

SADDLE RIVER DAY SCHOOL

# Bulletin FALL 2021 *and* Annual Report

Preparing the  
**Next Generation** of  
**Innovators, Thinkers**  
and **Leaders**



Message from  
Head of School,  
Jalaj Desai

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Distinguished  
Alum Robert  
Iommazzo '93

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SRDS Expands  
Programming  
Despite Pandemic

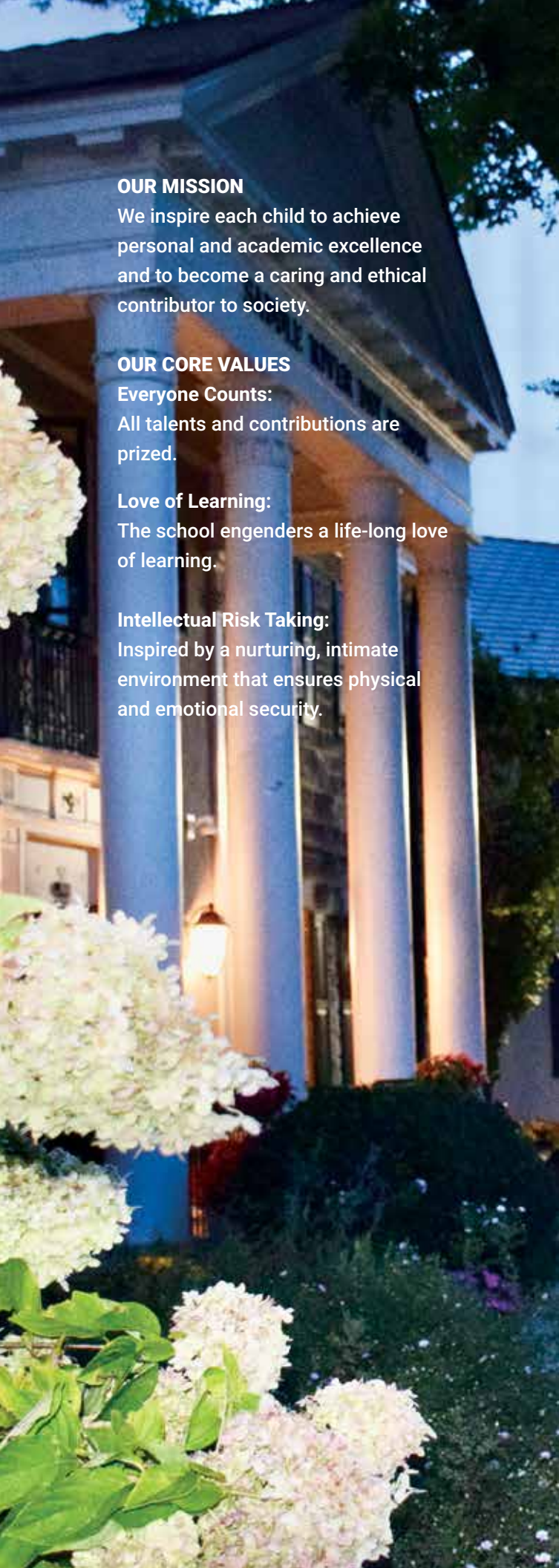
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Celebrating  
Student Academic  
Excellence

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**OUR MISSION**

We inspire each child to achieve personal and academic excellence and to become a caring and ethical contributor to society.

**OUR CORE VALUES**

**Everyone Counts:**

All talents and contributions are prized.

**Love of Learning:**

The school engenders a life-long love of learning.

**Intellectual Risk Taking:**

Inspired by a nurturing, intimate environment that ensures physical and emotional security.

**2021-2022 BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Executive Committee**

Mr. John Haller – President  
Mr. Rosario Ruffino – Vice President & Treasurer  
Mr. Dale Smith – Secretary  
Mr. Jalaj Desai – Head of School

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**Emeriti**

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Mr. Lawrence Salameno (deceased)  
Mr. Robert Sivori  
Mr. Stuart Steckler  
Mr. Edward Tafaro

**Founders**

Mr. John & Mrs. Diane Alford (deceased)

**SRDS BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The Trustees of Saddle River Day School provide commitment and leadership for the advancement of the School's mission, vision, and growth, as well as the preservation of the School's rich legacy.

In partnership with the Head of School, the Board of Trustees oversees and ensures all legal obligations are met and works to build a strong endowment by supporting annual fundraising and capital campaigns. The Board plays a vital role in guiding Saddle River Day School forward and ensuring that the institution is run with the utmost professionalism, while remaining at the forefront of educational and technological development.

The Board is comprised of parents, alumni, and community members with a deep affection, affiliation, and commitment to the school. They are highly skilled in their outside professions and bring a wealth of knowledge and experience that allows them to work together toward the best interests of the school.

**CREDITS:**

*Editor-In-Chief:* Gretchen Lee Kuhlman

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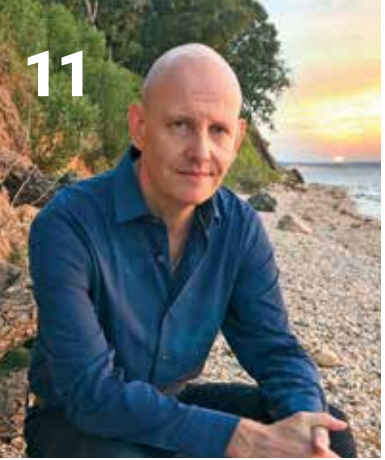
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# Preparing the Next Generation of Innovators, Thinkers and Leaders

Jalaj Desai, Head of School



I often hear parents and adults assert that they are “so glad I’m not a kid right now.” As an adult myself, I can appreciate this perspective. Being a kid back before cell phones, social media and a worldwide pandemic was complicated enough. Being a kid today requires the hastening of the kind of resilience, flexibility and stamina we adults have had the luxury of a lifetime to develop.

Our kids are growing up in a world in which knowledge is at their fingertips, a double-edged sword to be sure, but one that is as full of possibility and hope as it is danger. They are privileged to live in a place that is truly a melting pot, with a diversity in culture, language, and traditions that is unmatched almost anywhere in the country. They have been witness, in their lifetime, to great strife but also to great strides in technology and innovation, implemented at a dizzying, unprecedented pace.

The students of today will have to wrestle with questions of enormous moral and ethical consequence and they will be tasked with moving our country and our world forward in ways we can’t even imagine right now.

So where does that leave us as educators? I’d like to suggest it doesn’t leave us anywhere at all. Rather, it takes us to a place where we must give our students a foundation of knowledge that will help them navigate their unknown future. We must give them the tools that will enable them to think critically, evaluate immense amounts of information and make the best decisions they can, using all the available



## We must, in a nutshell, teach them *how to think*, not *what to think*.

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data they have. We must, in a nutshell, teach them *how to think*, not *what to think*.

In the past year, our academic team at Saddle River Day School has created and implemented several new programs designed to lay the groundwork our students will need to be successful in their transition to higher education and then into adulthood. Our Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Capstone Projects,

Gateway Diploma Program, and Coaching Academy all offer students the opportunity to pursue their passions, deep dive into areas of interest or explore something new, all while acknowledging each child’s unique contributions and encouraging their scholarship. Our commitment to a focus on developing an entrepreneurial mindset, even in our youngest learners, builds the infrastructure our students will need throughout their academic career.

Yes, this is a complex time to be a kid. Not least because we, their parents and the adults surrounding them, are often navigating the same uncharted territory they are. But my experience has been that our Saddle River Day students continue to approach each challenge with courage,

It is up to us here at Saddle River Day School to provide them with resources and support so that their rallying cry will continue to be the familiar, “How lucky we are to be alive right now.” It is our privilege and honor to do just that.

curiosity and optimism, not with fear. It is up to us here at Saddle River Day School to provide them with resources and support so that their rallying cry will continue to be the familiar, “How lucky we are to be alive right now.” It is our privilege and honor to do just that. 🌟



A Unique and Special Celebration:  
SRDS Graduates the Class of 2021



On Tuesday, May 18th, Charter Field was the site of the in-person Graduation events for the Saddle River Day School Class of 2021. Due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, these celebrations looked very different than in past years, but remained as festive as ever. Administrators, faculty, and staff were committed to making an in-person celebration for students and their families happen as allowed by the State of New Jersey.

In the evening, seniors and their families attended a ceremony where graduating students sat with a limited number of family members in the audience instead of on the dais. They listened to speeches given by Head of Upper School Tony Maccarella, classmates Emily Besserer, Masha Alon, Matthew Samanoglu, and Yuanruo “Sherry” Xie, and Head of School Jalaj Desai, all with the theme of “resiliency” and enjoyed time all together on campus as a class. While attendees wore masks and maintained physical distance from one another, it was wonderful to be able to spend time together and officially close the year for our students.

Congratulations to the Class of 2021! 🎓

Officers for the Class of 2021

President  
Maria “Masha” Alon

Secretary  
Katherine Meeks

Treasurer  
Yuanruo “Sherry” Xie



Our Tribute to the Class of 2021



Senior Awards Recipients for the Class of 2021  
The following awards were given to members of the senior class during the Senior Awards Ceremony.

Head of School's Honor Roll  
Emily Besserer, Kate Mallory, Cooper Mallow, Katherine Meeks, Yuanruo “Sherry” Xie

English Award of Excellence  
Kate Mallory

Mathematics Award of Excellence  
Yuanruo “Sherry” Xie

Science Award of Excellence  
Cooper Mallow

World Language Award of Excellence  
Emma Ig

History and Social Sciences Award of Excellence  
Emily Besserer

Visual Arts Award of Excellence  
Honger “Tibbie” Tao & Keyu “Jack” Zhu

Performing Arts Award of Excellence  
Susanna Bobbs

Female Athlete of the Year  
Emily Besserer

Male Athlete of the Year  
Ryan Cassels

Senior Outstanding Improvement in the Upper School Award  
Avery Traver

The Jeremy L Glick Freedom Award  
Katherine Meeks

The SRDS Humanitarian Award  
Yuanruo “Sherry” Xie

The Upper School Citizenship Cup  
Matthew Samanoglu

The Head of School Award  
Elizabeth Han & Cooper Mallow

The SRDS Scholar  
Kate Mallory



Class of 2021

# College Destinations

The Class of 2021 was accepted to a list of schools as varied and accomplished as they are. The strength of college guidance at SRDS is in the care and attention given to each student and family. At SRDS, our families receive expert college guidance that gives our students an advantage in the college admissions process. Over 100 colleges and universities visit SRDS each fall, and many of the best schools in the country admit our students because they know an SRDS graduate is an inspired learner who is confident, creative and accomplished. Over 45% of our students enrolled at a first-choice college through Early Decision.

Congratulations to the Class of 2021! 🎓

- AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE

ALVERNIA UNIVERSITY

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

BOSTON UNIVERSITY (3)

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

COLGATE UNIVERSITY

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

DESALES UNIVERSITY

DENISON UNIVERSITY

EMERSON COLLEGE

EMORY UNIVERSITY

GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

INDIANA UNIVERSITY (BLOOMINGTON) (2)

MARYWOOD UNIVERSITY

MUHLENBERG COLLEGE
- NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (3)

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY

ROCHESTER INST. OF TECHNOLOGY (2)

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY (2)

STEVENS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (2)

THE UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

TULANE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA (SANTA BARBARA)

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY



# Saddle River Day Honors Faculty and Staff

Head of School Jalaj Desai took time last spring to recognize a number of faculty and staff members that have served the SRDS community for many years and gone above and beyond the call of duty. Each of these valued members have sacrificed their own time in order to ensure the success of the school, whether in the classroom or behind the scenes. We congratulate each of them and thank them for their contributions.





