heart is at the forefront of all that she does. Moreover, she models humility and ongoing learning herself." These colleagues express amazement at this teacher's commitment to all that she takes on—of course including her work with her students and her colleagues but also her investment in the work of equity, diversity, and inclusion or her work with Horizons Greater Washington, and even her wonderful son, Luca—commitments that make us wonder how she has time to accomplish it all. She is a marvel, as one colleague observed.

The Love of Teaching Award for the 2021–2022 school year, with our deepest appreciation and affection, goes to an educator who, as one person said, "embodies the spirit of St. Patrick's in her belief in the infinite value of every member of the community." That individual is Middle School learning specialist Leah Corradi.

ABOUT THE AWARD

More than a decade ago, a group of parents initiated a conversation with us about ways to honor then-Grade 3 teacher Mark Humphreys' contributions to St. Patrick's. The outcome was that a named fund was created to recognize Mark and thank him for his service to the Day School. This fund, the Love of Teaching Award in Honor of Mark Humphreys, provides a new recipient each year with a stipend to augment that teacher's class instructional program or personal professional development opportunities during that year.

Each year, we invite nominations of potential honorees for the Love of Teaching Award from members of the faculty and staff for consideration by the Division Heads, who in turn make a recommendation to the Head of School. To recognize the recipient further, an anonymous donor purchased and donated to the Day School a wooden captain's chair with the St. Patrick's logo. The chair is given to the honored educator for the year for use in that individual's classroom or office.

Here are the qualities we set forth for nominees for the Love of Teaching Award:

- a dedication and determination to help each child develop to that child's fullest potential;
- a clear sense of teaching as a craft at which the nominee always strives to get better;
- a determination and willingness to find what works for each student;
- an understanding of the importance of collaboration with colleagues; and,
- the conviction that the best students this individual has ever taught are those who are currently in that classroom.

We ask faculty and staff who are nominating someone for the Love of Teaching Award to write a brief statement as to how that particular individual displays those qualities.

The Jeff Keffer Service Award

SAM MASON, DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY

This morning, we announce the ninth recipient of the Jeff Keffer Service Award, which includes a $5,000 stipend supported by the Jeffrey M. Keffer Endowment. My preceding remarks have emphasized Jeff's exquisite sense of community and his deep commitment to St. Patrick's. He was also deeply interested in environmental sustainability, organic farming, and farm-to-table foods. Elizabeth told me that he even made all of the baby food for the young May, Abby, and Griffin, sustenance that no doubt explains the great start they had in life.

Recognizing that this award is nested in the concept of community—really not just a single community but the larger concept of community—and service to community, it certainly embraces our ability to recognize our thoughtful place in the wider world, the impact we have on that world, and the kind of world we are passing on to those who will follow us. There are some obvious examples of this individual's work . . . an individual committed to those ideas of community and service to community . . . including the Garden & Outdoor Learning Space itself and the Eco-Schools Silver Award achieved by St. Patrick's (only the fifth school in Washington, D.C. to reach that level). There are our partnerships with D.C. Greens, which has sharpened our sense of the food inequities in this area, and with U.S. Food Rescue & Campus Kitchen, which reduce food waste here and put good food into the hands and mouths of those who need it. There is the recognition that environmental sustainability is fundamentally a social justice issue, given the disproportionate impact environmental degradation and food inequities have on the neediest individuals with whom we share this planet Earth.

Of course, this work is not the responsibility of a single individual, nor are the results the achievements of a single individual. Nonetheless, one important participant in this work observed recently that she is "humbled by the power of one person to affect change without drawing attention to himself." She continued, "He has ignited this work in ways that you couldn't plan for." It is also the work of faculty and staff colleagues, students, and parents—of the Environmental Action Team, of the Sustainability Task Force, and of the Equity Committee—of individuals who have long been involved in this work as well as those who are only now learning of its joys and possible impacts.

Where does our food come from? What does *that* taste like? What do plants look like as they grow and change? How does food get to our tables? How does food get to others' tables? Why doesn't food, especially healthy food, get to all of our tables in equal measure? Do we really waste that much food? How can we change that reality? How can recycling and composting help? How can we reduce our impact on the planet we all share?

ABOUT THE AWARD

There are many factors that make schools—especially great schools like St. Patrick's—seem like complex organizations and, in many ways, they are. But they are also rather simple organizations, thriving on face-to-face interaction and shoulder-to-shoulder collaboration, with the efforts of individuals—students, faculty and staff, parents—directly influencing the health and vitality of the whole.

Today, we remember—and honor—a man who appreciated those many complexities at the same time that he recognized and acted upon the otherwise simple understandings that shape this place. Jeff Keffer was an individual who clearly understood that each of us must work to make human institutions, relationships, and situations better than they were when we arrived, a theme that I articulated earlier for this very chapel. He had a keen sense of the roles each one of us can, and should, play in this effort, as faculty and staff, students, and parents. Rather than expecting those roles to constrain us, though, Jeff seemed to think that a clear, textured understanding of our various roles actually frees us to be our best selves.

As a nursery, elementary, and middle school, we recognize that the parents of the young people we teach will be close behind . . . nearby . . . here, and we benefit in so many ways from their presence. How fortunate we were to have Jeff Keffer be one of those parents, an individual for whom service to the ever-widening communities of which he was a part—and to this St. Patrick's community that he loved so much—was essential! Service is an expression of gratitude, optimism, devotion, and determination; it is, in fact, a way of life. Jeff Keffer lived his life in that way, without ever seeking any personal recognition.

Jeff and Elizabeth Keffer arrived at St. Patrick's in the fall of 1998, nearing a quarter of a century now, when they enrolled their oldest child, May, in the Nursery School. Daughter Abby and son Griffin would follow and, in

During the pandemic, public health officials advised schools to get students outside . . . to get classes outside. After all, it would be safer there. For this year's recipient of the Jeff Keffer Service Award, the "outside" is his classroom . . . it was before the pandemic took hold, before the Garden & Outdoor Learning Space took shape, under his guiding hand. It is now. And what a powerful sense of community this teacher brings to his work . . . of the St. Patrick's community . . . of the Washington metropolitan area . . . of the planet we share . . . and this is true even before we turn to his deep involvement in the Haiti Partnership Program.

This morning, we honor Jeff Keffer by honoring a man who, in addition to being a phenomenal and infinitely generous teacher of young children, has drawn together so many members of the St. Patrick's community—students, parents, and faculty and staff—to become involved in the work of environmental sustainability and of combating climate change and food injustice and, in the process, helped us serve the wider communities of which we are a part. This morning, we bestow the Jeff Keffer Service Award on early childhood science teacher and Director of Sustainability Sam Mason, with gratitude, admiration, and respect.

time, all three would graduate from St. Patrick's. Along the way, Jeff was a constant, vital presence. First and foremost in this place a superb father to his three children, Jeff was also a gifted, selfless volunteer, before, during, and well beyond his years as a Trustee. He brought thoughtfulness and care to his efforts to make St. Patrick's an ever better place.

Beginning nine years ago, we have endeavored to remember here, and honor here, a man, a father, a husband, a volunteer, and a friend who revealed his sense of St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School through a depth of involvement, commitment, energy, and achievement—a life of service to this institution—that will be difficult to equal. We remember, and honor, this man by acknowledging a member of the St. Patrick's faculty and staff for that individual's commitment to the Day School, demonstrated understanding of the community that comprises St. Patrick's, and service to the health and vitality of the institution. Specifically, we honor, in Jeff Keffer's name, a member of the faculty and staff who has demonstrated, over time, that understanding of and commitment to this place, that dedication to the quality of the experience of the young people who animate this place, and that yearning for excellence that shaped Jeff's life in service to St. Patrick's.

On our Foxhall Campus, for which Jeff was a tireless advocate, there is the Jeffrey M. Keffer Memorial Dell. Sitting on the bench in that tranquil place, you can turn and look over your left shoulder to see the new Garden & Outdoor Learning Space that, until recently, was never part of the Foxhall Campus plans. Intersecting on the Garden & Outdoor Learning Space are a number of forces that have gathered strength and meaning in recent years, guided by the energy, commitment, creativity, and determination of this year's recipient of the Jeff Keffer Service Award.

With Bruce Gellin, MD, MPH—the Rockefeller Foundation's Chief of Global Public Health Strategy, one of the world's premier vaccine and infectious disease experts, and husband of former, longtime, beloved School Nurse Sharon Gellin—as the featured speaker, the Class of 2021 gathered in the Nave for its graduation, including the awarding of diplomas and remarks that honored and inspired.

Life Lessons From the Pandemic

GRADUATION REMARKS BY BRUCE GELLIN, MD, MPH

It started with a sneeze and, within 24 hours, five were exposed.

In one week, 55,000 were exposed and 5,000 were dead.

No, this is not the opening salvo of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it might have been.

I know that **all** the graduates here will remember this headline vividly, but I wanted to be sure that your parents had a full appreciation for just one of the many reasons they sent you to St. Patrick's. And it's also proof that the Class of 2021 was uniquely prepared for what we all experienced over the past year and a half.

I met you two years ago when I had the privilege of spending a morning with you in the music room to talk about infectious diseases, epidemics, and pandemics. We had a great discussion based on your class project—"Smeasles"—at a time when a measles outbreak in New York was getting lots of attention.

IT STARTED WITH A SNEEZE.

Who knew that interdisciplinary studies—the intersections of math, biology, and health, in this case—would start in Grade 6? It sounds more like college to me. You studied epidemiology and contagion and modeled what an explosive outbreak of a new virus would look like if it were unchecked by a vaccine. But more than the virology, you came to understand the impact that a severe, contagious disease like Smeasles would have not only on health and well-being, but on society. And you predicted what would happen.

IT STARTED WITH A SNEEZE, AND A WEEK LATER 55,000 WERE EXPOSED.

Among the lessons you took from this study were the real-world application of math and biology, the importance of articulating (and questioning) your assumptions, and the critical role of clear, honest communication about the actions you can take

to keep yourself and your family safe. More than that, you saw how individual actions affect your community and how community actions affect individuals.

AND YOU CAME TO LEARN THAT TRUST IS AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL.

Those are just some of the many life lessons you have learned while you have been at St. Patrick's—you learned them in the classroom, you learned them on the playground, you (and your parents) learned them in the carpool line, and you learned them in Chapel. The lessons you learned from Smeasles are the same ones that the rest of the world learned from COVID-19 over the past year and a half.

YOU HAD A HEAD START!

How fortunate are we that we can all be here today—together, inside—to celebrate your great achievement at this important milestone? We are here to celebrate you, the graduates, for all that you have accomplished, the many challenges you overcame, and all that you have become.

We are also here to celebrate your parents, who had to juggle changing rules and schedules as we all bowed to the waves of the pandemic.

