

Taft

BULLETIN



Honoring
the MacMullens

SPRING 2023

6

Welcoming
Peter Becker '95

Taft's sixth head of school



8

Alumni Spotlight

Four alums doing important work
in their communities and beyond.



46

The MacMullen Era

Tributes to Willy '78 and
Pam MacMullen, P'14,'16



- OTHER DEPARTMENTS**
- 3 On Main Hall
 - 5 Community Corner
 - 16 Around the Pond
 - 36 Sports
 - 70 Class Notes
 - 94 In Print
 - 114 Milestones
 - 116 Looking Back



The Multicultural Arts Celebration, one of the events held during Martin Luther King Jr. Day, recognized culture, heritage, and community through creative student performances.

SPRING 2023
Volume 93, Number 1

EDITOR
Linda Hedman Beyus

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Kaitlin Thomas Orfitelli

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Debra Meyers

PHOTOGRAPHY
Robert Falcetti

COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATE/CLASS NOTES
Seamus F. Conway

DESIGN
Good Design, LLC | gooddesignusa.com

SEND ALUMNI NEWS TO
taftbulletin@taftschool.org
or write Taft Bulletin
110 Woodbury Road
Watertown, CT 06795-2100

CLASS NOTES DEADLINES
Fall–May 1
Winter–September 1
Spring–December 1

860-945-7777
TAFTALUMNI.COM

The *Taft Bulletin* (ISSN 0148-0855) is published three times a year by The Taft School, 110 Woodbury Road, Watertown, CT 06795-2100, and is distributed free of charge to alumni, parents, grandparents, and friends of the school. All rights reserved.



ON THE COVER
Head of School Willy MacMullen '78 and Pam MacMullen, P'14,'16 as they retire from Taft after serving for a combined 68 years. ROBERT FALCETTI

TAFT ONLINE

	Find a friend or past <i>Bulletin</i> : taftalumni.com
	Visit us on your phone: taftschool.org
	What happened at today's game? taftsports.com
	Shop online: taftstore.com
	facebook.com/thetaftschool
	twitter.com/taftschool
	instagram.com/taftschool
	linkedin.com/school/the-taft-school
	vimeo.com/taftschool

On MAIN HALL

A WORD FROM HEAD
OF SCHOOL WILLY
MACMULLEN '78



A Reflection On Main Hall

FOR MANY YEARS IN THIS MAGAZINE, I HAVE WRITTEN COLUMNS ENTITLED “ON MAIN HALL.” PERHAPS IT’S TIME I WRITE ABOUT THE MAIN HALL ITSELF. IT’S A REALLY IMPORTANT PART OF CAMPUS WITH A UNIQUE PLACE IN OUR SCHOOL, SO YOU NEED METAPHOR TO CAPTURE ALL IT IS. I FIND I WANT TO WRITE A BIT LIKE WALT WHITMAN IN HIS POEM “SONG OF MYSELF” FROM *LEAVES OF GRASS*. YOU REMEMBER: THAT SPRAWLING, CELEBRATORY, MASSIVE POEM MARKED, AMONG MANY THINGS, BY SENSUAL DESCRIPTION, CATALOGUING OF DAILY SCENES, AND CELEBRATION OF THE COMMON MAN. IT’S A SPACE WE ALL KNOW, AND IT’S MANY THINGS.

What is the Main Hall?

It is the Main Street winding through our brick village, linking Bingham and the dining hall, like the small town restaurant and the church.

It is the sacred text of the school, in the wall plaques, the scroll on which is written core values of service, citizenship, scholarship, community, and character.

It is the river that streams through campus, slowing in the wide, deep places and sweeping around corners, where backpacks are cast up like detritus.

It is the bloodstream of Taft, the beating life of the community, the source of nourishment, health, and life.

It is the collision-rich highway, where we travel, bump, and connect.

It is the soundtrack of the school: the ringing of bells, the tread of feet, the shouts of greeting, the peal of laughter.

It is the receiving line that never ends: introductions, handshakes, high-fives, hugs, goodbyes.

It is the gallery of the institution, art hanging on the walls, the continual acts of expression, creativity, and vision.

It’s the campus bulletin board for a thousand announcements: notices, sign-ups, causes, reminders, appeals, activities.

It is the jet stream of Taft, the atmospheric pressure rising and lowering with the changing seasons: highs and lows.