Ann Hanna



Chrissie Signore



Michelle Lanks



Yvonne McCort



Kathy Philipp



Alice Steinke



Daniel Van Kampen



Anastasia Kelly



Wendy Rhoads



Kris Sweeny

**Honored for Going Above and Beyond the Call of Duty:**  
Ann Hanna  
*School Nurse*  
  
Chrissie Signore  
*Director of Alumni & Special Events*

**Honored for Years of Service:**  
Michelle Lanks  
*Kindergarten Teacher, 20 years*  
  
Yvonne McCort  
*Lower School Teacher, 33 years*  
  
Kathy Philipp  
*English Teacher, 30 years*  
  
Alice Steinke  
*Art Teacher, 30 years*  
  
Daniel Van Kampen  
*Head of Maintenance, 37 years*

**Faculty & Staff Awards:**  
Anastasia Kelly  
*Director of Teaching & Learning*  
Freda Lee Hubler Award  
  
Wendy Rhoads  
*Lower School Science Teacher, 21 years*  
Freda Lee Hubler Award  
  
Kris Sweeny  
*Assistant Director of Admissions, 21 years*  
Lucille P. Mazarin Award  
  
Gretchen Lee Kuhlman  
*Director of Communication, 22 years*  
Robert A. Finkel Award (*inaugural recipient*)  
  
**Retiring:**  
Robert Finkel  
*Chief Financial Officer, 11 years*



## Robert A. Finkel Distinguished Service Award

Bob Finkel retired after 11 years of dedicated service to the Saddle River Day School. He never said “no” right away, but always tried to find a way to say “yes”... no small feat considering he worked with budgets and human resources. Chances are he shared a story, sang a song or told a joke to anyone who stopped by his office. Most times, colleagues would leave with a smile on their face.

In honor of Bob’s contribution to the SRDS community, Head of School Jalaj Desai instituted a new award: the Robert A. Finkel Award. The recipient embodies the characteristics of Bob’s time at SRDS: dependability, integrity, compassion, loyalty, and an undying dedication to ensuring the success of Saddle River Day School. The inaugural award was given to Gretchen Lee Kuhlman, who has served the school for 22 years in the Office of Admissions and now as the Director of Communications. Mr. Desai spoke about her work: “I admire your dedication and your ability to innovate and reinvent yourself; you are a great storyteller and your sense of humor is a joy to all. I thank you for your years of dedication and service to the SRDS community.”

Congratulations to Bob and Gretchen! 🎓



Distinguished Alumnus

Distinguished Alumnus Robert Iommazzo '93  
Accomplished in Life, Philanthropic at Heart



Robert Iommazzo began his time at SRDS in Grade 6. He was a model student and participated in many clubs and organizations, including Academic Decathlon, Chroma, student government, the JSA (Junior State of America) program for students interested in politics. He also played varsity golf his sophomore, junior and senior years. His sister April '95 was also a student and his father, Robert Sr. was an active member of the Board of Trustees under the Headship of Robert J. Kuhlman.

After graduating in 1993, he headed to Loyola University in Maryland where he continued to be actively involved in student government, was a co-president of the Young Republican Club and served as the President of the Loyola Italian Club. Robert also met his future wife Dana there. He graduated in 1997 with a Bachelor of Business Administration in International Business.

While his original intent was to go on to law school, Robert was presented with an opportunity to co-found the company SEBA International LLC. He is currently Managing Partner, leading SEBA's global Finance & Risk Practice. Specializing in finance, risk and regulatory compliance search assignments, Rob advises and represents banks, securities firms, leading FinTech companies and asset management companies on key executive and non-executive director appointments across these functions.



Rob Iommazzo and his wife, Dana.

Robert is active with several industry associations such as the ABA (the American Bankers Association), GARP (Global Association of Risk Professionals), SIFMA (Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association), PRMIA (the Professional Risk Managers' International Association) and NACD (National Association of Corporate Directors) where he frequently speaks on topics relating to recruitment and industry trends. He also serves as a Young Associate Director of the Board of Directors for the Metropolitan Opera and is an active member of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the Royal Institute Affairs (Chatham House) and the AESC (Association of Executive Search Consultants).



Despite their incredibly busy professional lives, Robert and Dana have a passion for helping those who are less fortunate. They have been involved with A Chance in Life (ACIL) for over 20 years and Robert currently serves as the Chairman of the Board of Directors.



Despite their incredibly busy professional lives, Robert and Dana have a passion for helping those who are less fortunate. They have been involved with A Chance in Life (ACIL) for over 20 years and Robert currently serves as the Chairman of the Board of Directors. The mission of the ACIL organization began 75 years ago, in the aftermath of World War II. Vast numbers of orphans and vulnerable children were left living on the streets of Italy by the war, and Monsignor John Patrick Carroll-Abbing was determined that someone should care for them. His decision to dedicate himself to their wellbeing defined the course of his life's work and founded what would become A Chance In Life. Now celebrating its legacy of the past 75 years, A Chance In Life offers the experience and vision to meet the ever-evolving needs of at-risk youth in the years to come. With the support of their donors,

they continue to invest in countries across the globe and provide new initiatives for at-risk youth, continuing Monsignor Carroll-Abbing's legacy of striving towards a day when every child in the world has "a chance in life."

Rob recalls his time at SRDS with gratitude and believes this is where the foundation was laid for the success he has experienced in his career and personal life. He is thankful for the strong sense of community, the personal attention that the faculty provided to their students and how individualism was encouraged through participation in diverse opportunities. In addition, he felt he received a top-notch education that prepared him for the rigors of college and beyond. Robert is an active alumnus of Saddle River Day and is proud of the remarkable progress he sees at his alma mater when he returns to campus.

He welcomed the opportunity to be a panelist at our *REBELS in the Real World* networking event last spring. He remains close friends with a number of his classmates to this day. Rob and Dana reside in Short Hills, NJ with their daughter Carolina.

We are pleased to present this award to Robert in recognition of his work. He truly represents the SRDS Mission to "achieve personal and academic excellence and to become a caring and ethical contributor to society."





# A Celebration of the Arts



**Shay Frey '10**  
 Shay Frey was a highly engaged student while at SRDS. She was an active and talented performer, especially in the theatre where she played several lead roles in dramatic and musical productions including *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey) and *Noises Off* (Dotty Otley/Mrs. Clackett). She also participated in athletics and student life including student council, peer leaders, and Admissions Ambassadors and was an Honors/AP student. Anyone who recalls her days at SRDS remembers Shay as a vibrant leader and an agent for positive change whenever she had the opportunity. She was one of four siblings who graduated from Saddle River Day School.

She went on to the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and graduated with a BS in Illustration Photography. She is currently the Strategic Programs Manager and Content Creator for The Mighty Shed, where she implements analytical thinking and creative brain power to develop a clear approach to branding, social strategy and web design. Shay was honored this year for “embracing all that comes from



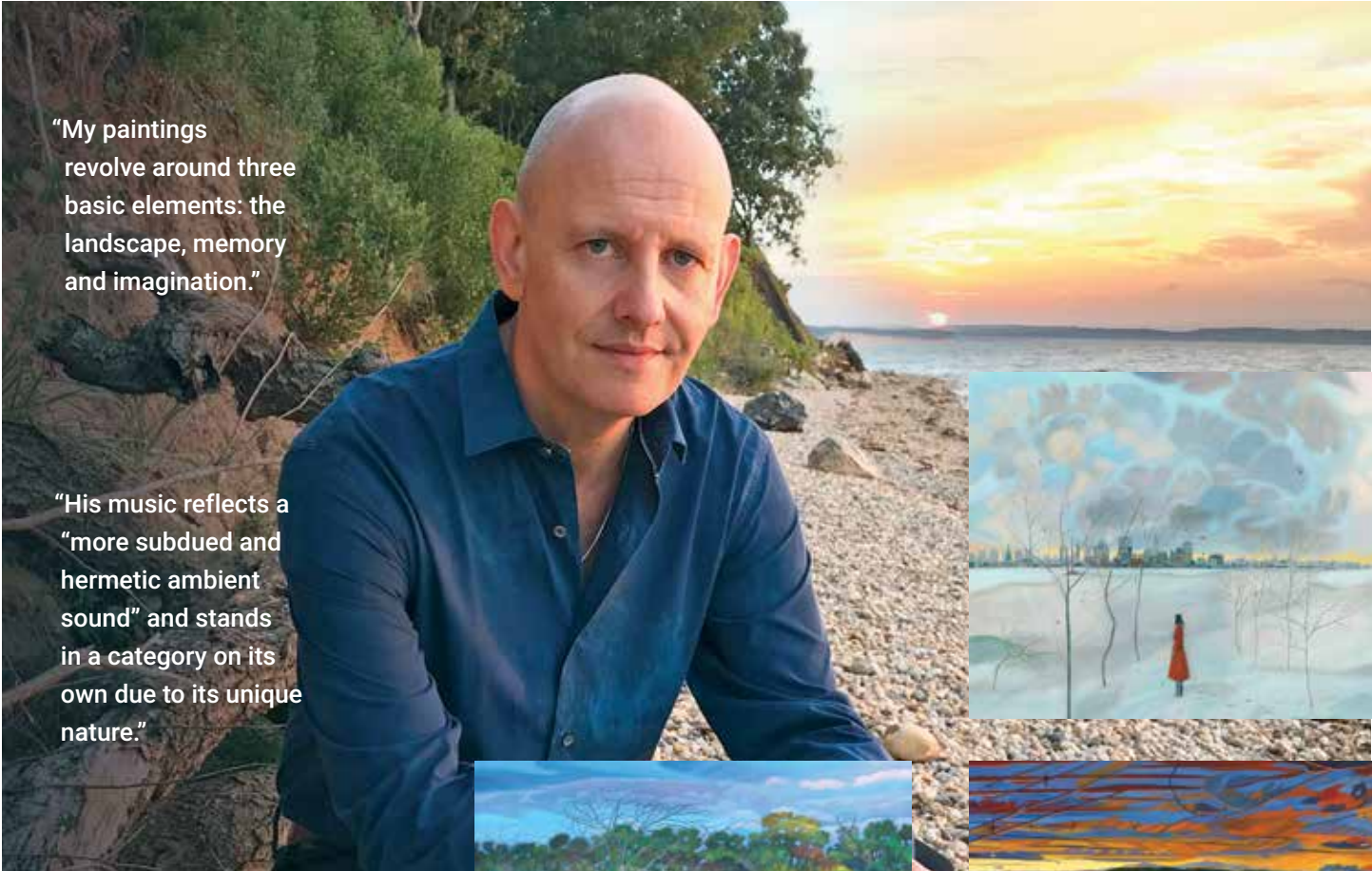
fearlessly jumping into the deep-end by taking on challenges with positivity.” She continues to explore photography and has started her own freelance business, Shay Frey Photography (<https://shayfrey.com/illustration>). Through her work with Disney Theatrical, Shay has had the pleasure of photographing notable subjects including Elton John and Reba McEntire.