And we are here to honor all of St. Patrick's great teachers who had to find new and innovative ways to teach and to do what they do best: "*Create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation in which to nourish each student's growth toward personal integrity and a lifetime of service.*"

You have been at St. Patrick's at a historic time, a disruptive time. You will look back at pictures of this ceremony and your Grade 8 year and remember that you were here when the virus disrupted everything you knew, changed the way you lived, and changed the way you looked at and thought about your community.

The new "BC" will be "Before COVID-19," when you did not think twice about riding the Metro, going to a Nationals baseball game, or eating inside a restaurant. And with the many twists and turns of the pandemic, you have come to expect the unexpected and to appreciate the value of planning for contingencies.

COVID-19 taught us many things, about viruses, about epidemics, and about the nature of science. But living through it all was much like the fog of war as we all tried to make sense of what is happening as it's happening. It's hard to have much perspective when you're in the middle of it.

But we also learned that while a virus was what started it all, a pandemic is more than "just" a global public health problem. It touches every sector, every aspect of our society. Virtually no one was untouched.

In that way, the pandemic shined a bright, but often harsh, light on our society and highlighted the many things that have needed attention for some time. The silver lining on that dark cloud is that the pandemic reinforced that we are all in this together. We are the herd.

And, as we are all learning, this disruption is leading us to a "new normal." We do not have a crystal ball, but we are just now getting glimpses of what that new normal might look like: Groceries are delivered to your house, doctor's visits are via computer screen, Zoom allows people to work from anywhere, roads are blocked off to make more room for outdoor dining, and we carry little pieces of paper that serve as "passports" that allow us to move about. We are more conscious of distance and personal space, and we react with alarm when we hear a sneeze.

Who would guess that when you mention "testing" in schools you have a vivid memory of swabs that tickle your brain, not #2 pencils that scribble on paper and fill in circles for standardized tests? Context matters, and your context is the pandemic.

The pandemic has brought about an explosion of new words and phrases, both in English and in other languages. This new vocabulary provides a context for the changes that have suddenly become part of our everyday lives:

- Zoom
- Hybrid
- Cohort
- Essential workers
- Essential services . . . and . . .
- Testing

And there are also the words that speak directly to our humanity. These are the words that remind us of the biggest challenges of the past year:

- Lockdown
- Self-isolation
- Quarantine
- And the phrase that most powerfully characterizes the pain of the last year and a half . . . **social distancing**

Social distancing has been, without a doubt, the hardest part of the past year and a half. The distancing part was a challenge, but the social part—rather the lack of and fear of the social part—was what affected us most. That is why we are so grateful that we can all be here tonight, inside, together.

Aristotle wrote, "Man is a social animal. He who lives without society is either a beast or God." Humans are born in society, live in society, and die in society. Society is indispensable for humanity. We cannot live as humans without society.

In his book, *Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect*, Matthew Lieberman, a cognitive neuropsychologist from UCLA, suggests that *becoming more socially connected is essential to our survival*. And central to his thesis is that the bets that evolution has made at each step reflect those that are designed to make us more successful and the things that make us more social are the ones that make us successful. It is what defines us.

Remember that next time you get in trouble for talking in class: *Becoming more socially connected is essential to our survival.* It may also explain the allure of and perhaps our addiction to, social media and why things on social media "go viral."

That humans are social animals also explains why social distancing was so hard and why there has been a focus on herd immunity—community immunity. It is what will keep viruses from spreading. When we are spread apart, the virus might jump but it can't reach a suitable place to land. Distance creates that bridge too far.

Alternatively, when most in the community—the herd—are immune, the virus might jump but essentially has no place to land because it will not stick. Immunity is the Teflon that keeps viruses from sticking and spreading.

And while this is really about physical distancing, that we refer to social distancing is revealing about who we are and why the past year and a half has been so difficult. It was the social part.

Without a vaccine to give us immunity and keep us from becoming infected, distancing ourselves from others was the only weapon we had to keep the virus from spreading from person to person.

If you are a virus, success is making more viruses. If you are a virus, infection is the antidote to your extinction. That has been the essential battle of the pandemic—the virus vs. our social nature. Immunity not only keeps us from getting sick but lets us be social, and being social is who we are.

No one will deny that the past year and a half has been difficult. But in meeting the challenge we learned much about ourselves:

- How we deal with uncertainty.
- How we can persevere.
- How we can adapt.
- How resilient we are.

What better way to prepare for the road ahead wherever that road takes us? And that is the message of graduation. The message of commencement.

Smeasles was just one of the many explorations you undertook during your time at St. Patrick's. There were many more, but what could be more fitting than your final project—the one that you will take with you as you move on to your next chapter and beyond. The one that you will take with you forever.

What better way to reflect on how much you have learned, how much you have grown, and all that you have accomplished than to think deeply about who each of you are and what you believe in?

This I Believe started as a 1950s radio program. It was a time when radio was the prominent mass communication platform. This weekly radio program created the opportunity to share the words and beliefs of the famous and the not-so-famous. The subliminal message is that everyone believes in something and everyone has something to say. When it began, sharing these beliefs brought comfort and inspiration to a country worried about the Cold War and racial division.

Eventually, the radio series became a cultural phenomenon. In the early days, nearly 100 leading newspapers printed a weekly column based on *This I Believe*. A collection of essays published in 1952 sold 300,000 copies—second only to the Bible that year.

It struck a chord, not only for individuals to think deeply about what mattered most to them but to learn more about their neighbors and what mattered to them—their beliefs and their values. It was never intended to persuade Americans to agree on the same beliefs. Rather, it was just the opposite. It was a welcome chance to encourage people to begin the much more difficult task of developing respect for beliefs different from their own. It was inspiring and comforting when it began nearly 70 years ago. Sharing our beliefs continues to inspire and comfort.

Your beliefs will be the word cloud of your time, in addition to masks, hybrid, PCR, spike protein, and the ubiquitous Zoom. The words that capture your beliefs will be what you look back upon as you remember this time in your lives:

- The importance of paying attention to yourself
- Maintaining balance
- Speaking the truth
- Speaking your mind
- Trust is at the center
- The importance of empathy
- Expect the unexpected
- Playing outside
- The toll of isolation
- Telling friends they are loved
- Contingency planning
- The importance of family
- The importance of community, and
- Recognizing that wherever we live we are a critical part of a global community

What better way to inspire each of you and all of us as you march off so proudly tonight toward what comes next? In addition to all that you have learned and the solid foundation you have built, you have thought deeply about who each of you are and who you have become.

And that's really why we are here: To honor all that you have become and to wish you all the best for what happens next. **We are all rooting for you!**

As you are now launched into your next orbit, what better way than to end with the words of that great philosopher Buzz Lightyear: "To infinity and beyond."

OFF YOU GO . . . AND WHEREVER YOU GO, REMEMBER THAT IT ALL STARTED WITH A SNEEZE.

Grade 8 Statements

This I Believe

To conclude the extraordinary 2020–2021 year, each of our Grade 8 students took part in sharing their individual remarks in-person with close family and Middle School faculty and staff, as is our tradition. The "This I Believe" statements, modeled after the 1950's radio program, offer our Grade 8 students' commitment to a belief or value they have formed since their youth. This intimate, pre-Graduation gathering was memorable for the sheer delight of sharing with their peers and family together in the Gymnasium & Performance Center. Each graduate's delivery continued the tradition of inspired messages that demonstrate the values of self-reflection and discovering their place in this world. The Class of 2021's voices ring clear in these individual essays, and we are proud to send them forth on their journey.

MARGOT BENELLI

I believe that challenging situations require love, creativity, and flexibility. A month before I turned 13, St. Patrick's, along with many other schools across the country, changed to virtual learning due to the pandemic. Out of the blue, everyone was physically apart in their homes, but communities were stronger than ever.

To get through a tough situation, first you need love. My parents were there with me and my sister every step of the way. They supported and encouraged us. When we needed help, they were there. An example of this is that they made sure we continued to be active and go on family walks, even on days when we had less energy. They made the past year and a half as amazing as it could be. I love you. Our teachers also worked to make the school experience as smooth and as easy as possible. One example is their understanding when we had Zoom problems and helping us catch up with what we may have missed. Strangers also shared love with one another by making signs to say thank you to frontline workers. Without love during this time, people would not have felt as connected as we did.

We're about one year into this pandemic, and people are coping through creativity. Throughout the pandemic, I saw creativity in many different ways. Since many of us were at home, people began new hobbies. This year I started trying digital art and continued previous forms of art I had already tried.

Finally, flexibility! Flexibility was one of our themes of the school year. Things were constantly changing this year, some days we were in-person, other days we were online. Due to the pandemic, we were unable to have some of the events or traditions that typically happen because of COVID-19 precautions. Instead, my classmates and I had to make the best of situations that were not always pleasant. During the pandemic, I witnessed love, expressed creativity, and managed flexibility in the world around me. This year I learned that life is not always fair, but simple actions, activities, and a bit of adapting can bring people together.

JD CAVALERI

Today I will be talking about happiness and how, no matter what, it will always come back to you. I started to realize this when I got my dog, Charlie. This event was about two months after my dog Lola died, which was a difficult time for my family. This experience shaped my understanding of the world and how I think about life. I will never forget the day we got Charlie. I was overjoyed and elated. I had just come back home from camp, and a large Golden retriever with a maroon coat was waiting with my family in the living room. He was beautiful. Almost immediately, he reminded me of Lola in the way he ran around like she did when she was younger. It made me sad, but I was also so happy with him.

Every day, Charlie reminds me of Lola. In a way, Lola lives inside of Charlie and inside of every dog I see. Having Charlie arrive in my life is not the same as having Lola, and I know that they are not the same dog. Lola died, and I am still sad about that. But, it brings light to the fact that, no matter what, happiness will always return and wear away the suffering in your life.

This is almost the same as St. Patricks. As I move on and everyone else does too, I will start to enjoy my new high school, similar to how I enjoy my new dog, Charlie. But I will never forget St. Patrick's, just like I will never forget Lola. And even though I'm sad to be leaving, St. Patrick's will live in every school I attend just like how Lola lives in every dog I see. *I used to believe that suffering was a feeling that would never go away, but now I believe that while some suffering may never go away, that does not mean that you can never find happiness again.*

IAN CHAMBERLIN

I want to share with you why I believe that entering a new community is an opportunity for an adventure, and why friendship makes the journey even better. One brisk morning during September, I held my mom's hand tightly for comfort as we walked into a new school, called St. Patrick's. I saw many other children holding their parents' hands, and they

had nervous looks on their faces, too. The classroom had a classic look: three tables and chairs, a whiteboard, and tiny cubbies located in the front of the classroom. I could feel the goosebumps forming on my neck, and my feet felt like cement blocks weighing me down with each step. I knew no one and was really shy. Soon my mother left me, and I felt as if I were all alone in my Kindergarten classroom.

Suddenly a boy with long, wavy blonde hair and wearing plaid shorts walked straight up to me and said, "Hi!" I was surprised and thought, *How could someone who did not know me just say hi? How does he have the confidence to introduce himself?* But I was intrigued and said, "Hello" back. We sat down, side by side, and played together. I did not know at that time that I had just met the person who would eventually be one of my best friends for the next nine years to come.