I have lost track of the different offices I have had on the Main Hall over the years. I know that I sit where headmasters Lance Odden, John Esty, Paul Cruikshank, and Horace Taft sat, and there’s weight and obligation and honor and stress and joy that accompanies that fact. In other offices have sat and now sit some of the most remarkable educators I have ever known: men and women who humble and inspire me with their intellect, passion, and care. At the top of the list is my wife, Pam, who works out of a tiny office around the corner in the Arts and Humanities building, perhaps considered just “off” the Main Hall. For years as a teacher, advisor, and aerobics instructor, she has met with students and colleagues in a space so small her knees almost bump against her guest. A lot of days I walk up there to check in or plan some family logistics. Usually there’s a student with her, reviewing the difference between an independent and dependent clause, or talking about Pip and the convict in *Great Expectations*, or thanking her after a talk about being a teenager at Taft and far from home.

Most mornings I stand just inside the main entrance, near the “T,” where the switchboard and PO boxes used to be, before Amazon deliveries meant we needed a full mailroom in the basement. Those few square feet are the gravitational center of the school: the Harley Roberts Room for admissions right there, the dean of students’ offices and duty office across, and all the other offices within sight. Pretty much every student will walk by at some point, for first period class or

“Most mornings I stand just inside the main entrance, near the ‘T,’ where the switchboard and PO boxes used to be....Those few square feet are the gravitational center of the school.”

on route to Bingham or heading to lunch. I stand there: welcome a visiting family, give morning greetings, ask a student to get off their phone, congratulate a pair of roommates on yesterday’s game, inquire into the health of the grandmother, thank a student for picking up a piece of trash.

The catalogue of scenes of the Main Hall reads long and poetic, like lines from Whitman’s “Song of Myself.” You know: “I celebrate...”

...the crush of students crowding to Bingham, funneling through Lincoln Lobby, dropping packs on the floor.

...the humorous scolding of the lower mid roller-skating to evening study hall: “Really? Roller-skating on the Main Hall?!”

...the crowd of teachers and students, after sit-down dinner: loosening of ties, rubbing elbows and bumping shoulders, slowly scattering into the night, the dorms, the Jig.

...a mini-golf course for a Saturday night activity: fake greens with little flags, kids in zany outfits, putting their way to the 18th hole in Lincoln Lobby.

...a brief loud, barking dogfight between one teacher’s golden retriever, the black Lab of another.

...Ferdie Wandelt ’66 peering over his glasses, standing in the doorway, advice: “It’s nice to be important. It’s more important to be nice.”

... the bell ringing at 8:10 a.m., a boy, hair wet from the shower, books spilling from under his arm, sprinting to class: “Mr. Mac, I’ll make it!”

...the admissions visit, the tour guide greeted by friends with the time-honored school jest: “Happy Birthday!”

...two students holding hands, skipping to the Saturday dance, music coming out of the dining hall.

...a senior running down the hall screaming, “I’m in!,” her college acceptance waved aloft.

...a lower mid quietly crying, homesick, an advisor nearby: listening, present.

...a student protest and silent gathering in the wake of the killing of an unarmed Black man.

...a young teaching couple, their toddler taking her first wobbling steps, holding father’s pinky, mother’s forefinger.

...my car, filled with balloons, parked in the lobby: Senior Prank!

...knots of students and teachers, hugging and sobbing, on the morning of 9/11.

...an admissions tour, the student guide saying: “This is where everything happens.”

I think of the names I’ve known on the Main Hall: Lance Odden, Al Reiff Sr., Linda Saarnijoki, Rusty Davis, Graceann Hess, Warren Henderson, Peter Holroyd, Mary Harrington, Lu Stone, Don Oscarson, Ferdie ’66 and Joanna Wandelt, Mike and Penny Townsend...That’s just me, and how many more I could list! You have your own names, too.

We should praise the famous men and women, but also the hundreds who have no memorial, who first stepped on the Main Hall in 1913 in the “New Building,” and then walked through every decade, up to today.

On Alumni Day, you walk in, through the wood door cut to meet the worn stone, maybe with a classmate or child or spouse, look down the polished red tiled floor, the morning sun landing through the windows, and the sights, the sounds, the smells make you think, “Nothing has changed. I’m back.”