In addition to her professional responsibilities, Shay has a passion for charitable causes and is committed to making an impact at the Hameau Farm in the Big Valley, a summer farm camp in Belleville, PA for girls ages 8-14



where she now serves as the Director of Communications. In 2018 she led the farm’s rebrand and was instrumental in efforts to ensure the camp remained open during the early days of the COVID pandemic. Since her involvement in 2018, the program has seen a 200% increase in enrollment and now has a waitlist. Shay’s incredible talents, creativity and can-do spirit leave an imprint on all she touches.

When asked what she felt SRDS gave her to succeed in college and beyond, she said: “In addition to the practical education needed to succeed in college and in life, Saddle River Day taught me two crucial skills: 1. How to learn: the intimate classroom experience gave me the opportunity to explore many methods of acquiring that I continued to use through college. 2. How to be entrepreneurial: SRDS encouraged my entrepreneurial spirit by allowing me to develop and implement new programmatic changes, even through the transition of leadership. These are both skills I use daily in my career.”



“My paintings revolve around three basic elements: the landscape, memory and imagination.”

“His music reflects a “more subdued and hermetic ambient sound” and stands in a category on its own due to its unique nature.”

**Tor Lundvall '87**  
 Tor Lundvall was a Wyckoff, NJ native when he attended SRDS. His father, Bruce Lundvall, spent more than 50 years in the record industry, signing such artists as Willie Nelson, Herbie Hancock, Phoebe Snow and James Taylor. It was under this influence that Tor began to develop his love for art at an early age and he says his “art and music developed side by side.” His childhood drawings of cuckoo clocks and dinosaurs eventually transformed into what he calls “outlandish creatures and landscapes” during his high school years.

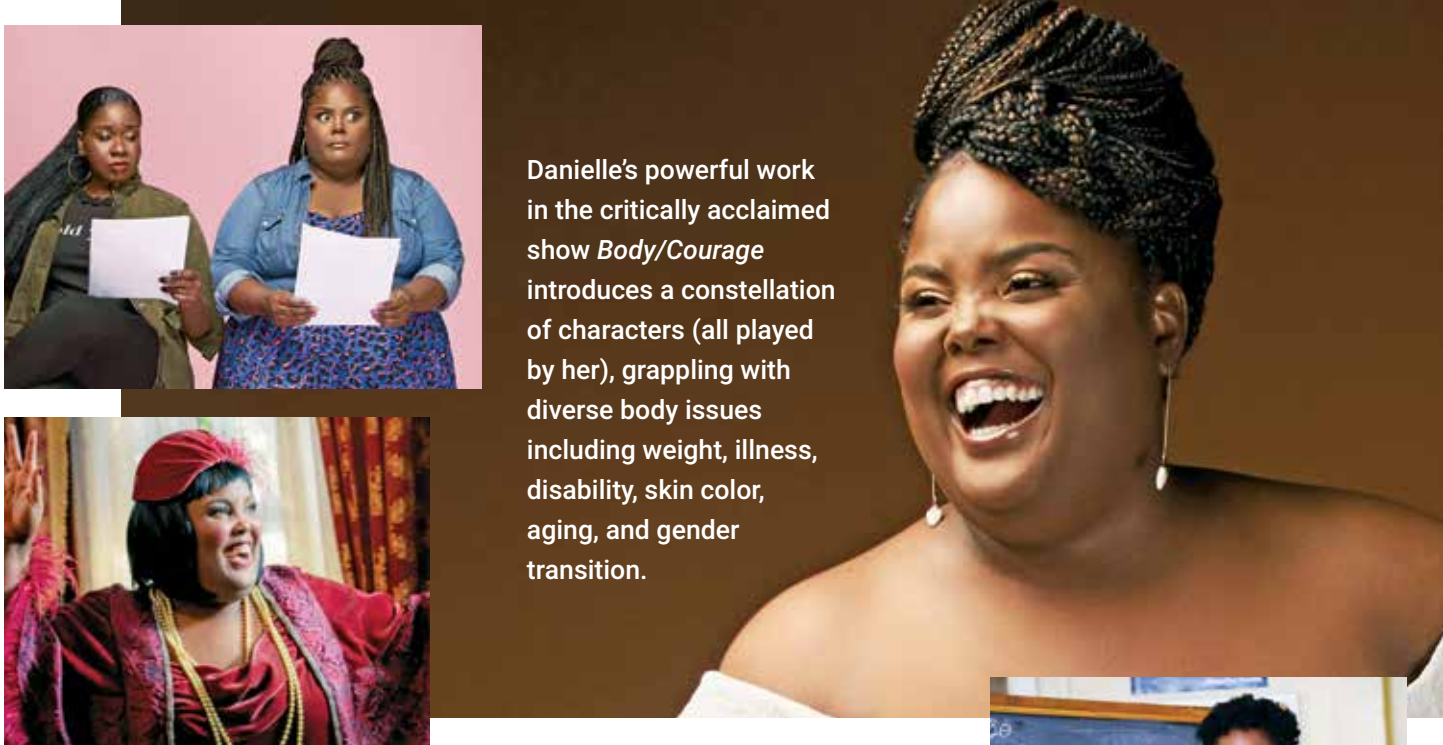
He attended American University and has since become a highly successful painter, composer and musician whose inspirations have always come from nature, imagination and childhood memories. “My paintings revolve around

three basic elements: the landscape, memory and imagination,” Tor says. His exclusively oil paintings typically start from some event in nature. Initially, his dominant pursuit was painting, but he began to write and record music in the late 80’s and today, “both fields have become closely related and continue to influence and feed off each other.” His music reflects a “more subdued and hermetic ambient sound” and stands in a category on its own due to its unique nature. His body of work includes 13 albums plus various

singles, EP’s and compilations all featuring his own original artwork on the covers. Lundvall’s work can be found courtesy of Dais Records. Dais Records co-founder Gibby Miller reflects on Tor’s work: “Tor is a singular sort of artist who can express his vision in 360 degrees. It’s quite remarkable. His music sounds like his paintings and his paintings look like his music — dreamlike, otherworldly, magical.”

To hear and see Tor’s work: [torlundvall.com](http://torlundvall.com)





Danielle’s powerful work in the critically acclaimed show *Body/Courage* introduces a constellation of characters (all played by her), grappling with diverse body issues including weight, illness, disability, skin color, aging, and gender transition.

**Danielle Pinnock-Wallace ’06**  
Danielle Pinnock-Wallace began her journey at Saddle River Day School in 7th grade, where she was highly involved in the theater and performing arts. She went on to Temple University and received her MFA in Acting with First Distinction Honors from the Birmingham School of Acting (United Kingdom). She has studied with famed solo performer and documentary theater playwright Anna Deavere Smith and is a 2015 Bob Curry Fellow with The Second City. Danielle appeared in *Twist Your Dickens*, The Second City and Goodman Theatre’s 2015 comedic holiday production; The Second City’s 2015 NBC Universal Break Out Comedy Festival; *Twilight*: Los Angeles, 1992 with The Other Theatre Company; and as an understudy in the Goodman Theatre’s *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*. Classically trained, Danielle can adapt herself to take on any role, but her outstanding comedic work continues to gain her national and international acclaim.

Her written work about body awareness has been featured on Buzzfeed and other publications. Her project entitled *Body/Courage* was written and produced by Danielle, who also plays the lead. From their website: “In February, 2016, *Body/Courage* received its World Premiere with Rivendell Theatre Ensemble and Waltzing Mechanics. Danielle’s work has already gained critical acclaim. Created from over 300 interviews conducted worldwide, *Body/Courage* is a rich exploration of body acceptance as we share in one woman’s transformative journey to discover her own beauty through the voices of others. Danielle’s powerful work in the critically acclaimed show *Body/Courage* introduces a constellation of characters (all played by her), grappling with diverse body issues including weight, illness, disability, skin color, aging, and gender transition. Their stories reflect a nuanced and moving response to the high pressures, expectations, and judgments society places on personal appearance.” Danielle has won critical acclaim for this courageous and



outstanding work on the stage.

Since then, Danielle continues as a successful actor, content creator and entrepreneur. She can be seen on the hit CBS comedy *Young Sheldon* as Ms. Ingram, in EPIX’s *Get Shorty* and lends her voice to multiple recurring animation roles for DreamWorks, Universal, Netflix and Cartoon Network. She is the co-creator of the hilarious online sketch series *Hashtag Booked*. Also airing on CBS on October 7, 2021, the new sitcom *Ghosts* features Danielle who plays Alberta, a Prohibition era lounge singer. Danielle was a 2020 Webby Honoree, and has captured the hearts of major networks and media outlets in the U.S. and abroad. 🌟

## Rebel Athletic Hall of Fame Inducts Two from the Class of 2015



### Brian Mulligan ‘15

Brian Mulligan started at SRDS his freshman year, where he was an Honors student, and a leader. He ran cross country and track and played basketball, serving as Captain in his senior year. It was during this time that the boys varsity program began its ascent to become a highly competitive team in Northern Bergen County, following a year that saw the Rebels qualify for the Bergen County Jamboree and advance in the NJSIAA State Tournament for the first time in many years. Brian helped pave the way toward establishing a program that recently experienced four undefeated league seasons (2017, 2019, 2020 and 2021) and finished with a 15-2 record last year during the pandemic. The program continues to consistently advance in both state and county tournaments.



Brian was involved in numerous other activities and clubs at SRDS as well, like the ever-popular Balloon Animal Club and the Fishing Club and was an Admissions Ambassador and a strong student. He went on to attend the University of Miami in Florida and graduated in 2019 with a degree in accounting and a minor in finance. After graduating, he took time to prepare for the LSAT and began his first semester of law school at Rutgers Law School (Newark) in the fall of 2020. Now, in his second year, Brian serves as an

Associate Editor of the *Rutgers Computer and Technology Law Journal* and as a member of the *Society for Corporate Law and Governance*.

Brian reflects on his time at SRDS: “I have always felt that I was academically prepared for my classes in college. Thanks to my time at SRDS, I was able to make the adjustment from high school to college work seamlessly.”



### Sophia Raia ‘15

Sophia Raia was a “lifer” at SRDS who started in Kindergarten, as did her brother Lawrence who graduated in 2017. In addition to playing soccer, track and softball, Sophia was a capable Honors and AP student and was actively engaged in student council, was an Admissions Ambassador, a coordinator for the SRDS literary publication *Mimesis*, and helped coordinate production of the *Retrospect* Yearbook. She is also a gifted artist who has showcased her work in numerous exhibitions. She creates and displays many moving pieces and donates the proceeds from their sales to *Homes Fit for Heroes*, an organization that provides free furnished apartments for wounded operations warriors and their families. Her father Lawrence C. Raia served as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at SRDS and her mother, Illana Raia, Founder & CEO of *Être*, recently participated in an SRDS Alumni event “Rebels in the Real World” about her highly successful platform that mentors young girls and encourages them to be what they want to be.



After graduating from SRDS, Sophia attended Wesleyan University to study Neuroscience & Behavior. While pursuing her scientific career in college, she played catcher on the Wesleyan varsity softball team and was a softball representative for the Student-Athletic Advisory Committee for the NCAA. She continued to foster her passion for art through studio art classes and graduated in 2019 with a BA in Neuroscience & Behavior and an Art History minor. She completed a summer research internship at USUHS (Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences) that led to her post-graduate position at Mount Sinai where she worked on a human brain mapping project. She graduated in May of 2021 from Georgetown’s Master’s Program in Physiology & Biophysics Program and is applying to medical school with the hope of starting in 2022.