Looking back at my first day of Kindergarten and meeting that friendly boy, I realize that my adventure of starting a new school was made joyful and exciting because of my new friend. I felt so happy that day, and it brings me joy knowing that I'm still friends with that same individual.

I will remember my first day at St. Patrick's, especially on my first day at high school. This place will remain in my heart, and I will miss my amazing teachers who have made me a strong student, and a better person, and, of course, my friends. This is the end of my journey here, but I will take what I learned from St. Patrick's to high school and beyond.

HENRY COHEN

I believe in the importance of empathy. When I was little, I ran and won a race because someone else fell and I didn't stop for him. I attended a daycare called Kinderhaus. Every day we went to play at a nearby hill. In my class, there was this boy named Austin. We all desperately wanted to be his friend. One day Austin suggested to me and my *best* friend Gil that we race down the hill to a tree. We leaped at the opportunity to win and become Austin's friend. As we were running down the hill, Austin fell and called for us to stop. I thought this request was dumb. It was a race! The whole point was to get there first. Why should I stop and let him win? I didn't, and I won.

Austin and Gil, who stopped for him, slowly came down the hill. Austin glared at me. Gil did the same. The rest of the day they played together and didn't let me play with them. I asked my teacher what was going on. She said, "He wanted to win. You beat him. That's why he's mad." Later, while I was building with blocks, what my teacher said came back to me. It had *never* occurred to me that other people had emotions and feelings just like I did. I still think I did the right thing by winning that race—it was a race, after all—but the empathy I gained from it has been one of the most important values I've acquired.

Empathy has been at the core of most of my St. Patrick's experience. It was at the core when we assembled sandwiches for Grate Patrol, when we made Gifts for Good booths, and this year when we came up with policies to help mediate social justice issues. The ability not just to feel for others, but to understand others' feelings has greatly enriched my St. Patrick's experience, and I hope it will continue to guide the rest of my life. This I believe.

MACI CUMBERBATCH

I believe that failure is something that everyone needs to experience in order to gain confidence. Beginning in fourth grade, every student must participate in the annual Recitation Contest. When I recited in front of the entire class, I failed miserably. I was so nervous and tense, my hands were clammy and, for a brief moment, I wanted to run away. In fifth grade, I decided to take matters into my own hands and overcome my fear of public speaking, but more so of embarrassing myself.

When I had to choose my fifth grade recitation piece, I decided to do *Auggie and Me* by R.J. Palacio. After reading *Wonder* over the summer, the messages about being your true self and embracing it inspired me to continue reading the trilogy. I did not want to experience the disappointment I felt in my fourth grade year, so I worked as hard as I could to memorize the passage. I recorded myself reciting the piece, and I recited one part before I went to sleep and recited it again in the morning to see if I remembered it. When I presented in front of my class, I was a nervous wreck. The room was as quiet as a snowy winter morning. I presented my piece and ended up messing up a few times, but I performed better than expected. I was elated! A few days later, my teacher shared that I was to recite my piece in front of the grade because I was nominated to try out for the schoolwide competition! My friends knew how nervous I would be so they continuously reminded me of how hard I worked for this opportunity.

Standing up in front of everyone was frightening. I ended up not making it into the schoolwide contest, but that wasn't the point. The point was I experienced an event that destroyed my confidence and, instead of shutting down, I learned to face my fear. Now, I believe that I know what I need to do in order to be prepared for any situation that requires public speaking. I need to practice in front of people, think about the good I am doing for myself, and remember how it improves my public speaking skills. I am still scared of public speaking, but I know that I will always have people and strategies to help build my confidence.

ALEX DESANTIS-BAUGH

I believe trust is earned. A quote that comes to mind when I think about trust is, "Keep your promises and be consistent. Be the kind of person others can trust," by Roy T. Bennett. In my story, I will show how I earned my parents' trust.

When I was 12 years old in the warm and tropical weather of Punta Mita, Mexico, I was having dinner with my brother and parents. When I was finished with the delicious food, my brother and I wanted to go to the ice cream shop. My parents thought about it for a few moments and then proceeded to give me money to purchase ice cream. I was reluctant at first, because I had never paid for anything without my parents

before, but I wanted ice cream so badly. Although I was a little scared to pay for the first time, I felt like my parents trusted me. The fact that they trusted me helped to push my nervous feelings aside and pay for the ice cream. My brother and I picked our favorite flavors—mint chocolate chip and cookies & cream. At the resort, the waiter put the receipt and change in the waiter's wallet. The waiter slid the wallet to me across the counter and, as I reached for it, I felt anxious and a little proud. Then, I put the money in and it was all over in a snap—that fast! I was on my way back to my parents with the "mission" completed. When my brother and I got back to the table, my parents asked what we did with the money and we showed them the ice cream.

After that I felt like my parents put their trust in me because I did the right thing. As I grow older, I will continue to demonstrate the fact that I am trustworthy. For example, next year I will be travelling to Potomac, Maryland, each day for school, and then in a few years I will start to drive *their* cars! I will continue to make sure they can put their trust in me, and I will be sure not to lose it.

NICK DESANTIS-BAUGH

I believe that, when in doubt, it is important to have flexibility. Earlier this year, I was talking to one of my best friends about what high school we would go to. I was prepared for the possibility that I wouldn't be going to the same school as my friend. After talking with him, I discovered that we had applied to the same schools and that there was a chance we could be together! I was excited and hopeful. Later in the school year, we learned that we didn't get accepted into the same schools. I felt a bit sad at first, but I was supportive of him by reaffirming that he would love where he was going and that we would still talk all the time. I had realized the possibility of our not going to school together next year, so I was better prepared to learn this information. From this experience, I realized it is always important to be flexible.

I learned some very important reasons as to why flexibility is important. Not all things are going to turn out exactly as planned, and you have to be prepared for that. With my friend, I knew that there was a possibility that we would not go to high school together, so I tried not to get my hopes up. Having flexibility makes you more prepared for when things don't go according to plan, and it will make you more self-reliant even when you're stuck. When things don't go your way, if you can stay flexible, you will find ways around the problem. There is usually a solution to any problem, even if it isn't ideal. Being flexible keeps you from feeling defeated because you keep on trying and finding different ways to accomplish your goals and overcome challenges. If you are too rigid and only accept perfection, then you will never accomplish anything. Next year will be the first time my friend and I are going to different schools. I thought to myself at the time that this moment may change our friendship, but I'm flexible and so is my friend. We will still remain close even if we are far away.

BIANCA DURAN

I believe that independence is the key to gaining maturity. What comes to mind when you think of growing up? You probably think of parents, teachers, and friends who helped you in the journey from childhood to adulthood. When I think of growing up, I think of the obstacles I have overcome on my own and the lessons that I learned in the process.

Independence has helped me mature in a lot of ways, but one moment that stands out was on my trip to Maine this past January. I was visiting my wonderful godparents, which is always a highlight of my year. My sister and I fly alone to spend time with them. This year, the trip was different not only because of the pandemic but also because of where I was mentally. Even though the pandemic has brought many important lessons into my life, it also brought some stress and negative emotions.

I recall one day in particular. I had just finished my Zoom classes for the day but had an extraordinary amount of homework left and tasks that had to be done. I felt like I was drowning in a sea of stress and pressure, and it seemed like there was no help coming anytime soon. I was on my own. You might hear this and think, "Oh, poor thing! She must have felt as if there was no one there to support or help her. She was all alone." But instead of giving into the stress and pressure, I stepped back and thought of the benefits that I gain when I am on my own. I walked into my room and felt the temperature change from chilly to warm and inviting. I was actually feeling freedom, relief, and comfort in trusting that everything was going to be okay despite the struggles I was experiencing.

At that moment, I knew that my independence was at the core of this feeling. I realized that in order to learn and understand times like this, I need to embrace this moment of being alone. Through solitude, I have learned many lessons and skills, such as problem-solving, organization, stability, and self-reliance. My trip to Maine this year allowed me to be independent, and I learned many things about myself that will help me in high school and throughout the rest of my life. I learned that the freedom that comes from independence allowed my abilities to grow without limits. I learned what strategies worked best for me, and I was able to discover new abilities I had. Although independence doesn't eliminate the obstacles, it has been important for me to overcome them on my own so I can learn and become the best version of myself while relying on my own determination. Independence is crucial to developing and maturing. This I believe.

BELLA DURAN

I have come to believe that hope, especially hope in a community, drives individuals to persevere through difficult situations. In the summer of 2020, I was 13 years old and many difficult things were happening: COVID was spreading throughout the world, Australia was damaged by forest fires, Kobe Bryant and his daughter died, George Floyd was murdered, and the list goes on. In addition, the Black Lives

Matter Movement grew in support and representation. I wanted to go to one of the Black Lives Matter protests that were taking place in Washington D.C., and finally, on June 6, I was able to go. My mom took my sister and me to a protest that was happening in front of the White House.

It was hot that day, and it was crowded. Sweat dripped from the faces of the dedicated protesters who were there for many hours. Due to COVID, we all had to wear masks, making the experience even harder. Despite these setbacks, I still saw hundreds of individuals holding their posters like athletes holding their trophies after winning first place. At the protest, there were people handing out water bottles, food, and more signs. Everyone was participating and taking care of one another. It felt like a community. We were uniting as one. This year, in humanities class, we talked about the Civil Rights Movement, and my number one takeaway was that you make the most impact if you work together. That is something that I definitely experienced during my time at the protest. Towards the end of the protest, I had a realization. I realized what motivated people to continue was hope. Hope was at the core of it all. Hope is what made the tough situation more bearable. Hope encourages people, young and old, that they can influence the future and make a difference in our flawed society by standing up for what they believed.

This was the first protest that I had ever been to, and it was an awakening. This experience filled me with hope and inspired me to continue to participate in and dedicate my time to different movements. It opened my eyes to see more ways we can fight injustices. Being treated like something less of a human isn't acceptable and should never be tolerated. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are." We need to keep these words in mind to better understand social movements. I believe hope is necessary in life and can lead people to persist even when doing so is difficult.

ANNA ELIOT

I believe that love and empathy are all you need to begin a lasting friendship. In September of 2012, it was my first day of Kindergarten. I was excited, but also anxiously waiting for the bus. When I reluctantly boarded the bus, shaking because I didn't know anyone, I sat next to a girl named Molly. She was also five and starting Kindergarten too. She lived next door, so I had seen her, but we weren't good friends. We started to talk about random things that 5-year-olds like, probably sharing what we had packed for lunch or some silly thing we saw the other day. What I didn't know was that the conversation was the start of a friendship that would continue on through today.

At the core of this day was love and empathy. We were both starting school and were going through the same thing, so we knew how the other was feeling and were able to bond over those feelings. When I came to St. Patricks' in Grade 6, I was less worried about being able to find a friend because of my experience on the bus with Molly. I knew that if I was kind and showed love and empathy, I would be able to find someone to be friends with. Love and empathy guided the start of my long-lasting friendship with Molly. I believe that it is important for all of us to keep love and empathy in mind as we start at new schools next year, especially those who do not know anyone. With these principles in mind, I know that we are all capable of making friends and becoming friends to others.

Molly and I have continued to be friends through plenty of stupid arguments, going to different schools, and a pandemic. I feel that we have continued to be friends because we still share the core values of love and empathy, which have helped us stay close even when we have different opinions or can't be together physically. I am very grateful for this experience because it taught me that love and empathy are all you need to begin a friendship that can last a lifetime.

ANNELIESE ENGEL

I believe that, with the help of others, letting go of stress and not overthinking allows one to enjoy life more and try new things. I naturally tend to overthink things, and allowing myself to enjoy life freely is something I work on. For me, the most important way to learn is by letting go and trusting others without the fear of falling. I have learned this lesson in so many different ways, but one of the most important and most distinct times was when I learned to ride my bike.

On Christmas when I was around seven years old, I was given a glorious, shiny Disney princess bike. Sometime after receiving it, I built up the courage to take it across the street to a basketball court to try it out . . . with training wheels, of course. My parents came along to teach me how to ride it. I was very nervous and afraid of making a mistake or falling. As I took off, I couldn't stop thinking about falling and hurting myself or, even worse, people seeing me fall and embarrassing myself. Yet, my parents supported me as I took my first lap around the court by holding onto me so I wouldn't fall and by encouraging me to keep going. My mom and dad said things like, "You've got this" and "You're doing great!" It made me realize that my parents' unwavering love and support will always be there for me.

I know that by placing my trust in others I can be adventurous and try new things without worrying and overthinking everything. Knowing that my parents will always have my back, I feel ready to take risks and make mistakes, recognizing that, if I fall over, they will help me up and I will learn from their guidance. I was able to discover how, with loving support from family, I can allow myself to let go, which is an important life lesson. By allowing myself to be free, I can live a full and joyous life without fear and worry of messing up.

NATALIA FREEDMAN

"*Many people, especially ignorant people, want to punish you for speaking the truth, for being correct, for being you. Never apologize for being correct, or for being years ahead of your time. If you're right and you know it, speak your mind. Speak your mind. Even if you are a minority of one, the truth is still the truth.*"~ Mahatma Gandhi

I have failed to speak my truth. In the past, I have always been agreeable, making sure all are pleased by my words and only speaking my mind when my thoughts were deemed acceptable. When being told by my teachers that I possessed many leadership qualities, shame overshadowed my pride. How could I lead others to speak their truth if I couldn't do the same? My self-conscious mindset of needing to soothe others' ideas and egos quickly vanished by a few words of incredibly wise advice from a wise woman, Ms. Adams. She inspired me and taught me to become a leader, one who spoke their truth and believed in their own words, especially when it matters the most.

May 25, 2020 was another day of depressing COVID-19, online school, frustrated students and teachers. It was also the day that George Floyd was murdered, a day which soon ignited in me a desire to question authority and the fairness of our society. Ms. Adams had recently noticed my passion for social justice. She invited me to her Zoom room and asked if I could speak about racial injustice and the Black Lives Matter Movement during an assembly. My stomach began to turn, and I became selfishly overwhelmed with my own nervous emotions. I cared more about how the Middle School would react to my words rather than making an impact. Ms. Adams somehow miraculously sensed my nervous energy through the computer and uttered a phrase that would soon come to change my life. ``Natalia," she spoke calmly, "everyone has a voice, but this is yours, you choose how you use your voice, you choose your impact, and you choose if you stay silent. So tell me, what will you do?"

I gave my speech at the assembly and spoke my truth. My agreeable nature was replaced by my ambition and determination to make change. I finally took charge and began to lead more, both inside and outside my school community, creating debate and current events clubs and encouraging myself and others to think critically about the world around

us. I believe you choose your impact; you choose if you take charge and spark a movement; you choose if you stay silent or use your voice, and I believe this all starts by speaking your truth, especially if you're in the minority. *I believe that to be a successful, inspiring, and impactful leader, one must speak their truth, speak their mind, even if they are in the minority.*

JASMINE GEORGE

I believe that enthusiasm and optimism can help make a day very memorable. One amazing day, I woke up to my first day of seventh grade. All throughout the morning, I was elated and focused on the new school year ahead of me. I can still remember greeting all my friends in the morning and mentioning how tall everyone got over the summer. I spent the morning setting goals that focused on being a successful student, being a kind friend, and being the best I could be. There were so many new teachers to meet for the upcoming school year. But it was not all pleasing throughout the day. Suddenly, I was nervous about making a good impression with my other classmates and teachers. I wanted this to be the best year. This was the year before all the stress of my Grade 8 year. Then I remembered all the excitement I was feeling for this new school year and how I did not need to worry a bit.

So all the emotions helped me to overcome the nerves I was feeling and helped me remember all the good things that were going to happen that year. This experience made me realize that excitement and optimism can help overcome fears. Looking back now, I feel glad I got to experience a day like that, but also sad because I will probably never get to relive that exact day. After experiencing my own memorable day, I hope to be able to help make someone else's tough day better. I look forward to my first day of high school and feel that I can make it just as memorable as my first day of seventh grade because I will be just as excited and optimistic.

SYDNEY GEORGE

I want to talk to you about my experience doing gymnastics and how from that experience *I now believe that life leads you down the right path*. This isn't your typical "I loved gymnastics and never gave up" speech. I'm going to tell you about my journey from start to finish and how I had to trust that with every setback my life was going in the right direction. From the start of my gymnastics experience I knew that my family was by my side and that they would cheer me on when I won and when I didn't. Not only that, but they had to take me to gymnastics, which was 4.5 hours a day, five days a week, when I was nine and I was always eager to go!

I loved gymnastics, so much so that I competed on a level with 14-, 15-, and 16-year-olds. The competition was based on age groups, so I usually did well because hardly anyone was in my age group. In a state competition, the teams' top three or four individual overall scores are combined to compare the teams and determine who won. My team ended up winning states, and knowing that I contributed really boosted my confidence. However, I never realized that a few months later I would be quitting. The years where I competed in gymnastics revolved around me, and I needed to give my sisters some time for their sports and activities. They came to my meets almost every other weekend. They couldn't do anything else because my practices were long and frequent.

Though this really bummed me out, I understood why. It felt like a huge part of me was just washed away before my eyes. But looking back now, I realized that I was just scared of not knowing what would happen next. I needed to trust that life was leading me in the right direction and that everything happens for a reason. With more time available, I was able to become closer to my family, which has been very beneficial. Though I may have stopped gymnastics, I found my love for school and learning. I know that if I were to have continued doing gymnastics through middle school and high school it would've been extremely stressful. My experience taught me a lot about trust and made me who I am today.

Graduation

ALEX HARTLEY

I believe in the power of friendship. During the summer when I was seven years old, I met my dog for the first time. I was glowing with joy when I met Django. Throughout these past few years, he has always been there for me, during my highs and lows. For example, when I was sick, he would lie next to me so I knew I had a friend. He cares for me and trusts me no matter what. I have learned many things throughout our experiences together, and that knowledge has been passed down to my other dog, Polly, who has been my friend as well. Django, Polly, and I go for walks, watch shows like The Big Bang Theory, and trust each other. Knowing that someone trusts you makes you feel wonderful, because it shows that you are responsible.

One thing Django has taught me is responsibility. I have learned to take care of Django in a few ways. I take him for walks, make sure he is fed, and grab him his favorite treat, which is Cheerios. Also I make sure he is happy. Another quality Django has taught me is flexibility. As surprising as it is, animals have feelings too. For example, he will wait by the door until I get home. It is important to take those feelings into consideration because they are important in developing a mutual bond of trust between you and your pet. A third thing I have learned from Django is patience. It takes time for both people and animals to learn new things. Believe me, this is not easy, as my other dog Polly has still not learned where the bathroom is. But if you are patient and you give your animal time to learn, you and your pet will be friends for life.

The last lesson I have learned from my relationship with Django is to be more comfortable with speaking to humans. I use this in my relationship with people in many ways. For example, public speaking. I will practice in front of Django before I talk in front of an audience. Talking to Django is easy because he does not judge me. The qualities of responsibility, patience, and flexibility are some of the most important values in life. While my dog cannot talk, he is one of the wisest creatures I know. These experiences with Django have taught me that joy comes in all shapes and sizes, and it can come with life lessons on the side. I find the saying "A dog is a man's best friend" to be one of the most impactful and truest sayings I have ever heard. This I believe.

WYATT HERMAN

I believe that change and learning can help everyone grow as a person. I'd like to share a story that captures my thoughts about growing up and changes in life. My mom taught me the valuable lesson that growing up is an important part of life that happens to everyone. She emphasized the fact that while growing up can be seen as scary or even sad, it can also be enlightening and push you into a new phase of knowledge. Allow me to share with you one event in which my mom taught me this lesson.

The second to last week of school, I received a letter I wrote to myself back when I was in seventh grade. I skimmed through the letter and was not happy with what I saw. I saw a version of myself that was so happy and had no worries. I was upset because I felt that I was missing something now and was missing something then. I was confused about what I was experiencing but sensed a lack of insight. I started to question myself on why I seemed so much more joyful then than now. I approached my mom to see what she thought. She explained that my past, younger self that was seemingly always happy was somewhat clueless and oblivious to a lot that was happening in the world. The reason for the difference in my perspective was because I now know so much more about myself and the world around me. I now have a newfound awareness that I lacked before.

This teaching moment made me feel a lot better about myself and helped me understand how growing up will make me a stronger, wiser person. It also propelled me to realize that as I grow, shifting in life will follow and that I shouldn't turn away from the change, but I should welcome it to strengthen me mentally and emotionally. I am so thankful for this moment because, truthfully, I wouldn't understand the importance of growing up without it. I will take my St. Patrick's childhood memories with me as I leave this school and hold them close, keeping in mind that I am no longer so naive, but have a better understanding of the world around me. Considering this, throughout the rest of school and life beyond I am confident that I can develop and work through anything.

CARTER HUDSON

I'm here to talk about how one experience changed my perception of life and how *you should value everything you have before it disappears*. When I was 12 years old, I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. In the beginning, I despised it. Some people treated me differently after I told them I had diabetes. They told me what I could and couldn't eat and what I could and couldn't do. I pretended my diabetes didn't exist. After time and help from others, I came to learn to accept my Type 1 Diabetes. I met others like me, and we shared diabetic stories. I found a larger community of people out there, all like me, and I learned that we could all have different races, genders, sexual orientations, religions, and ages, but our diabetes brought us together.