Sophia reflects on how SRDS prepared her for college and beyond: “My time at SRDS allowed me to pursue my various passions simultaneously from a young age, teaching me time management and prioritization. These skills helped me become a successful student, artist, and athlete in my subsequent endeavors. Most importantly, athletics at SRDS taught me how to be a team player, an attribute I value most as I progress in my career. I am grateful to SRDS for supporting me over the 13 years I spent there and for the continued support since graduating.” 🌟



Spotlight on Success

Living an Entrepreneurial Life:  
Three SRDS Alumni Pursue Their Passions



Stephanie Devli '17 Brings  
Awareness to Mental Health  
through her Clothing Line

“I’ve always had a passion for fashion and mental health awareness. I studied psychology during my time at New York University and I’m currently pursuing my Master of Arts degree in psychology at NYU as well. During the COVID-19 pandemic, work and school went remote and I found myself with lots of free time on my hands. I decided to put my time to good use and I began creating tie-dye and bleached clothing, a fashion trend that sparked during the pandemic. Lots of people began WFH (work from home) and so there became a high demand for loungewear. I spent a few months tie-dying and bleaching clothing, selling them, and also sending them to well-known influencers in hopes of expanding my reach. As the months went on and as a full time student at NYU, I realized my company was growing and I could not make everything on my own. I stopped making tie-dyed and bleached loungewear and I began manufacturing loungewear sets overseas.

I created The Happy Camp3r with a mission to raise awareness for mental health. Mental health is such an important conversation topic that needs to be discussed more and our mission is to do exactly that. We strive to bring awareness and to shine a light on the resources available to all those that are struggling. Thus far, we have raised over \$25,000 that has been donated to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Anxiety & Depression Association of America, and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

I spent seven years of my life learning and growing at Saddle River Day. I was surrounded by people who guided me in my endeavors and who helped me achieve my goals. I went into college fully equipped and ready; I can say that without a doubt, SRDS gave me the tools and skills I would need to be successful throughout my college career. I have learned that nothing is impossible and hard work breeds success and I will forever be thankful for my time at SRDS and the teachers and staff who helped shape me into the person I am today.”

Stephanie graduated from New York University with a BA in Psychology from the College of Arts & Science and is a Candidate for a MA in Psychology from the Graduate School of Arts & Science this spring. Follow Stephanie’s company on Instagram: <https://thehappycamp3r.com>

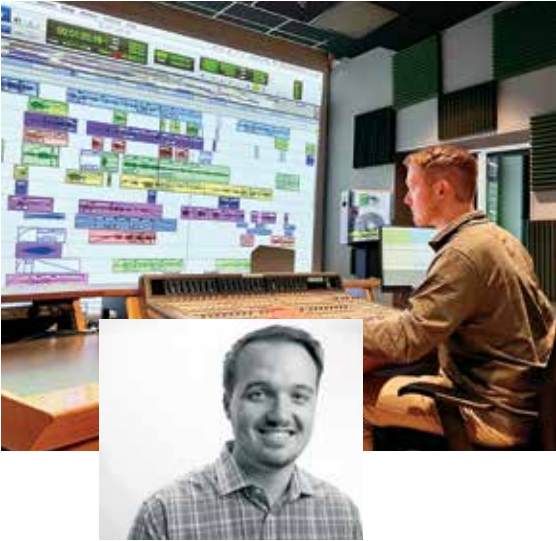
Jack Hansen '17: Founder,  
HansenHouse Media

“I attended the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in 2017 and received a BFA in Filmmaking. My concentration was in Post-Production,

where I focused on editing, sound design, and post-supervision. In 2019, I received a nomination for a national student editing award by the American Cinema Editors (ACE) organization. As a finalist, I attended the 2019 ACE Eddie Awards in Beverly Hills, CA, where I met a bunch of incredibly talented filmmakers. The recognition I received from ACE bolstered my reputation at school. I returned to North Carolina determined to build off that reputation and expand my network. I worked with as many people as possible and offered workshops to scout talent in the lower classes. By my senior year, I was ready for my next big project: creating a production company.

I founded HansenHouse Media LLC in January of 2021 as a post-production company. Fortunately, the remote nature of editorial work allowed me to build my client roster and generate revenue with minimal overhead. Getting my business off the ground while completing my last semester at school was incredibly challenging, but I made it to the finish line.

Upon graduation, I reached out to the most talented and respected people from my network and asked them to join my team. We immediately scaled HHM into a full-service production company and shifted our focus to content marketing. HHM’s core services include video production, editing, sound design, graphic design, motion graphics, animation, and visual effects. Whether our client needs a high-end commercial or wants some photos touched up for social media, we carefully tailor our services to meet the needs of each project. We primarily work with business owners



and marketing directors in the greater NYC area to boost brand awareness, promote products & services, and attract new customers for their brands.

During my time at SRDS, I spent many hours working in the RebelVision studio. We produced weekly shows that were broadcast live throughout campus and I learned how to use all of the high-end equipment in the control room. The hands-on experience I gained from working in the studio complimented the instruction I received through the videography classes and by the spring semester, I was interning for the SRDS Development office. I worked with the Communications team to create promotional materials for community events including the Annual Gala, Day of Giving, and graduation ceremonies. After graduating in 2017, I continued to work at SRDS in my summers as an intern for the Technology Department. SRDS has had a significant role in my life as a young adult and I am so grateful for the unique experiences that I’ve had as a student, intern, and colleague.”

To learn more about Hansen House Media, follow them on: [hansenhousemedia.com](https://hansenhousemedia.com)

Billie Singer '05: Founder,  
Buying for Blokes

“Buying for Blokes by Billie is a passion project that stems from a decade plus career in the luxury fashion and jewelry industries. However, my interest in fashion started much earlier. Even as a little girl, my favorite activity was shopping and I always loved having something new in my closet (still do!). When Sex & the City’s leading lady, Carrie Bradshaw said “shopping is my cardio” it immediately rang true. A sport I excelled at... finally!

My experience started as a teenager eager to learn the retail world. It continued to include some of the most iconic American brands in our shopping landscape, notably, Banana Republic, Talbots & Tommy Bahama. Graduating from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, majoring in Fashion Merchandising & Marketing, I was fortunate enough to spend a semester in London studying Fashion Marketing and visiting famous Parisian fashion houses. During college, my internship at Tommy Hilfiger led to the creation of my Dress for Success fashion shows. It was emceed by former Director of Community Affairs,



Betsy Hilfiger, who became a mentor to me. Its purpose was to teach students how to dress for interviews, internships and, in turn, full time jobs.

After switching directions, the majority of my career has been in the luxury jewelry industry holding positions at brands including Tiffany, Harry Winston, Graff Diamonds, Roberto Coin and Jacob & Co. In more recent years, I have completed my Graduate Gemology certification from the Gemological Institute of America and Fashion Event Planning Certification from the Fashion Institute of Technology.

You may ask, “What does Buying for Blokes mean?” Well, over the years, I have found that men are my favorite customers. As a female shopper, I can tell you that most women typically do not want help with their shopping; however, men often do. Since they tend to dislike shopping and want to get in and out of the store quickly, they appreciate the advice. That’s where I come in! I can shop for you and bring you the clothing. Or we can go shopping together to find your new looks. In today’s COVID climate, you may be even less inclined to enter a store, so let me shop for you. Whether clients are looking for an outfit for a special event or updating their closet, I can help them select a wardrobe that reflects their personal taste and lifestyle.”

The logo for Billie’s new company was designed in a collaborative effort by SRDS Graphic Arts students. Follow Billie’s company on Instagram: [@buyingforblokesbybillie](https://www.instagram.com/buyingforblokesbybillie)

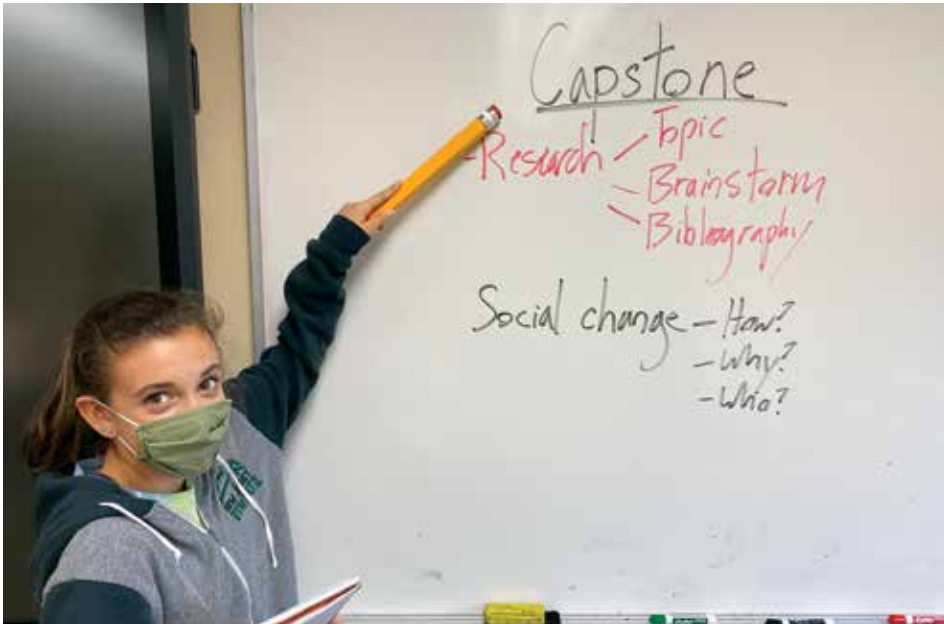


# New Middle School Capstone Research Program Adds to 21st Century Tool Kit

One of the best things about middle school kids is that though they still have the enthusiasm and curiosity of childhood, they are also in the process of developing the critical thinking and cognitive abilities to really study, research and document the world around them. It is in this sweet spot between wonder and scholarship that the middle school faculty and staff, headed by Dana M. Stern, Head of Lower and Middle Schools and Christine Lebovits, Assistant Head of Lower and Middle Schools, have developed the *Capstone Project* program for 5th through 8th graders.

As part of Head of School Jalaj Desai’s mandate to “teach kids how to think, not what to think,” the *Capstone Project* encourages middle school students to examine their interests and passions. Their goal? To find a meaningful topic or idea they would like to spend time understanding deeply over the course of the year. Students are guided in this discernment process by their *Capstone* coordinator, an advisor who meets with them to develop the scope and focus of their project. Their year-long project culminates with the submission of a research paper that challenges students with age-appropriate requirements for knowledge and presentation. Students are also encouraged to use their unique gifts and talents to imagine additional ways to share their findings. Art projects and installations, multimedia presentations, podcasts, capsule news stories, pop-ups and other methods for creative expression are applauded and supported.

Each grade in the middle school is given some minimal direction for their *Capstone Project*, based on the themes the grade will use to undergird their learning for



As part of Head of School Jalaj Desai’s mandate to “teach kids how to think, not what to think,” the *Capstone Project* encourages middle school students to examine their interests and passions.

the year. SRDS educators capitalize on the fifth graders’ enthusiasm for science by suggesting they pursue STEAM-related topics for their *Capstone*. 6th graders explore the Saddle River Day School Core Value, “Everyone Counts” and seventh graders explore their “Love of Learning.” The 8th graders research topics and provide solutions to environmental issues after learning about the UN Sustainability Goals. Students are given a sketchbook where they record their thoughts and observations. Use of these tools coordinates with instruction in the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and

is intended to prepare middle schoolers for the systems they will encounter when they step up to 9th grade.