I learned to advocate for individuals with diabetes and wanted to prove that it wouldn't define me—or worse, control me. I went on diabetes awareness walks and at Gifts for Good I personally contacted a renowned diabetes awareness organization with headquarters in D.C. Currently, I'm training for a famous 115-mile backpacking trip. I'm leaving the house for boarding school, I'm getting a job this summer, and I'm working to keep everyone in the house asleep at night from my Glucose Alerts (sorry, Mom).

I refuse to let diabetes control me. I see it as a challenge, making things just a little or a lot harder for me compared to everyone else, but I refuse to let it weigh me down. I will leave you with this thought: Make sure to appreciate what you have every day, because you never know when it could vanish. Before my diagnosis, I thought nothing more of sweets and food, but now I would sell my soul to have more than half a slice of cake at a birthday party. Appreciate

everything around you—your food, your family, your house, your job. After all, you won the lottery of life! There was a 1.2 billion to 1 chance you could come on this Earth. So please value what you have and take time to recognize it every day, because maybe someday you'll miss the normalcy of your life.

VIVIAN HUNTER

I believe that dedication and not letting yourself get in the way of your goals is key to success. Over the summer, I worked tirelessly to improve my lacrosse skills. Starting toward my goal was the most difficult part, because I feared that such dedication to a single sport would result in my own failure rather than my success. My stomach felt as if it were flipping when I even thought of the idea. I was sure that I wouldn't make the team. I was thinking, "Why should I waste my summer playing lacrosse when I could be relaxing by a pool?"

My friends told me the great memories they made and the skills they learned on the team in an attempt to convince me to join the next level. However, their attempts were not successful at first. Eventually, after loads of encouragement and convincing, I began to practice. I felt determined and motivated to make my skills better. Every morning, I went to the large turf field. I skipped countless fun, social events and missed out on hours of sleep, but I knew that I would have to do that in order to achieve my goal. Eventually tryouts rolled around, and I made the team! After all the sweat, countless packets of strawberry-flavored electrolytes, and sunscreen, I had done it. I was so happy by this news, but surprisingly that wasn't what I was most proud of. I was most proud that I stayed dedicated the entire summer and gave lacrosse my all. I realized that even if I hadn't made the team, that still would have been a great accomplishment. Remaining dedicated and not letting yourself get discouraged from achieving goals opens many doors of opportunity and makes you a more adventurous and brave person.

NASIR KING

I want to talk to you about the COVID pandemic and how it made me learn to adapt to unexpected things. To me, adapting means being open to change and being able to accept it. It's also knowing that change will happen and there is nothing that you can do to stop it from happening. It means that you need to be capable of working around a change and not letting it stop you from achieving your goals.

I came to this realization about adaptation and change when I was reflecting over the summer break. One thing that I had to adapt to, specifically, was getting used to using Zoom for school, which was not easy, especially because it was something that I had never done before, and at the start there were many issues that I had to navigate through, but that was something that I became accustomed to over time with practice.

A second thing I had to adapt to and incorporate into my life was not going outside and not doing the things I wanted to do. This wasn't major, but it was still very annoying to deal with. However, I overcame it. For example, instead of complaining about not being able to go outside, I found other ways to have fun, like playing with my younger sister. She and I played Roblox together and enjoyed talking with each other while playing games. Another thing I did was cooking. My favorite recipe is for making shrimp fettuccine. This is because it's my go-to food when I can't think of anything to eat, as it is simple to make and it tastes very good.

A third thing that I had to become used to was wearing a mask every time I went outside and also having to keep hand sanitizer with me all the time so that I wouldn't get sick or infect anyone else. The only thing that was hard about this change was getting used to sanitizing my hands and not touching my face as it's something I do subconsciously. I had to learn to keep my hands in my pockets to help avoid getting sick. This pandemic made me realize that life is not certain and that change is something that will always happen. I believe that people should come to terms with change and

accept it, because in my experience you can grow from it. This is my experience with COVID and how it taught me to adapt to change. *I believe that everyone should learn to live with change*.

JAMES MORALES

I believe it takes time to understand yourself and to understand how others feel. Let me ask you a question: How do you know how you are feeling? What tells you that you are happy, sad, upset, or frustrated? I learned a lot about myself during Covid-19, and that's because I focused on getting to know myself. I remember the first day of quarantine, and I was so excited because I thought it would be a little break from school and only last a month. I thought I would be able to play video games with my friends all day. However, I was wrong; the time for video games didn't last long, and quarantine lasted a lot longer than one month. This time period was both helpful and unhelpful at the same time. On one hand, I was able to focus more on my mental health. On the other hand, it was a long time away from friends and sports were cancelled which is a huge part of my life.

During this time off, every night I would always spend 30 minutes right before I slept thinking about my life and what I accomplished that day. I learned this technique from my mom. This 30-minute reflection has been important to me because it takes my mind off of anything that happened in the past and it makes me focus on what happened that day. Then, I spend more time thinking about what I should do the next day. For example, I would make plans: I'd plan to play basketball, workout, and draw. This has been useful because it gets me excited for the next day.

All of these tools of spending time reflecting before I go to sleep and planning on what to do the next day help me because it tells me how I am feeling at the end of the day and how I will feel the next day. After a long time of thinking about myself I realized three things: One thing I realized was I'm more creative at night. Another thing I realized is I'm more calm and relaxed after I reflect. And three, it takes time to understand yourself, and I still want to continue this exercise even after Covid.

MARIO MULA

I believe that a true friend is someone with whom, no matter how long it's been, you can pick up your friendship like nothing has changed. Jim Henson, puppeteer, once said, "There's not a word yet, for old friends who've just met." An experience that I want to share with you about this topic is when I came back to school at the start of fifth grade after summer break. That year I wasn't sure that it would be as easy to connect with my friends again after summer break because I had not been in contact with them because I had been traveling over the summer. While I was walking up the stairs of the Whitehaven Campus to my new classroom, I was worried the beginning of the year would be difficult. I thought to myself, "This is going to be terrible if I can't relate with any of my friends. It will make the beginning of the year pretty miserable. If it is hard to reconnect with my friends, it will be like having to make all of my friends from last year all over again." But to my surprise, I was able to pick up conversations with my friends as if we had not been apart.

I just talked to them about how much fun school was last year and who was in what classes like nothing had changed. To me, that moment was so important because it showed me what great friends I had made at St. Patricks. Looking back now, I see that this experience and many others at St. Patrick's have shown me something very important about the friendships I have made: That a true friendship will stay strong. No matter how long it has been or no matter what happens, we will still be friends.

RYAN O'KEEFE

I remember the first time I saw my sister. My father took me to the hospital to see her. At the time, I did not understand what was going on at all. I was only five years old! When I first saw Emma, I thought she looked like a beautiful, healthy baby potato. Of course, all I

wanted was to go home and watch the zany show "Wow Wow Wubbzy." My mother tried to explain to me that this was my little sister Emma, and I would have her in my life forever. I did not know how important she would be, but trust me, *Emma helped me understand what I believe: That all people are important.*

As I grew older, my parents started to take more and more care of my sister and they paid, what felt like, less attention to me. It made me jealous because I did not understand that babies are a lot of work and effort. Over time, I learned this, and I started to befriend her. We started playing games like Marco Polo (which I always won), going on bike rides, and talking to each other more often. We ended up becoming good friends together.

When I look back on these memories, I realize that Emma and I have differences—she is serious and I can be lazy—but we also have a lot in common, like we both like chocolate ice cream. We *try* to be nice to each other, even though it's challenging, especially when I'm babysitting her and she doesn't listen. But we care for each other. Life without Emma would not be interesting, and I definitely would not be the person I am today without her. She changed me and made me a better, more kind person because I had to take care of her. In all, I believe Emma taught me that every human, despite our differences, is equal and deserves the same care, love, and respect as others.

MALACHI PHILIPS

I believe that you have to learn who you are before helping others discover who they are. I came to this belief when I was around nine or ten years old. I had just started to take the game of basketball seriously. I knew at some point I had to learn how to become a leader, because every team needs a leader to succeed; they need that person to encourage them. Of course, I wasn't a leader when I first started to play the game. So I started to learn from my coaches and other teammates. They would tell me what I was doing wrong, and I would often get frustrated trying to find my purpose on the team. Some questions I would ask my coaches were "Why do you need me for the team?" Or "What's the best way I can inspire my teammates to do better?" One person that has helped me become a better player and person is my training coach, Coach Earl. He has told me multiple times to see my best potential on the court and help my teammates do the same. He would encourage me to speak up in practice or, when I am struggling on a workout, he would want me to tell everybody to push through and we are almost done.

My favorite story to tell of when I was a leader was in February 2020, right before Covid ruined everything. I was in the county semi-finals playing against probably our biggest competition yet. We started off good but they were better, by the second half the score was 32-43 we were losing the game and hope of coming back. By the time the last quarter came around, the score was 38-46. Around the last few seconds of the game we were down by three, and our coach called a timeout. He told us, "There is no losing hope in basketball," then I came in and said, "You gotta push through until the end, because there is no way we have come this far just to lose." We came back into the game with a new feeling and passion to win and that is what we did. We came back and won the game. After learning how to find my purpose on the team, I also learned how to be a leader for my teammates. Even after playing basketball for around six years, I am nowhere near the leader I want to be. But I have learned so much about myself. *I believe that you have to know yourself and your purpose in order to become a leader.*

KATIE PINTO

I believe that change is the key to progress. Allow me to ask you, What's progress? How's it achieved? I'm constantly thinking about those questions as a field hockey player. There are many forms of change, and this evening I want to talk about my growth as a coachable field hockey player and the improvement of my skills. Before my experience at my first national tournament, I never fully understood the value of a growth mindset and the importance of positive change.

The Tampa air was thick and muggy, as my teammates and I entered the tournament with anticipation and excitement. It was the first time I played with the U14 age division and, with that, a higher level of play than I had experienced before. Unfortunately, my team didn't win any games. Upset and embarrassed, I felt ashamed that I brought my family to Florida to lose so dramatically. In the coming months, I was determined to work hard with my team to become a better player for the winter season by running consistently every day and taking notes after each practice. During Presidents Day Weekend, my team attended another tournament with fresh hopes of winning, this time in Pennsylvania. I was elated that the teamwork we put into the season paid off after we won the tournament! Throughout that experience, I learned that hard work and preparation are crucial elements to overcoming obstacles.

I'm grateful for the realization that change is the key to progress, because I can now live a more enjoyable life. I have a different mindset, including flexibility to change and determination to work hard to improve my field hockey skills. This also helps other aspects of my life, like school, when I'm trying to master challenging topics. Looking back now, I see that every tournament I attend, successful or not, is a valuable learning experience that helps me become a better player. This understanding has taught me to appreciate difficult activities, sports-related or not, as opportunities to fix past mistakes and become a better person.

HUDSON REYNOLDS

I believe having faith in yourself helps you become more independent. Your whole life you trust the people who are the closest to you, but when do you learn to trust yourself? When I was younger, I always relied on other people to help me through anything I did. I couldn't be independent. However, as I have gotten older and have become less dependent on others, I have found that I have greater trust in myself.

This belief comes from my experiences during Middle School at

St. Patrick's. My life as an elementary student was full of guidance, and I was worried that I would not have that guidance once I reached the sixth grade. Grade 6 started, and it was a whole new world but without as much supervision. It was busy, mysterious, and sometimes frightening. Despite all of this, the expectations for greater independence during that period forced me to gain a stronger sense of trust in myself. Learning to trust myself helped me make better decisions whether it was at school or ordering off the menu from a restaurant. It was like learning a new game. You start out confused without any idea about what to do, but the more you play, the more confident you'll end up.

Becoming a middle schooler taught me how to manage greater responsibilities like organizing my 848 emails and dealing with way more homework. I even learned how to balance my social life along with my school work. The only way I was able to accomplish this was to have belief in myself that I was capable. As all of this was happening, I was not thinking about how it would help me in the future. I didn't notice that I was learning how to be independent or that it mattered. However, the experiences I had in Grade 6 made me realize that I should trust myself to be successful in school and in life in general. I am the way I am today because of what the St. Patrick's Middle School taught me.

GEORGE ROBERTS

I believe in the importance of staying determined. Together, we will embark on an epic journey, weaving a tapestry of hardship, perseverance, questionable campsites, and legendary ice cream brands. My story of determination is that of a canoe trip.

This was a good few years ago at a sleepaway summer camp in Vermont called Keewaydin, which was very into canoe trips. This would be my very first one, and it was going to be a serious ordeal. Admittedly, the canoeing itself wasn't that hard, as I was one of the campers who was paired in a counselor's canoe. The first few days went exactly as planned, with a bit of river stuff happening, but well into the trip, we found ourselves camped on an island in the middle of the lake. Everything was going fine. Right up until the thunderstorm. That complicated things a bit. We had to stay in our tents for a day because, obviously, canoeing in a thunderstorm is not exactly advisable. The next day, the lightning had stopped, but it was still pouring. The counselor gave us a choice: We could stay in the tents, or we could proceed as planned and paddle to the most fun location of the whole trip. The votes were split, and things got heated. Or so I'm told, as I was getting firewood. That meant, however, that I had the deciding vote: I said yes. It was a scary trip, canoeing during a thunderstorm. But we were all determined. In the end it was worth it because a waterfall was our final destination. I slid down a waterfall, which was fun, and on the way back from the trip we toured the Ben and Jerry's factory. Stay determined.

ALASTAR SKINNER

When I was five years old, I tasted soap. It was not pleasant. Allow me to explain my soap situation and *why I believe it's important to learn from bad decisions because it gives you wisdom*. One day when my parents weren't home and it was just my sister and I, I decided to try something new. And that something new was soap! I quietly snuck into my parents' bedroom. I made sure the coast was clear (because that's what they did in movies, and I wanted to feel adventurous). Once I was sure that I was alone, I pumped some of the gold flavored Dial soap, which smelled the best because it reminded me of a sunflower, into my hand from the dispenser and put it in my mouth. As soon as I did, I spat it out, because it tasted bitter and slimy. Needless to say, the soap did not taste the way it smelled. And I learned from my bad decision that soap is not edible.

More importantly, I realize now that you won't truly have wisdom until you make some not-so-good decisions because you have to learn from them. This year in Grade 8, I learned a lot from the decisions I made in Grade 7. I used wisdom and decided to do my homework before my baseball games. Before in Grade 7, I would wait until after my games, but then I would spend the entire night up late and my grades started to suffer. Another example of how I became more wise was when I started to take breaks during homework. I learned from when I had a terrible headache because I was doing work for a long time. Finally, it doesn't matter if you fail because you are learning. I believe wisdom comes from failing and learning. And I am glad that the soap did not make me sick.

LOGAN THOMAS

I believe in telling friends they're loved, and doing it often. I want to talk to you about learning during lockdown. I will present three benefits:

It's a practice in sincerity. You're speaking truthfully, and you're allowing yourself to mean it.

Doing so exercises compassion. Compassion is about expressing empathy. We've all struggled at one point or another, and it's comforting when someone tells you you're appreciated.

It reinforces consistency. Practicing this on a regular basis strengthens stability within relationships. This keeps it healthy, and both parties comfortable.

This came to me at the very beginning of lockdown, as I navigated a new friendship. Storefronts stood empty, crowded no more, streets void of the familiar rumble of wheels on asphalt. But was I going to let the lockdown stop me from telling my glorious new friend that they're amazing? No. Though I didn't set out to learn, my pursuit became a lesson in sincerity and reliability. I learned that it pays to tell your friends nice things. It makes them happy, and often, you too. This was the case for me. I embarked on a quest of gift-giving for my friend's benefit, but there was an unintentional upside for me. I was elated at the prospect of giving them a gift. My mood lifted because I knew I could make them joyous. As I gave them gifts, my sincerity grew, sunshine in my chest, and I'm better for it.

Present day, I'm working on being more consistent with this practice. Telling a friend nice things once helps then, but it's too little. Telling someone sporadically is confusing. Rather, you must regularly engage with your friends in a way that lets them know they matter. Bearing this in mind, I try to tell my friend how much they mean to me (so much), on a regular basis. I hope that everyone finds themself a friendship where gift-giving makes *you* feel like you're receiving a present. I hope it's a friendship like mine, where even the simple things make you feel bright.

VIVIANA VELLA

I used to believe that fear would hold me back, but now I believe that fear is a positive motivator that can help me be successful. One of my earliest memories of being afraid was when I joined my first soccer team, and my dad was the coach. I thought soccer was not going to be fun for me because I was small. But he had told me that height did not matter; soccer was for people who had a passion for playing the game. He inspired me to develop my skills and moves, bringing me out of my comfort zone.

When I saw all the other skillful kids doing complicated drills, it scared me. But, despite my fear, I started the first practice in the fall, which ended up being very exciting. My dad continued to help me in so many ways: By saying that I don't know what it's going to be like until I try and see. By tying my cleats in a special, funny knot that I remember to this day. And by preparing me for an experience that I have never had before. He knew that I would have fun and do great.

This experience made me realize that I should not expect the worst outcome and bring myself down until I try it out for myself. I was a bit scared about this at first, but then it taught me that having fear helps me improve, because then I am more motivated to do better. I no longer am scared about playing because I love soccer and I am passionate about playing it. Having fear is natural, because it can help us be more motivated and more confident in ourselves to be better. This is what I believe.

BURTON WHITE

When I was thinking about my friends, I came to realize that a quote I have seen somewhere rings true about my friends and me: "*True friendship isn't about being there when it's convenient, it's about being there when it's not*." In third grade, I had two best friends, but they moved away. So I began fourth grade all alone, with the mindset that I would just have to push through this year. In Lower School, homerooms were a big deal. If you weren't in the same homeroom with someone, there was a sort of brick wall between you.

However, the first day of this "devastating" year was spent with someone who is one of my best friends today. Let's call this person Lewis. I had been friends with Lewis in Kindergarten but we hadn't been in the same homeroom since, and we had slowly grown apart. Lewis could have chosen to keep up the brick wall that had been held there for the past three years. Lewis's friend group had stayed united over the summer, and he was not obligated to reach out to me. But he made an inconvenient choice to break all walls and rebuild the friendship that we once had.

I walked through the door of Ms. Khan's classroom with my head down, but by the end of the day, I walked out with my head held high. I walked in a solo and out a duo. I walked in despairing and out radiant. Lewis has taught me to be a brick wall-breaker and to make the inconvenient choice. The inconvenient choice breaks down the brick wall and teaches us how to be there for others and how to show your true friendship towards them. This I believe.

KHLOE YELVERTON

I'd like to share my thoughts about one of my core beliefs, resilience. According to dictionary.com, resilience means the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties and toughness. I've been

practicing resilience since Grade 5. That's when I injured my knee so badly that I had to go to the hospital. At the time, I was excited to be hurt because I would get to ride the elevator due to my crutches, but it eventually became tiring dealing with the same injury constantly.

I started to hate the fact that my knee was injured. Additionally, over time, my knee was not healing and I was not getting answers from doctors about why. After every appointment, I would think, *this will never get better, there will be no fix, I'll be in pain forever, I won't be able to dance anymore.* I spent so many nights crying about that. But then one day in March of 2020, I had had enough of the moping. So much was about to change for me and for everyone, really. So, I took it upon myself to see the other side of things. Instead of getting upset and going back to being a moody and pessimistic teenager, I realized that I can be resilient if I just change my thinking.

When I went to the doctor and they didn't have new information for me, instead of feeling sad, I told myself, "It is what it is and sometimes there aren't any answers." I also reassured myself by saying, "I could and would get through this." It was still upsetting for me to hear no new news about my injury, but I wanted to be resilient and overcome my difficulties. I ended up missing all of ballet this year, but instead of shutting down and feeling left out, I sat in on all of the classes, allowing myself to still be part of the experience. I eventually learned to not let things get me down, and I realized that there are many positive things in store for me. Resilience is not something that comes naturally. It comes from hardship and struggle. It comes from changing your mindset. This I believe.

LUCAS YOUNG

While I think that there are many other attributes that make us human, I believe that love is essential and makes us truly human. When I was seven and recovering from my first ear surgery, I realized my family truly loved me. I had this realization because my parents gave me my favorite food, bagels and cream cheese with salmon. Also, they let me do what I love to do, such as play baseball on my iPad and reading, from my bed. As I look back on my experience, I now see that love is omnipresent, and it is inside of us, all of the time. It is essential to all of us, because love shows us who we truly are. Also, I feel so incredibly elated and happy when I know other people care for me as I care for them. This mutual caring relationship is a very important part of the human experience.

Over the course of the pandemic, I have come to realize that it is important to love someone else in order to feel loved. Love is a feeling that we can present to others, especially in times of need. We can show how much we care by helping others, letting others know, and making them feel special. It is important to care for others now more than ever, and to feel loved if we are to get through this pandemic together.

Love is powerful and precious. Love opens up our minds to things we would not see without it. For example, I saw that my classmates truly cared for me when they sent me letters of encouragement when I was recovering from my surgery. If everyone cares for everyone, no more wars, conflicts, and hunger. The world will prosper and grow, but all that starts with one person showing someone else they care. If we can do that, the human race can and will accomplish anything.