Interdisciplinary projects like *Capstone*, a rigorous, constantly evolving curriculum, and the leadership and vision of Ms. Stern and Ms. Lebovits have driven a significant increase in enrollment in the Saddle River Day Middle School. The SRDS Middle School is well-known for being a tight-knit, supportive community with extensive and varied opportunities for students to stretch their wings, hone their skills and try new things. Parents in and around Saddle River, New Jersey have recognized the value of an SRDS education as a springboard for their children to achieve their academic and life goals. Not only are SRDS middle schoolers well prepared for high school and higher education, they are well prepared for life in a rapidly changing world as well. 🌱

# Igniting an Entrepreneurial Mindset that Reaches Beyond the Classroom

It has been said that entrepreneurs aren’t born, they are made. It might even be more accurate to say that they are self-made. But what is it that entrepreneurs need in order to be successful? They need a big idea that solves a problem, the knowledge and education to develop that idea, the courage to implement it, the financial literacy to be good stewards, and the resilience, creativity and critical thinking to be able to resolve issues, pivot when necessary and adjust their original idea to fit new market challenges. Not a skill set one would expect students in grades PreK through 4th to have mastered. But at Saddle River Day School, the seeds of the entrepreneurial mindset are being planted in our youngest students through project-based learning designed to start them on the path toward making themselves exactly who they want to be as students and, eventually, as adults.

At Saddle River Day School, individual talents are recognized, appreciated and encouraged. Students are given the latitude to contribute to projects in ways that support their talents and abilities. They are also challenged to tackle the pieces of projects that are less comfortable to them. Risk-taking is encouraged and resilience is



emphasized. This sounds great but how is it actually put into practice?

This year, in the Lower School, students will be involved in *Project-Based Fridays*. Some of these projects will actually be one day projects, some will extend for several weeks. These cross-curricular experiences will involve core subject teachers as well as Special Area teachers. So, for example, when the first grade decides to start a restaurant, their math lessons might involve learning about money and coins, their science teacher might work with them on measurements, they might design logos in art class and work together to develop a theme and a menu. Third graders might use a 50 States unit as an opportunity to become “travel agents” delving deep into the history and attractions of a state, examining the ratio of time to distance for various modes of travel, and creating a marketing brochure for the state. What we know is that every child will have something unique to contribute based on their skills, talents and interests. It’s our job to give them the tools to be able to

This year, in the Lower School, students will be involved in *Project-Based Fridays*. Some of these projects will actually be one day projects, some will extend for several weeks.

contribute confidently and effectively; tools that will serve them long after they finish each project.

This entrepreneurial mindset extends to the new lower school math program, Dimensions Math. Following the Singapore math model, the focus of the program is on discovery, conceptual problem solving and number sense. The program trusts students to work autonomously, but with close teacher supervision, to make connections, question for deeper understanding, explore, explain and learn to solve one problem multiple ways. The end goal is better fluency, accuracy, flexible thinking, and more efficient problem solving. This training will, of course, be applicable to many other aspects of the students’ learning and life.

At SRDS, we recognize that now, more than ever, everything is interconnected. The skills learned in one class can be applied in another. No subject can be taught in a vacuum. Even our youngest learners understand that when we work together, we work better. This appreciation of individual strengths and the commitment to support and develop them is an essential part of the entrepreneurial mindset and is at the heart of our mission to “educate each individual child so they can meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world with confidence and compassion.” 🌱



# SRDS Continues to Expand Innovative Student Experiences Despite Global Pandemic

Innovative experiences outside of the traditional classroom setting is one hallmark of an SRDS education where students often have the opportunity to “experience” concepts that are taught in the classroom in a practical, hands-on setting. These experiences help students develop an entrepreneurial mindset that enhances the overall learning process and prepares them for success in college and in the real world. Despite a global pandemic, SRDS expanded its offerings for students in grades PreK-12th during the 2020-2021 year.

## Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Continues to Grow

Aligning with the Saddle River Day School’s mission to encourage students to be “intellectual risk takers,” the *Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship* (CIE) continued to flourish under the direction of Anastasia Kelly in her new role as the Director of Teaching & Learning. This new role was created to collaborate with faculty to successfully set and meet student outcomes, to improve and modify curriculum and to stay up to date on new research-based teaching and instructional methods. Ms. Kelly works with the Admin team, department heads and faculty to help teachers become more effective educators

and to ensure that the excellent curriculum and standards at SRDS are continually met.

The mission of CIE is to enhance the academic environment with meaningful projects and programs that encourage students to examine issues in the community and the world, and to see these issues as opportunities for innovation, design and entrepreneurship. It allows for more project based, student-centered learning and cross-divisional collaboration in the classroom and enhances popular applied learning courses and programs already in place such as Engineering and Design, Graphic Design, Entrepreneurship, Robotics, Digital Citizenship and Fluency; it creates new programs and curriculum



that help prepare students to succeed and thrive in life. The space that formerly served as the library-research center in North Hall was modified to now serve as the physical location for the *Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship*. Students and faculty are able to utilize this space for numerous CIE activities and boot camps. Efforts will continue to expand CIE with the goal of integrating further innovation, design thinking and technology into the current curriculum and classroom.

## New Esports Club Introduced: SRDS Rebellion

The newly formed esports club called *SRDS Rebellion* launched its program with a Zoom session to chat with expert VR developer and VP of Creative at Harmonix Music Systems, Helen McWilliams. Other components of the new program will include talking to a story writer at Microsoft, a game designer for Xbox games and live space games, as well as a marketing exec from Epic games. Technology Director Laura Hollis is the ‘Coach’ for the esports team; David H ’24 and Alex H ’24 are student leaders. The team will be playing in the High School



Esports League (HSEL) during the 2021-2022 school year.

## Mini Courses Enhance 21st Century Skills

Mini Courses were again offered for Upper and Middle School students during the past academic year. The intent of these courses is to help students learn important skills such as creativity, critical thinking, research, collaboration, applied learning and public speaking. The courses were designed and taught by faculty, based on a student poll. The week-long courses offered a wide variety of topics for students including Black Poetry, Broadway Master Class, Cooking with Chef Mark, Exercise Science, French & Italian Pastries, Horror Movies and Rock Band just to name a few.

## SRDS Offers Spring Break and Summer Academies

In its inaugural year, the *Spring Break Academy* provided students in grades PreK-12 an opportunity to maximize their learning experience beyond the normal school day. Classes were designed as high interest, project-based, and for optimum student engagement. All classes were conducted in a hybrid format, so students were able to join in-person or remotely. A wide range of offerings were included such as Creative Kids arts and crafts, STEAM, Short Films, Sports Crimes, DIY Woodworking, Financial Literacy, and Story Mapping and the majority of the courses were closed quickly due to full registration. The *Summer Academy* ran from June 28-



July 30, also in a hybrid format, so students could join in-person or remotely. Classes included full-credit advancement and elective courses, trimester-credit electives, and non-credit enrichment electives.

## SRDS Students Score in the 90th+ Percentile in National Math Competition

SRDS participated in the virtual MATHCON competition last year. MATHCON is a national competition that gives students across the nation the opportunity to compete against other students to enhance and excel their mathematics interest and education as well as earn scholarship opportunities. Last year’s competition included 17,000+



students! SRDS had 14 students in grades 4-12 who qualified for the finals by scoring in the 90th percentile or above. CONGRATULATIONS to: Sandra P & Maanya D ’29, Rikki E & Darius A ’28, Mason L ’26, Laura Y, Moses X & Noah O ’25, Saraline X ’23, Livia D, Alex S, Ethan L, Jessica Y ’22, and Sara B ’21.



Students thoroughly enjoyed exploring these interesting topics as well as the short respite from their traditional academic work. Mini courses will be offered again for the 2021-2022 school year.



## TEDxYouth@SRDS Presents Virtual “TesTED” 2021

This year’s student-led event was again produced and delivered virtually. Faculty advisors Laura Hollis, Director of Technology and Verne Becker, Technology Integrator, along with faculty mentors MaryBeth McDonough, Robert Kettlewell, Joe McMenamin, Jennifer Maylath, Margaret-Rose Misey, Vanessa Robinson and Kathy Philipp continued to support and encourage students to move forward with the program, despite the challenges.



The program included three major sessions: 1. *Welcome to GenZ*; 2. *Make a Change*; 3. *Moving Forward* were emceed by three different SRDS students: Michael Bernstein ’22, Matthew Samonoglu ’21 and Nia Carrera ’24. Keynote speakers were three young men from outside the SRDS community. Ben Gleeman (Trinity School, NYC), Jonah Gleeman and Ryan Spiegel (Ethical Culture Fieldston School, Bronx, NY) inspired listeners as they spoke about how they founded the nonprofit organization called Doorstep Donations and have delivered over 60,000 meals to those in need. Numerous musical performers and poets also had the opportunity to showcase their talents. It was an inspiring event for everyone in attendance. 🌟



# At Saddle River Day School, the Learning Extends Beyond the Classroom



## SRDS Coaching Academy & Music Institute

If you're an athlete, or know someone who is, you know that most workouts start with a warm up and then proceed into a period of high intensity effort that gradually tapers into a cool down. Trainers will tell you it's important not to skip the cool down because that's the time when you lay the groundwork for your next workout by gradually easing your muscles out of work and into rest mode. So it began to seem counterintuitive at Saddle River Day School, that at the end of the school day, after we've asked our students to work at high levels of mental intensity all day, we would just send them home without offering them a "cool down." Starting in the Fall of 2021, SRDS filled that gap with the introduction of two new after school programs: the Coaching Academy and the Music Institute.



The brand new Saddle River Day School *Coaching Academy*, designed by Middle School Learning Specialist and Instructional Support teacher, Erica Cohen, seeks to establish a more robust and lively after school community at SRDS. While students who participate in athletics have always had the opportunity to hang around campus after school, the *Coaching Academy* will give more students the chance to

The brand new Saddle River Day School *Coaching Academy*, designed by Middle School Learning Specialist and Instructional Support teacher, Erica Cohen, seeks to establish a more robust and lively after school community at SRDS.

participate in directed activity on campus once their school day has ended.

Courses for the inaugural session of the *Coaching Academy* are mostly taught by SRDS faculty and are designed to appeal to a broad range of students. Choices for Middle School and Upper School students include but are not limited to: 3D Fabrication, Meteorology, LEGO Masters, STEAM Challenges, Chess, How the Stock Market Works, and Reading and Creating the Graphic Novel. Even our littlest scholars can get in on the action with Pre-K 3 – K students participating in Phonics or Nursery Rhymes and students in grades 1-3 enjoying STEAM adventures, art explorations and chess. Course sessions will run for 8 weeks and will be updated on a trimester basis. Saturday morning SAT prep classes are also available for Upper School students.

For students who could do with a little more individualized attention in a core subject area, the *Coaching Academy* will also offer 1:1 or 2:1 tutoring by our highly qualified SRDS faculty. Available subject areas include Math, English, Spanish and Computer Science. Tutoring sessions are for the full eight weeks which is great for kids who need consistent practice with a dedicated support system.

Also new in Fall 2021 was the Saddle River Day School *Music Institute*. Musicians who currently participate in the SRDS instrumental music program benefit from private lessons taught by accomplished musicians. Students will gain a greater proficiency through this consistent, intentional practice that will lead to leadership opportunities and possibly enhance their college admissions portfolio. Lessons are offered in 30, 45 and 60 minute blocks based on student preference, age and goals. A new Lower School strings ensemble is also offered once a week.

Saddle River Day School students are, by nature, curious and intellectually intrepid. Our new *Coaching Academy* and *Music Institute* aim to support and nurture these traits in our students even after their structured schooling has ended for the day. Keeping their brains occupied and their bodies engaged in a meaningful, but fun activity is exactly the kind of "cool down" SRDS students need.

## Saddle River Equestrian Program

At Saddle River Day School, our educators strive to always support the whole child. We work to find the balance between academics and student passions and encourage students to pursue their interests both through academic inquiry and also through their extracurricular activities. We seek to know and understand our students so we can work to create opportunities for them to shine. With rigorous academics, innovative programs that prepare students for their future, and a close-knit, caring community the Saddle River Day School experience is a one-of-a-kind education



At Saddle River Day School, our educators strive to always support the whole child. We work to find the balance between academics and student passions and encourage students to pursue their interests both through academic inquiry and also through their extracurricular activities.

for students from the littlest PreK-3s up to 12th graders. Now Saddle River Day School has added yet another program that gives students the unique opportunity to pursue a passion without taking time away from either their studies or their after school activities.

As of Fall 2021, Saddle River Day School, in partnership with Saddle River Equestrian, has launched the *Saddle River Riding Program*. Open to SRDS students in grades 1-12, this program is offered to anyone from novice riders to experienced

equestrians who are currently competing on the "A" Horse Show Circuit. Students have access to top notch trainers and horses/ponies, all at a well-respected facility located less than five miles from the SRDS campus. Lessons for new riders focus on building trust and confidence on and with the horse. Beginners are closely supervised and instructed in how to safely and comfortably master basic riding skills. More advanced students will focus on English equitation, hunt seat and jumper disciplines. Lessons are offered after school for those who are interested or during the school day at lunch for Middle and Upper School students as a fulfillment of the Phys-Ed requirements in those divisions. Multi-tasking at its best and a great way to free up time for an extra elective in students' schedules. At Saddle River Day School, we are committed to developing programs and experiences that supplement our first class education and provide value for our students and families. 🐾



# Academic Gateway Diplomas Program



The Upper School *Gateway Diplomas Program* successfully launched in the fall of 2021. Starting with the Class of 2023, students will have new opportunities for increased academic rigor, research and field work in areas of interest such as the Arts, Humanities, International Engagement, Medicine, Science, and Innovation & Entrepreneurship. Students must “apply” and be approved in order to participate in the program that will include summer coursework. Upon completion of their work, each student will make a final presentation in the spring of their Senior year during an expo style event.

Head of School Jalaj Desai views this as an opportunity to differentiate the SRDS academic program: “We want to increase academic rigor by offering more challenges to our students, as well as providing more applied learning opportunities that engage students with 21st-century real-life skills.” He and Director of College Counseling Karen Ferretti conceived of the diplomas program as a way to accomplish this vision while increasing the opportunities for SRDS students to stand out in the college application process. For Ms. Ferretti, the successful completion of a *Gateway Diploma* will provide our students with an advantage when applying to colleges:



Joe McMenamin and Robert Kettlewell

*“Now, more than ever, colleges are viewing their applicants through a holistic lens. Who a student is — character, leadership, clearly identified academic interests — all matter to colleges in a time when schools move further away from a strict GPA/standardized testing review. For a student that is doing this for the right reasons — increased rigor, broader experiences, more profound research opportunities, coordinated academics and extra-curricular — this program will give him/her a better story to tell college admissions offices.”*

The program is directed by Joe McMenamin and assisted by Robert Kettlewell. Joe is the Upper School History Department Chair and is currently working on his Masters in Global and Comparative History from Rutgers University. Robert holds a Masters from the Teachers’ College at Columbia University. Both have taught numerous AP and Honors History courses at SRDS and have been actively involved in student life including Model UN and the debate club. In addition, Robert serves as the Early College Counselor for students in grades 9 and 10.

For further information, please visit [www.saddleriverday.org/academics/gateway-diplomas-program](http://www.saddleriverday.org/academics/gateway-diplomas-program).

# New Pre-K 3’s Program Opens with a Full Class

Saddle River Day School announced the expansion of its Early Childhood Program (PK3, PK4 and K) with the addition of a Pre-K 3’s class for the 2021-2022 school year that has quickly become an integral part of the SRDS family. As the starting point for a child’s journey at Saddle River Day, this program is designed to meet the unique needs of young learners.

Our core values, *Everyone Counts*, *Love of Learning* and *Intellectual Risk-Taking* are the framework for the program, which focuses on fostering an early love of learning in a warm, nurturing environment. The developmentally appropriate curriculum takes into account the social, emotional and educational growth of each child; recognizing each as a unique individual, while encouraging collaborative learning. A low student to teacher ratio ensures each child receives the personal attention he or she needs to thrive. “It is my belief that positive early school experiences set the foundation for a lifelong love of learning,” says Chris Lebovits, Assistant Head of the Lower and Middle Schools, who also established the Pre-K 4 program in 2015. Our Early Childhood Program Director Michelle Lanks adds, “When a child comes to school each day, excited to learn and engage in new experiences, it unleashes endless individual potential.” Michelle has taught young learners for over 23 years and holds a BA in Elementary Education and Psychology from Rider University as well as a Masters in Literacy.

Students in Pre-K 3 and Pre-K 4 spend each day engaged in meaningful experiences that build foundational academic and social skills. Everything that happens in and out of the classroom—from games and guided play that encourage emergent language skills to



nature walks around the campus—is mindful of the specific needs of three and four year olds. As part of the SRDS community, students participate in special area classes such as science in

a state-of-the-art lab and art in an art studio designed specifically for our lower school learners, play on a playground “just their size” and explore a new language.

Kindergarten bridges the gap between early childhood and elementary school with just the right balance of academic rigor, differentiation and engagement to challenge each child at their individual level while promoting a lifelong love of learning!

To learn more, visit us on the web: [www.saddleriverday.org/earlychildhood](http://www.saddleriverday.org/earlychildhood).



Spotlight on Success


# Two SRDS Students Recognized for Academic Excellence by The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth

Congratulations to students Vivaan Bagga '31 and Maanya Desai '29 who were both honored as some of the “brightest students in the world by The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY).” Both students were honored for “exceptional performance on the SAT, ACT, or similar assessments taken as part of the CTY Talent Search. CTY uses above-grade-level testing to identify advanced students from around the world and provide a clear picture of their true academic abilities.”

Vivaan and Maanya were two of nearly 19,000 students from 84 countries who joined CTY in the 2020-21 Talent Search year. Less than 20% of CTY Talent Search participants qualified for CTY High Honors Awards. Honorees also qualified for CTY’s online and summer programs, through which bright students can form a community of engaging learners with other bright students from around the world.

“We are thrilled to celebrate these students,” said Virginia Roach, CTY’s executive director. “In a year that was anything but ordinary, their love of learning shined through, and we are excited to help cultivate their growth as scholars and citizens throughout their early formal education, college and beyond.”



There are more than 15,500 enrollments in CTY Online Program courses each year. A global leader in gifted education since 1979, CTY is focused on recognizing academic talent in exceptional K-12 students and supporting their growth with courses, services, and resources specifically designed to meet their needs. CTY draws students from 50 states and 84 countries worldwide. CTY provides more than \$4 million in financial aid to students. For more information about the CTY Talent Search, go to [cty.jhu.edu](https://cty.jhu.edu). 

**“We are thrilled to celebrate these students,” said Virginia Roach, CTY’s executive director. “In a year that was anything but ordinary, their love of learning shined through, and we are excited to help cultivate their growth as scholars and citizens throughout their early formal education, college and beyond.”**

Spotlight on Success

# Saurav Trivedi '25 Accepted to the Columbia University Academic Immersion Program

The Columbia University Academic Immersion program is a highly selective program open to academically exceptional high school students, grades 9–12. Through the Academic Year Immersion program, high schoolers prepare for the college experience through exploratory online coursework and community activities over ten weekends in the fall and spring. As a program participant, students learn from scholars and practitioners who are experts in their fields, build a community of lifelong connections, participate in world-class co-curricular activities and differentiate themselves with a Columbia Certification of Participation and personalized evaluation letter.

Saurav Trivedi '25 — a lifer at SRDS who began in Kindergarten — applied and was accepted to the highly competitive program for the year 2021-2022. In Saurav’s own words: “I decided to apply to this program because it was academically rigorous and gave me the opportunity to be educated in various subjects by Columbia professors and professionals in their fields. The program is really tailored for students who are above average academically, even though they did not require a specific GPA. The application process required me to write an essay in response to a prompt that was provided, and submit a letter of recommendation from one of my teachers. I am hoping to gain valuable insight into various fields from this program. For the fall session, I am taking a class in marketing and I will




continue to take other offerings through next summer. Grades are not assigned in the program; students who finish a course will get a participation certificate and an evaluation letter.”

Saurav also says, “I feel that Saddle River Day School has helped me grow as a person and achieve my goals, both academically and personally. In lower school, I knew that this was the right school for me because my teachers pushed me to try harder and strive to achieve more. SRDS is committed to providing a strong education and more to the students. Even during the pandemic, they made sure to remain open and provide the best possible experience for their students, despite so many challenges. Not only were

**“I enjoy going to school here because of the outstanding teachers, the friendly environment, and the various opportunities at the school. At Saddle River Day, students are proud of their school. There is a ‘friendship’ between all of the students regardless of the grade. As a lifer, I can confidently say that my school provides important life skills necessary for success in high school, college, and beyond.”**

we able to reopen safely, we were also able to enjoy a very memorable year together.

I enjoy going to school here because of the outstanding teachers, the friendly environment, and the various opportunities at the school. At Saddle River Day, students are proud of their school. There is a ‘friendship’ between all of the students regardless of the grade. As a lifer, I can confidently say that my school provides important life skills necessary for success in high school, college, and beyond. In the coming years, I will be excited to see how SRDS builds upon their friendly environment and tradition of excellence.” 



# SRDS Parents Guild Reinvents the Annual Gala

Each year, the Parents Guild hosts a gala style event that serves as a major fundraising effort for the school. The beautiful courtyard on the Saddle River Day School campus was the site for the Parents Guild *Vine & Basket* event held on April 24, 2021. Attendees enjoyed a wine tasting directed by sommelier Christian Galliano along with “baskets” of prepared snacks. It was so wonderful to be together in person again after the previous year when every school-hosted event was held via Zoom, due to restrictions as a result of the pandemic. Thanks to the generous donations of our families, the efforts of the SRDS Parents Guild Executive Council Sarah Felitti-Powell, Joni Pasenchuk, Amy Sneyers and Andrea Weinberger and the support of Special Events Director Chrissie Signore '85 and Development Director Lynn McCormack, the evening was a huge success! 🍷





# The Show Must Go On!

## Performing Arts Finds New Ways to Showcase Student Work

Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, the Saddle River Day Fine Arts Department worked tirelessly in order to showcase student work through its performing and visual arts.