CONGRATULATIONS, Class of 2021

Margot Benelli
National Cathedral

Jeb Bonnie
St. Anselm's Abbey

JD Cavaleri
Woodberry Forest (VA)

Ian Chamberlin
Landon

Henry Cohen
Georgetown Day

Maci Cumberbatch
Maret

Alex DeSantis-Baugh
Bullis

Nick DeSantis-Baugh
Field

Bella Duran
Episcopal High School (VA)

Bianca Duran
Episcopal High School (VA)

Anna Eliot
Washington-Liberty IB Program

Anneliese Engel
Maret

Natalia Freeman
Georgetown Day

Jasmine George
George School (PA)

Sydney George
Madeira

Alex Hartley
St. Andrew's

Wyatt Herman
Bullis

Carter Hudson
St. Mark's (MA)

Vivian Hunter
Bullis

Nasir King
Lower Merion High School (PA)

James Morales
Georgetown Prep

Mario Mula
St. John's College High School

Ryan O'Keefe
St. Andrew's

Malachi Phillips
Dematha

Katie Pinto
National Cathedral

Hudson Reynolds
Georgetown Day

George Roberts
Field

Alastair Skinner
St. John's College High School

Logan Thomas
Sidwell Friends

Viviana Vella
Bullis

Burton White
Sidwell Friends

Khloe Yelverton
Holton-Arms

Lucas Young
St. Albans

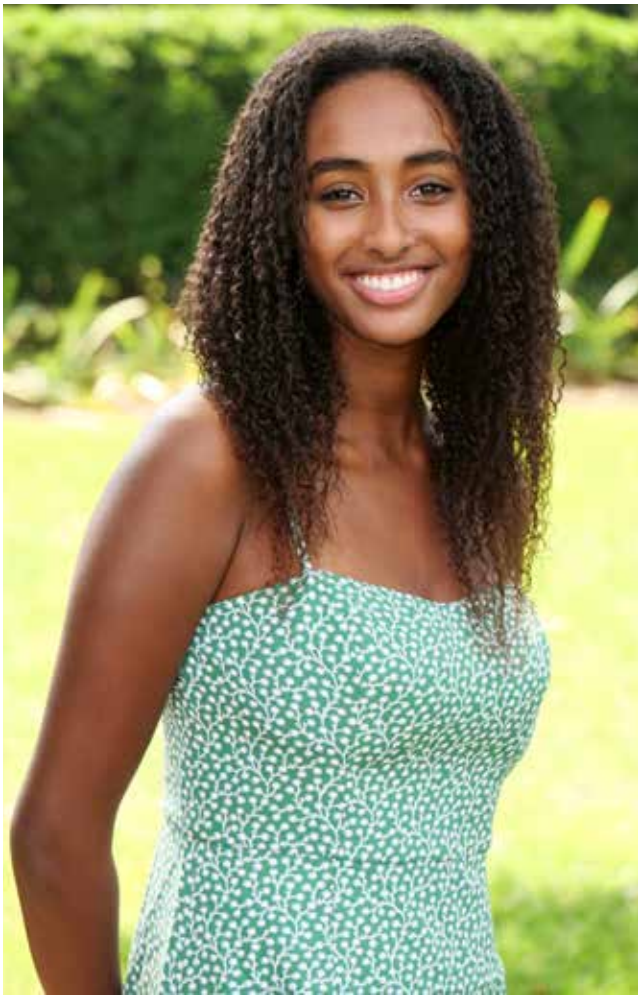
New Endowment Supports Effective Use of Spoken Word

St. Patrick's is pleased to announce the establishment of the Nancy Maguire Gray Pyne Endowment, made possible by a generous gift from Burton C. Gray Jr. (CC '17, Abigail '19, and Burton '26), whose positive personal experiences with collegiate debate activities inspired the gift. The Endowment will promote and support the development of the effective use of the spoken word by our Middle School students through these complementary activities:

- The creation of a Speech & Debate Club, including stipends for a faculty advisor to the club and guest speakers and coaches from outside St. Patrick's and fees associated with debate league membership and participation.
- The creation of the Nancy Maguire Gray Pyne Award for Student Exposition to support a prize for Middle School students who excel in a new competition for student-crafted speeches on a theme identified annually.

The income from the Nancy Maguire Gray Pyne Endowment will provide a powerful mechanism for promoting and supporting the development of student voice and the qualities of thoughtfulness, wordfulness, engagement, and responsibility that should shape and guide the use of that emerging voice.

St. Patrick's is incredibly grateful for this significant gift, the substantial opportunities it will make possible for our students, and the forward-thinking perspective of the Gray family.



Alumni Profile

A Conversation With Adie Selassie W'16

Adie Selassie W'16 is a stellar example of how the pursuit of academic excellence and the advancement of human understanding can reach beyond St. Patrick's. An award-winning student leader and social entrepreneur, Adie is a National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist and a recipient of a Calvin Coolidge Presidential Scholarship (five students selected from more than 4,800 applicants) and an Outstanding Citizen Award from Arlington County.

Adie has recently authored two children's books—*Solar Gratitude* and *Your Growing Brain: And How to Take Care of It*—that reflect interests and activities that now shape her life. In the preface to *Solar Gratitude*, Adie states, "I wrote this book to share one of the lessons of my life—to show gratitude to all things that bring light to our lives." The books were illustrated by her brother, Yaphie ex. '21. The youngest Selassie is Aman '27.

Adie's continued success as a student and her accomplishments as a social entrepreneur demonstrate the commitment to service, global citizenship, and pursuit of one's passions that we hope to instill in all of our students. We are proud to have her among our most distinguished alumni and are thrilled to share this interview with her.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY AFTER ST. PATRICK'S.

My nine-year journey at St. Patrick's concluded at the end of the sixth grade, in 2016. Transitioning out of St. Patrick's was a difficult decision. It's a place that nurtured me, a place where I learned how to learn, supported by some of the most empathetic teachers who challenged me to reach higher. The school's science, music, and athletic programs helped to balance my development as a student, collaborator, and athlete. Importantly, I made some lifelong friends. St. Patrick's was, and remains, a second home.

In middle school at Sidwell, I began my fascination with the human brain and, as I started high school, I found my passion for neuroscience. There, I was determined to explore the brain more deeply and engage in opportunities that would advance my knowledge and interest in it. In the last three years, I've studied the neurodevelopment of zebrafish, explored drug labeling protocols and challenges at the FDA, and conducted brain research at the National Microscopy Laboratory Research at the University of California at San Diego. I presented some of my findings at scientific conferences like the Society for Developmental Biology and the American Society for Cell Biology. Currently a senior at Sidwell, I'm doing the final internship of my high school at Children's National Medical Center until the spring of 2022. At Children's, I am studying and characterizing neurodevelopment using resting state functional MRI (fMRI).

The multiple opportunities to engage in community service at St. Patrick's opened my eyes to the possibility of making a real impact in the lives of people who need a hand. I took those lessons with me to Sidwell. My time in high school has been spent leading initiatives that I believe are important to our society, both within the Sidwell community and outside of it. I have participated in service opportunities, both with well-established organizations as well as with initiatives that I pioneered and led.

I've spent a lot of my time in particular working on two 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations I have founded. The first, Live in The Lights, provides solar power to impoverished border communities in Texas known as the colonias. These communities have very limited access to power and electricity, especially as recent climate patterns have adversely affected the power grid, as has happened in Texas. So far, Live in The Lights has provided solar panels to over 50 households and expects to install another 75 panels by the end of 2021. The second organization, Care For You DMV, facilitates access to free mental healthcare for teens in the DMV area by connecting licensed psychologists and therapists with teens in need of that care. We essentially created a marketplace for free and confidential mental healthcare for teens. At Care For You DMV, our goal is to support youth mental health and reduce mental health disparities among teens in the DMV area. This service has been especially necessary during a pandemic, when youth mental health needs have sharply increased due to the many disruptions young people have had to cope with.

WHAT HAS DRIVEN YOUR SUCCESS?

I attribute much of my success to values that I learned from my parents and extended family. Faith, humility, hard work, and personal integrity are core to my family's tradition. Beyond that, the foundation for my work ethic, curiosity, collaborative spirit, and love for reading all developed during my elementary school years at St. Patrick's. I love to learn as much as I love to teach and help others. I love to solve problems together with others. All of these traits were seeded and fertilized back when I was on the Whitehaven Campus, and they have served me well in high school.

I also remember being rather shy in my early years at St. Patrick's. My family and teachers were pivotal in encouraging me to probe deeper and seek out answers to challenging academic problems. Knowing when to ask for support from my family, teachers, and community, both at Sidwell and St. Patrick's, has been vital to my success at Sidwell. Throughout middle school and high school, I've continued to refine and build on the lessons I learned during my early years at St. Patrick's. And that has made it easier for me to achieve my goals.

WAS THERE A PARTICULAR MOMENT THAT INSPIRED YOUR INTEREST IN SERVICE?

The service learning curriculum at St. Patrick's underscored the importance of service. It encouraged me to use whatever resources I had to make a difference in someone's life, no matter how modest. As a Nursery, PK, and Kindergarten student, I remember making soup for the homeless with Grate Patrol; as older students, we made sandwiches. The particular moment that inspired my interest in service was in the third grade, when a severe earthquake rocked Haiti. In class, we learned about the devastating impact of this tremor on the nation, especially on the lives of students at St. Etienne de Bateau, our sister school there. Their challenges seemed unimaginably hard. After learning about and seeing the suffering of my fellow students in Haiti, I was immediately inspired to do something about it. I organized a bake sale and recruited my friends to help me with the effort. Even as an eight-year-old third-grader, I recognized the solidarity we felt with our friends in Haiti—and my gratitude to my friends for the help and collaboration with my project. I began to understand that possibilities exist for all of us to lead in serving others. That particular moment launched my passion for service.

Adie's nonprofit Live in The Lights provides solar power to impoverished border communities in Texas.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

Now in my senior year of high school, I will be entering the next phase of my life soon. I will continue working with my two organizations, Live in The Lights and Care For You DMV, throughout college. I plan (and have already begun) to attract, recruit, and engage younger students to join my efforts on both fronts. I encourage new ideas and am always willing to learn from others, both from those with more experience than me and those just starting out. I also plan to stay engaged with the St. Patrick's and Sidwell communities. In college, my studies will focus on neuroscience, cognitive science, and mathematics. After college, my ambition is to improve our understanding of the brain and develop therapeutic strategies to treat neurological diseases, while simultaneously studying the implications of neuroscience beyond medicine, including in education and the justice system. To accomplish my goal, I hope to attend research-focused universities with strong neurocognitive science and public policy programs.

HOW DID THE ST. PATRICK'S CURRICULUM HELP YOU TO COME TO APPRECIATE INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY?

I learned a lot from St. Patrick's about the value and importance of sustainability. It is here that I first understood the critical nature of reducing the amount of greenhouse gases we all generate. I especially remember our unit on recycling. We learned that about three-quarters of all waste that ends up in the landfill is recyclable. I remember learning a song called "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle," which I can still recite from memory. I also recall visiting the recycling plant in D.C. and being in awe of the way our trash can be converted into usable objects. It became shockingly clear to me that we all should be doing more to reuse and recycle and make a positive impact on our precious environment here on earth. After that trip, I successfully convinced my family to redouble our recycling efforts.