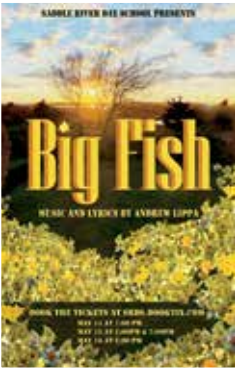


### The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

The fall production of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* was held outdoors for three shows on October 22, 23 and 24. During a year when so much was curtailed due to the restrictions of the pandemic, this unique presentation of the classic drama was such a refreshing surprise for its audience as the SRDS campus provided an incredible backdrop with special lighting that enhanced each scene. Thanks to Tyler Capa, Middle and Upper School Music & Theatre Director for supporting these students to continue the fine tradition of excellence in the arts.

### Big Fish Makes its Debut on the SRDS Stage

Typically performed in the month of March, last year's spring musical *Big Fish* held three performances on May 14, 15 and 16 indoors in the Performing Arts Center. The play focuses on the exaggerated storytelling of the main character Edward Bloom. When Edward becomes ill, his son William travels to be with him. William has a strained relationship with his father because he never really believes that the stories he tells are true. Even on his deathbed, Edward recounts fantastical anecdotes. When William, who is a journalist, starts to investigate his father's tales, he begins to understand the man and his penchant for storytelling. The musical version was superbly cast with principal roles performed by Avery Travers '21 (Edward Bloom) Gillen Malanga '22 (William), Liz Han '21 (Sandra) and Natalie Janowski '22 (the Witch). In addition, Charlotte Hibbert '22 did an outstanding job directing the stage crew for the production.



The SRDS Theatre Department presented *Failure: A Love Story* by Philip Dawkins, a magical, musical fable where, in the end, the power of love is far greater than any individual's successes or failures opening on November 12th.



Now in his fourth year, Director Tyler Capa is still working his magic in the theatre department at SRDS! He is a highly accomplished pianist, arranger and writer of music and continues to headline in his own shows at Feinstein's/54 Below with some of Broadway's finest young talent. In addition to his responsibilities



### A Spring Concert in the Courtyard

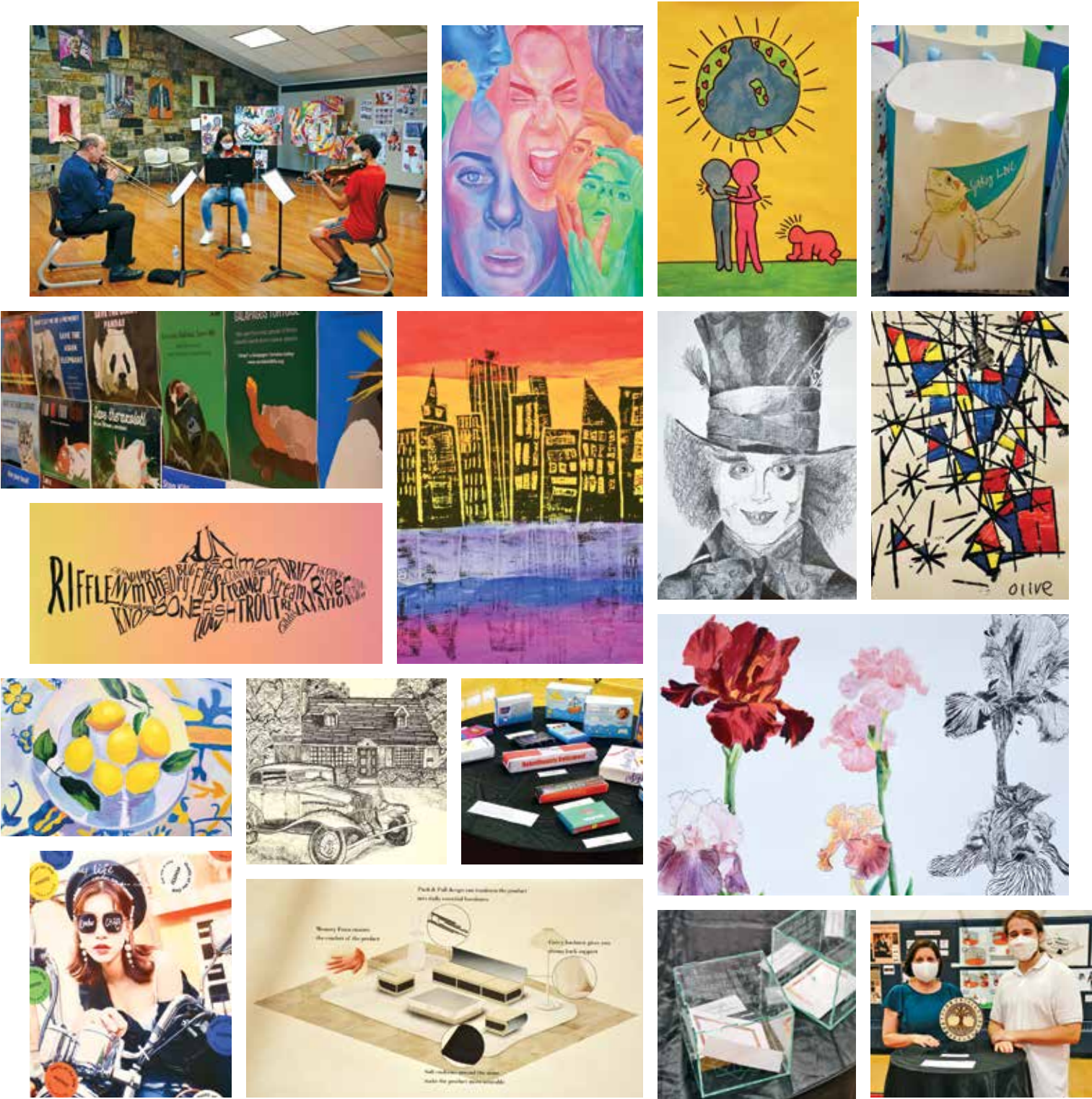
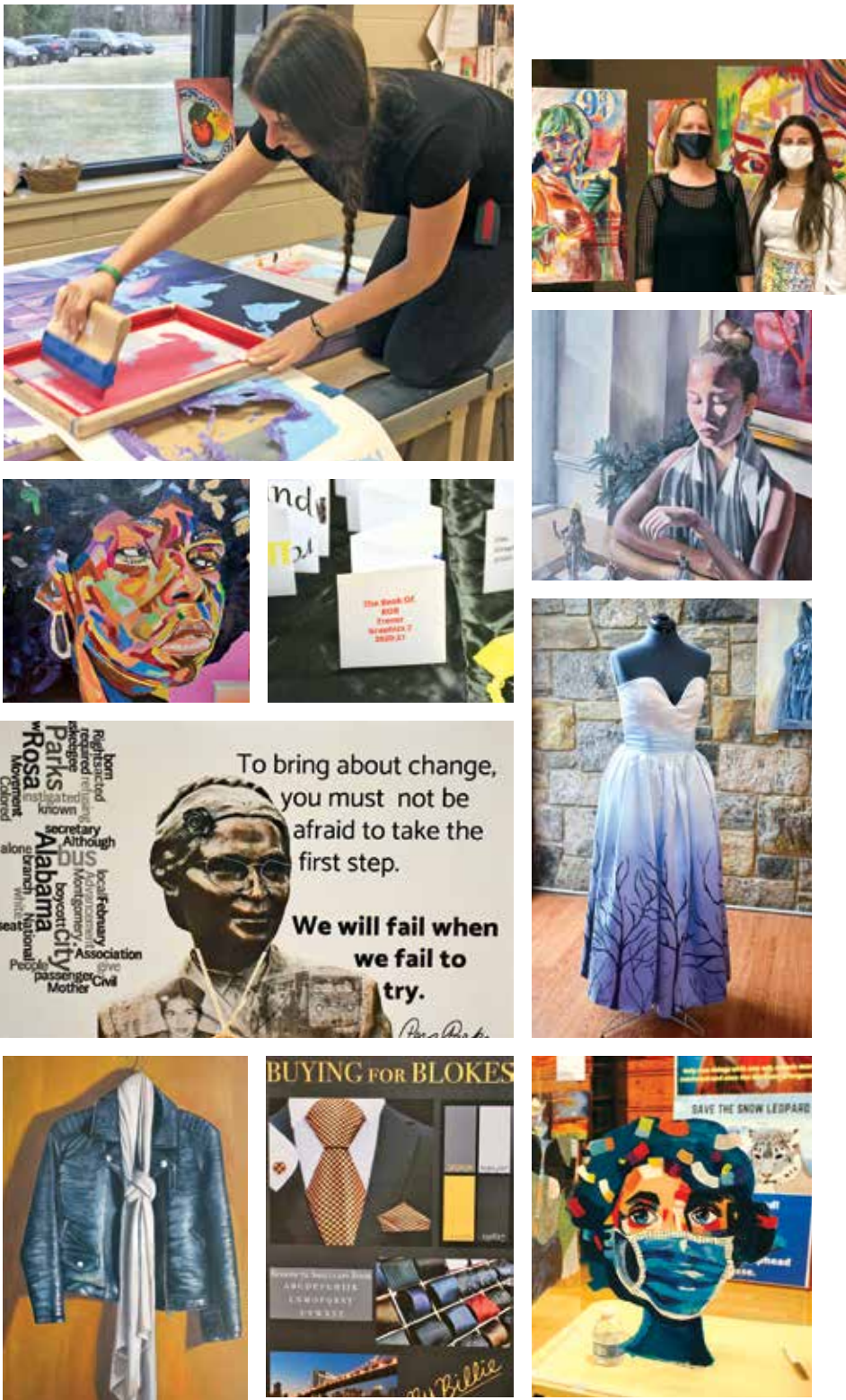


at SRDS, Tyler is a thriving collaborative music content creator on social media and vocal coach to many of Broadway's finest. On Monday, September 20th, Tyler invited some of these talented artists back to the SRDS campus for a delightful evening of Broadway performances for an outdoor concert held in the courtyard. 🎭



# The Annual SRDS Art Show Returns to Campus

The Annual Art Show returned to campus in the spring of 2021 for the SRDS community to enjoy the culmination of an entire year's work for students in PreK-12. The visual arts at SRDS provide a means to gain personal satisfaction through individual accomplishment in the creation of images and forms. The program is solidly based on a respect and understanding of where students are creatively, what they require from their work, and the means to move them from one developmental stage to another as they become more expressive, inventive, and perceptive. Through creative experiences, students become familiar with facets of artistic thinking such as the ability to formulate problems and create multiple solutions, the ability to pursue a project over time, the willingness to solve problems inventively, the ability to take risks, and finally to reflect critically on one's own work providing valuable skills that function beyond the studio into other areas of the curriculum. The program has gained recognition for its innovation and cutting edge technology as it continues to challenge students to not only develop their abilities, but to learn 'real world' skills as they must navigate in a highly technological and visual world. 🌐





# REBEL Student-Athletes Compete with Heart During Pandemic

Whenever tragedy strikes, there’s always a question that arises about whether sports should go on. For a short time, sports are insignificant and inconsequential. But before long, sports return and we are all happy to have the distraction. In a world where there’s always a lot to worry about, sports are a wonderful way to forget everything else for a few hours. Sports can remind us of how we are part of a bigger community, and that community becomes even more important when everyone is shaken from their foundations. Sports are a common language for so many of us. It’s something that is consistent and comforting.

Understanding the importance of maintaining an athletic program for our students was a driving factor for the SRDS Administration during the 2020-2021 academic year. While many high school and collegiate programs made the decision to shut down their athletics for the year, SRDS continued to allow its teams to compete as safely as possible. Athletic Director Danny Brown worked diligently to ensure that games went on whenever possible. “Our student-athletes, coaches and staff showed



tremendous heart and worked extremely hard to compete safely and successfully in a uniquely challenging environment,” he says. “I’m very proud of these achievements.” The fall season allowed the outdoor sports to continue, including boys and girls varsity soccer, cross-country and girls tennis. Scheduling of games was, in essence, a ‘moving target’ with other schools forfeiting games due to players being absent. Athletics became about more than just competing at a high level or attaining the best win-loss record; it was about being able to work together toward a common goal and to find some normalcy in a time of great uncertainty.



Basketball season began in December and the decision was made to allow both the boys and girls varsity teams to compete with no post-season play. All players were required to learn remotely during the season so as not to impact the life of the school; no fans were allowed in the gyms. The girls went 10-3 on the season, losing only to the top-ranked teams in the state including St. John Vianney. The boys also had a successful season, posting a 13-2 record overall with close losses to Hackensack and Paterson Kennedy. In the spring, boys tennis and girls lacrosse competed successfully against other schools



including post-season play.

At Saddle River Day School, we believe athletics are an integral part of the SRDS experience.

We strive to provide an environment that promotes achievement, fair play, integrity, sportsmanship, and overall health and fitness. We believe the values taught through participation in athletics are an extension of those taught in the classroom at SRDS. Developing a strong work ethic, working as a member of a team, respect for leadership and peers, self-discipline, commitment, loyalty, perseverance, communication, accountability, conflict-resolution, and pride in accomplishments are all life skills that a strong athletic program enhances. Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, our students displayed incredible leadership and fortitude, on and off the field; we couldn’t be more proud!

GO REBELS! 🐾



# The Class of 2021 Signs Four to Continue at the Collegiate Level

Congratulations to these four students from the Class of 2021 who will continue to play at the collegiate level:



**Ryan Cassels**  
basketball at Alvernia University



**Gabe Diaz**  
baseball at DeSales University



**Sean O’Neill**  
basketball at Stevens Institute of Technology



**Katherine Meeks**  
lacrosse at Quinnipiac

During Katherine’s time at SRDS she helped lead the women’s lacrosse team to a State Sectional Championship in her freshman year. She was honored with First Team All-Conference and All-County selections, as well as First Team All-North Jersey, Third Team All-Group One and Under Armour 150 selections. She tallied 155 goals, 34 assists, 145 ground balls, 123 draw controls, and 34 caused turnovers in high school. In addition, she earned the Honors Biology award and Jeremy Glick Award and made Dean’s List in every quarter. Katherine is majoring in health science studies in college.



# Alumni Events

## Homecoming & Fall Festival on Campus



### Reunion at Café Panache

Saddle River Day celebrated in-person at the sold-out Alumni Reunion held at Café Panache in Ramsey, NJ on Sunday, October 10th. Alumni, their families and friends, along with SRDS faculty and staff gathered to celebrate six alumni and their remarkable accomplishments since leaving the halls of SRDS. Robert Iommazzo '93 was honored as our Distinguished Alumnus; Shay Frey '10, Tor Lundvall '87 and Danielle Pinnock-Wallace '06 were recognized for their contributions to the arts and Brian Mulligan '15 and Sophia Raia '15 were inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame. We were honored to have so many past faculty join us this year as well including Vera Amins, Joan Demarest, Dorothy Fayerweather, Lucille Mazarin and Evan Strager. It was wonderful to be together in person and to experience the connectedness and warmth that all in attendance shared as a part of this special community.

### SRDS Alumni Council

Jonathan R. Kuhlman '84 — President  
Amy Fisher '86 — Vice President  
Billie Singer '05 — Secretary  
Kimberly Moussavian '87 — Treasurer  
Chrissie Signore '85 —  
Director, Alumni & Special Events  
Gretchen Lee Kuhlman —  
Director of Communications

Lynn McCormack —  
Director of Development  
Kathy Philipp — Faculty Representative  
Penny Makris Bullen '84 —  
Past Parent Coordinator  
John Azarian '78 — President Emeritus

### Council Members

Mark Buchakjian '15  
Gaby Groh '12  
David Leffler '04  
Ryan Neumann '16  
Grace Pak '05  
Glenn Popowitz '86  
Alex Rathod '88  
Michael Rosen '82  
Jill Rosker '11  
Anahita Sethi '16



### REBELS in the Real World

This wonderful alumni networking event held on March 23rd was hosted by the Alumni Council; Gabrielle Groh '12 emceed the event. The virtual presentation featured three accomplished SRDS alumni: Allen Popowitz '88, Robert Iommazzo '93 and Liza Abrams Wisk '06 shared a wealth of knowledge about their journeys to highly successful and rewarding careers since leaving SRDS. Keynote speaker Illana Raia, past SRDS parent and entrepreneur recently named one of the first 250 on the "Forbes Next 1000 List" kicked off the presentation by sharing insights from her own illustrious career beginning as a corporate attorney to thriving entrepreneur, guest lecturer and mentor. We look forward to hosting future successful events with the goal of connecting our SRDS Alumni. 🌐



Dear Friends,



On behalf of the SRDS Board of Trustees, it is my privilege to report that the Saddle River Day School Community is enjoying another successful year thanks to the efforts of so many wonderful people who are committed to working together to fulfill the mission of the school. While the world and its leaders seem to be moving from one crisis to another, exhibiting volatility, uncertainty and an absence of clarity on mission and values, Saddle River Day School is moving steadily forward aligned with a common purpose and intent.

The school year began with a notable increase in enrollment, boasting new programs, initiatives and offerings for students and families alike. The

**“Jalaj and his team are well aligned with the Board of Trustees, and we are working together to continue strengthening the school for today while taking steps to chart a course for success long into the future.”**

administrative team and the faculty partnered to improve the school in the post-pandemic period rather than become victims of the same. The passion and commitment of these people is truly remarkable, and continues to be a differentiator when one compares SRDS to other schools, both public and private, in the region.

Jalaj and his team are well aligned with the Board of Trustees, and we are working

together to continue strengthening the school for today while taking steps to chart a course for success long into the future. We ask for your continued generosity with the SRDS Fund; this is the primary method of funding the programs that enhance the educational and social experience for each student. Your meaningful gifts are appreciated and critical to our continued success.

Thank you again for your active participation and involvement in the school and for your generosity with the SRDS Fund. Together we are shaping the future of Saddle River Day School, as we build and strengthen this special community to the benefit of every student enrolled.

John Haller  
*President, Board of Trustees*

SRDS Annual Giving 2020-2021

This year’s report reflects restricted and unrestricted gifts made to SRDS between 7/1/20 and 6/30/21. The Office of Development has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this report. If we have made an error or omission please notify us at 201.327.4050, x1124 so that we can ammend our records.

Legacy Club (\$50k+)

- The Copper Beech Foundation, Inc.
- The Coyne Family
- F & P DeRosa Memorial Fund
- The Neuenhaus Family

Founders’ Society (\$25k+)

- The Botta Family
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Trustees’ Society (\$10K+)

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- The Haller Family
- The Han Family
- The Hekemian Family
- The Regular Family
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- The Zouhar Family

President’s Society (\$5K+)

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- The Cook Family
- The Fixler Family
- The Greenbaum and Ulrey Family

Headmaster’s Society (\$2,500+)

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- The Lieberman Family
- The Ligresti Family
- The Lu Family
- The Mansfield Family
- The Patel Family
- The Piran Family



**“The teachers are fantastic, and the campus is beautiful, serene, peaceful, warm, inviting, and welcoming.”**

— KIM LAWRIE P’31 & ‘33







“There’s a great sense of community. Kids are being formed into great citizens and great human beings.”

— MICHELLE LIEBERMAN P’28

The Popowitz Family  
The Ruffino Family  
The Silbergeld Family  
The Slomin Family  
The Trivedi Family  
The Tucker and Waldman Family  
Ms. Zhen Zhu

**Patron’s Club (\$500+)**

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Ms. Karen Ferretti



“The School’s community feels like a family. There’s a very warm feeling, and focus is given to nurturing students to become responsible, well-rounded individuals who support one another.”

— SHARON SCHMETTERER P’27

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**“The SRDS Fund supports all areas of an SRDS education and allows us to provide students with the best possible resources and opportunities to learn, grow and achieve. The finest schools in the world have a strong culture of giving and we are no different. We need to keep the momentum going, and we need your support to do so.”**

**– JALAJ DESAI, HEAD OF SCHOOL**

**Make your gift to the SRDS Fund today!**

To make a donation, please visit [www.saddleriverday.org/giving](http://www.saddleriverday.org/giving), or call the Development Office at 201.327.4050, x1124.



**The Legacy of Diane Alford, Co-Founder Saddle River Day School**

**“What is a life well lived? What is the story behind a person’s outward accomplishments that makes us pay attention? How do you measure those who have lived beautifully? Is it their travels or perhaps their bank account? What has touched you most deeply through the life of someone you’ve known or loved? Whatever it is, those who live well offer us the opportunity to cherish the gift of life, to pay it forward so that others might thrive instead of settling for what’s comfortable, familiar and popular.”**

**– DR. CARA BARKER, AUTHOR**



Diane Alford, co-founder of Saddle River Day School and wife of Mr. John C. Alford (deceased January 23, 2016) lived such a life. On Saturday, April 10, 2021 Mrs. Alford passed away at age 96. She died peacefully surrounded by family and friends. She is survived by her four children, Dana ‘67, Brandon ‘70, Valerie ‘74 and Darcy ‘76 all of whom graduated from the school.

Even though they lived on the same street in Hackensack, NJ at one time, John and Diane did not formally meet each other until after World War II. They were wed on June 19, 1948 and remained happily married for sixty-eight years until John passed away in January, 2016. “Throughout nearly seven decades, one can count fewer than thirty occasions in which they spent a day apart,” their youngest daughter Darcy recalls. “They remained very healthy, happy and in love throughout their entire marriage.” Although education was their primary passion, the Alford’s were also avid travelers and when asked what their favorite trip was, John would often declare “the next one” to be the best.

In 1957, the couple purchased the Denison estate, which consisted of twenty acres of property in Saddle River, NJ and together with Douglas S. Ogilvie established the Saddle River Country Day School (SRCDS). On June 24, 1957, the school was officially founded, thereby completing their vision to establish a quality independent school in the area. John and Diane served on the Board of Trustees from 1957-1981 and provided the stability and framework for the school to grow and thrive. Today, SRDS enrolls a record 380 students in grades Pre K3 –12 while maintaining a 7:1 student-to-faculty ratio; 85% of faculty hold advanced degrees. The school offers 20 AP and college level courses as well as 80+ student-led clubs, athletics and arts options. In addition, students benefit from a 1:1 college advising program that begins in grade 9. Although they had not been directly involved with the school for many years, the fact that it continued to advance forward was of great importance to them. In Diane’s words, “Never in John’s and my wildest dreams did we envision that the school would become what it is today.” Their vision continues through the ongoing work at Saddle River Day School as we look to the future and strive to continue their legacy. 🌱





SADDLE RIVER DAY SCHOOL

147 Chestnut Ridge Road

Saddle River, NJ 07458

201-327-4050

[www.saddleriverday.org](http://www.saddleriverday.org)