The St. Patrick's curriculum surrounding environmental sustainability also provided me access to relevant facts and figures related to the challenges that our environment faces. It gave me the language to both understand and articulate the challenge. The curriculum also offered me tangible proof, through examples, that small innovations can help, and those efforts can then be scaled up to make increasingly larger impacts in the world. In thinking about how to apply those lessons to my own efforts at my nonprofit, Live in The Lights, I challenged my organization to push ourselves to create more novel solutions to old problems through small experiments and then capturing those lessons. For example, we used iterative problem-solving processes not only to decide on solar as an energy resource, but to also select the type of solar energy panels that would be appropriate for use in the Texan colonias. I was recognized by the leadership of Hidalgo County, Texas, for "introducing sustainable innovation" into the colonias. Live in The Lights was similarly honored by the Brower Youth for Environmental Leadership Foundation, as well as by the George H. W. Bush Points of Lights Foundation.

Congratulations to College-Bound Graduates from the Grade 6 Class of 2015 and Grade 8 Class of 2017

Riley Anderson
Smith College

Carter Akridge
Wake Forest University

Quentin Akridge
Elon University

Carly Armitage
Holton-Arms Class of '22

Luca Arvanitis
Bucknell University

George Balboa
Baylor University

Libby Bishop
Georgetown University

Kate Bohigian
Georgetown University

Sofia Brahimi
George Washington University

Bayley Buchanan
Union College

Dorothy Carlson
Southern Methodist University

Olivia Carnot
University of California, Los Angeles

Richard Davies-Van Voorhis
Oberlin College

Maggie Farina
Northwestern University

Sofie Fisher
Santa Clara University

Cyrus Ghoreichi
American University

Witt Giannini
Columbia University

Kate Graham
University of Richmond

Courson Gray
Tulane University

Anderson Grennan
Southern Methodist University

Henry Griffen
Bates College

Christian Hall
College of William & Mary

Nathan Hall
Case Western Reserve University

Owen Hennessey
St. Mary's College of Maryland

Scott Holland
St. Albans Class of '22

Seth Johnson
Bates College

Halle Johnson
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Genevieve Johnston
University of Wisconsin–Madison

Sara Jones
University of California, Los Angeles

Charlotte Khuzami
University of Wisconsin–Madison

Thomas Lowe
Yale University

Sophie Mansfield
Middlesex School Class of '22

Katherine Moe
Bates College

Jackson Muise
Boston University

Campbell Musslewhite
Gap Year, Colgate University Class of '26

Charlotte Nordberg
Tulane University

Kate O'Brien
Davidson College

Tia Piziali
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Benjamin Pusch
Trinity College Dublin

Gigi Rettew
University of Miami

James Rodocanachi
Tulane University

Jed Rossotti
Georgetown University

Austin Rouse
University of Wisconsin–Madison

Abigail Scharf
University of Chicago

Michael Sheehan
Georgetown University

Alex Stettinius
Trinity College

Elise Strawbridge
Westminster School Class of '22

Kylie Taylor
Emory University

Hannah White
Colgate University

Laila White
Tulane University

Wiley White
Davidson College

Hyland Wood
Tulane University

Courtney Yockel
College of the Holy Cross

Nathaniel Zarb
University of Michigan

Claire Zegger
Emory University

Alumni Notes

Scott Milam '83 and family

1983

After spending time in Massachusetts, Illinois, and Georgia, **Scott Milam '83** and family settled in Arlington, Virginia in 2007. He has two amazing and talented children—Beckett (14) and Emmeline (11), who attend Arlington public schools—with Amanda, his remarkable wife of nearly 20 years, who works as a registered nurse at Virginia Hospital. Scott started his public education consulting company, Afton Partners, in 2011 after spending more than a decade working on private- and public-sector turnarounds and performance-improvement initiatives. Outside of work and home, you can find Scott participating in trail races, mountain biking, or generally finding ways to be outside as much as possible.

Neville Wilson Wolf '95's first child, Josiah, turned one in October.

1995

Neville Wilson Wolf '95 and her husband Jason celebrated the arrival of their first child, Josiah Lee Tait Wolf, on October 29, 2020. Grandmother Louise Hayes is the Office Manager at St. Patrick's! Neville, Jason, and Josiah live in Colorado.

1999

Isabel Adams '99 and Will Camnitz welcomed their daughter Louisa Sleeper Camnitz on Saturday, May 8, just in time for Mother's Day. Louisa is also the granddaughter of longtime St. Patrick's faculty member and administrator Ann Adams! Isabel's siblings and fellow alums **Sam Adams W'02**, **Jo Adams W'04, and Annika Koppen W'03** have all visited their beautiful new niece in Greensboro, NC.

Louisa Sleeper Camnitz was born to Isabel Adams '99 and Will Camnitz on May 8, 2021

2004

Stephanie Hoover Boyar W'02 and her husband Shane welcomed their baby boy, Finn Hawking Boyar, to the world on October 9, 2020, in their new home in Richmond, VA.

2006

Metal sculptor **Dave Dunn '06** held a successful art show in Key West, FL in January 2021. His next

Stephanie Hoover Boyar W'02 and her baby

Marion Smith W'04

show is in New Orleans in November 2021.

Marion Smith W'04 returned home from Manhattan in the spring of 2021 to continue her real estate career with the Nancy Taylor Bubes Group at Washington Fine Properties. She is currently living in Bethesda and will be getting married at the end of the year in Charleston, South Carolina, to Brian Buglione.

2008

Lorentz Hansen '08 is in her third year at Vermont Law School, pursuing a joint J.D. and masters degree in restorative justice and working as Senior Managing Editor of the Vermont Law Review.

2009

In July 2021, **Hollis McLoughlin '09** accepted an offer from Oppenheimer to be a second-year analyst in their New York office. He also recently became an uncle again, this time to his sister's little girl, Caroline Croft Davis, born on April 20, 2021, at Sibley Hospital, where Hollis was born on April 19, 1995. He is the godfather to his sister's son, his nephew William Davis. Hollis has lived in New York since graduating from Trinity in 2018.

2011

Sydney Chapman W'09 began her studies at University of Chicago Law School this fall.

2012

Madison Eldridge '12 started a new position in April as an entertainment communications coordinator at YouTube, where she mainly works on publicity for YouTube Originals content. Most recently, at the end of July, she was able to celebrate her 2020 graduation from Loyola Marymount University in person at the Sofi Stadium.

2013

Julian Detmer W'11 graduated in May from Williams with a BA in economics. Julian was a dual athlete at Williams, playing for both the men's hockey team and the men's golf team. Following graduation, Julian moved to Boston, where he is an analyst with Citizens Financial Group in their Debt Capital Markets Division.

Madison Eldridge '12 graduation

Isabel Stettinius '13 graduated from the University of Virginia in May and will continue her studies at Virginia, where she will pursue a masters in commerce at the McIntire School.

2015

Chloe Chapman '15 has finished her sophomore year at the University of Georgia, where she plays basketball and soccer.

Madeira Graduates: Olivia Carnot '17, Laila White '17, Katherine Moe '17, and Halle Johnson '17

2017

Kate Bohigian W'15 entered Georgetown this fall and continues to volunteer at Fair Chance, while she develops the HeyDay Holiday, as described in the July 2020 edition of the St. Patrick's Alumni Newsletter.

Sofia Brahimi '17 graduated from Bullis and entered George Washington University, where she was awarded the Presidential Award scholarship and was selected for the Women's Leadership Program for Globalization, Economics, and Business in a living community on GW's Mount Vernon Campus. Sofia is excited to return to the St. Patrick's neighborhood! She will pursue a B.Sc. in international relations at the Elliott School for International Affairs. In light of her soccer pedigree, as striker of the Bullis ISL-A champion varsity girls soccer team, she will likely try out for the soccer team at GW. She likewise beat the VA thresholds in track & field (800m and 1600m) and is thinking of also trying out for the GW track & field team.

In spring 2021, **Olivia Carnot '17, Laila White '17, Katherine Moe '17,** and **Halle Johnson '17** celebrated their graduation from Madeira School.

Owen Hennessey '17 graduated from Severn School in June and will be attending St. Mary's College of Maryland, where he will compete on their varsity sailing team. He coached youth sailing this summer at Severn Sailing Association.

Campbell Musslewhite W'15 will take a gap year and then attend Colgate University in the fall of 2022. During her gap year, she'll do some hiking out west, marine biology research in Hawaii, a ski instructor training program in Colorado, and an internship in Cape Town, South Africa.

Alex Stettinius '17 will attend Trinity College next fall after a gap year. He is working for National Geographic and the Outdoor Channel with Carter Andrews, a world-renowned fisherman with shows on both channels. (As classmates may recall, fishing is not a hobby for Alex but an obsession.) He will also intern at Ecosystem Partners in Baltimore, a private equity firm that invests in conservation and mitigation projects. Alex did his Episcopal High School externship with Ecosystem Partners last spring.

2020

Erin Morera '20 competed this summer at USEF Pony Finals 2021 with her two mounts, Nominee and Tresoro. She rode Nominee to the prestigious Overall Regular Pony Hunter Reserve Grand Championship title out of 350 ponies, as well as the Reserve Championship in the Regular Large Pony Hunter division. With Tresoro, she finished third overall in the Large Green Pony Hunters and won in the under saddle class. She was also the Owner/Rider Champion of this division. Erin continues her training at Heritage Farm in Katonah, New York, and is looking forward to being back in Washington, D.C., this fall to compete at the Washington International Horse Show and the Capital Challenge.

Erin Morera '20

2021

Recent graduates **Sydney George '21**, **Bella Duran '21**, and **Bianca Duran '21** reunited during their junior varsity soccer match-up this fall between Episcopal, where Bella and Bianca are enrolled, and Madeira, where Sydney is enrolled. They hope to keep in touch and keep the Wolfhound spirit alive on and off the field.

In Spring 2021, **Olivia Carnot '17, Laila White '17, Katherine Moe '17,** and **Halle Johnson '17** celebrated their graduation from Madeira School.

Bianca Duran '21, Sydney George '21, and Bella Duran '21

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2021–2022 ANNUAL FUND

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Have questions or need more information?
Please contact Dana Saab, Director of the Annual Fund,
at 202.342.7010 or SaabD@stpatsdc.org.

ST. PATRICK'S EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL

4700 Whitehaven Parkway, NW
Washington, D.C. 20007
www.stpatsdc.org

BOUNCE BACK TO THE '90s with us on Saturday, March 5, 2022.
We hope you will join us for the Fund-A-Scholar IDEALS Auction. It will be an epic night of community fundraising and lots of FUN!

Follow us on SOCIAL MEDIA to stay up to date with St. Patrick's news and catch a glimpse of community fun!

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/StPatsDC
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Share your news with the ST. PATRICK'S ALUMNI NEWSLETTER!
Please reach out to Chris Bolger at BolgerC@stpatsdc.org if you have not received your copy.

Our Mission

St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School strives to create a diverse and inclusive learning community of students, faculty and staff, and parents who recognize the infinite value of every individual as a child of God. We are committed to developing character, advancing human understanding, and promoting academic excellence to shape engaged citizens who live with integrity, empathy, and purpose.