William R. MacMullen

William R. MacMullen ’78



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Taft



—THOMAS ALLEN, Dean of Community, Justice, and Belonging

“Not feeling like you have an obligation to act or be someone you’re not to ‘fit in’ or feel comfortable around a group. Having the ability to be yourself and not worry if others will not like you, or shame you for your true personality.” This is one of many responses I received when I asked students what belonging at Taft means to them.

In the book *Belonging: The Science of Creating Connection and Bridging Divides*, the author cites the definition of belonging as “the feeling that we’re part of a larger group that values, respects, and cares for us—and to which we feel we have something to contribute.” And while we are working continually to ensure all who are members of our community feel that they belong, we do have moments where we fall short.

So how do we address these feelings of lack of belonging? What do we do as a school community? Is there something each individual member of our community can do? These are all very important and meaningful questions, things that must be addressed to truly ensure all who are part of Taft feel that **they are Taft**.

One of the ways we are intentionally working to cultivate a shared sense of belonging is happening in the classroom. Faculty are being asked to choose an identifier from our monthly celebrations calendar and spend a class period discussing the contributions of that group. Students are constantly being challenged to think about allyship in various ways, with the hopes of helping students develop an empathy bank so that they can draw upon that when the difficult moments and conversations come.

Students were given copies of our DEI statement at a recent school morning meeting led by student leaders and me. In this conversation, we challenged the community to be a 20%er: We believe

that in order to effectively change the community to be empathetic, caring and increase a shared sense of belonging, it takes a minimum of 20% of us. However, you do not need to be on campus to be a 20%er. You can be a 20%er from right where you are! Call, email, get involved. Support our students. Let them know they belong and you are happy they are a Taftie! Taft is a great place because of the people. Belonging at Taft is no longer reserved for a special group, but rather it is afforded to all of us who are students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents and siblings. Everyone who has someone at Taft is part of the community, therefore you belong. We Belong. **WE ARE TAFT.**

“Everyone who has someone at Taft is part of the community, therefore you belong. We Belong. **WE ARE TAFT.**”

ILLUSTRATION BY FRANZI/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Welcoming Peter Becker '95 as Taft's Sixth Head of School

AFTER A SIX-MONTH SEARCH involving hundreds of candidates from around the world, Taft announced in November that Peter Becker '95 will serve as the next head of school. Becker will begin his tenure on July 1, succeeding Willy MacMullen '78, P'14,'16, who will retire at the end of June after a remarkable 22 years as Taft's head of school.

An educator who has devoted much of his life to independent schools, Becker has served as head of The Frederick Gunn School since 2012. He has a deep understanding of Taft and is committed to creating an educational community where everyone belongs and thrives.

"As a Taft graduate, Peter knows, loves, and values our mission and culture: its insistence on excellence, passion for community



Peter Becker '95, Taft's new Head of School.



Becker with his wife, Amy Julia (Truesdell) '94, and their children, William, Marilee, and Penny.

and belonging, commitment to improvement and to service, and pride in school spirit," wrote Kate Genung Taylor '94 and Sarkis D. Izmirlian II '90, P'20,'22,'24, who served as co-chairs of the Head of School Search Committee. "[Peter's] career has always been about students. As a teacher, coach, advisor, dorm head, department chair, and head of school, he has worked with empathy and caring to help students feel valued so they can grow and succeed. As a head, he has shown a tremendous ability to administer and lead, inspiring others with a strategic vision and working collaboratively to improve and transform the school."

"I am deeply honored and excited to serve as Taft's next head of school," Becker said. "As a student, Taft was truly transformative for me.... Taft has many strengths—chief among them, clarity of

mission; a motivated, curious, and spirited student body; an exceptional, hardworking faculty and staff devoted to student growth; and a fiercely loyal, connected alumni community that understands the ethos of Taft and the value of its mission and motto. Together, in partnership, we will build upon what is already a remarkable school."

Grant Porter '69, P'00, chair of the Board of Trustees, said that Becker "will simultaneously affirm the work of Willy MacMullen and the faculty over the past 22 years and also lead Taft in novel ways and to new places."

"I speak for the entire Board of Trustees in welcoming Peter and Amy Julia (Truesdell) '94, and their three children, Penny, William, and Marilee, to Taft," Porter continued. "This is a proud and exciting day for Taft."

Head of School MacMullen shared, "This is a great moment for Taft. I have followed Peter's career with interest and pride. Indeed, I tried unsuccessfully to hire him years ago before he went on to get his master's degree! Peter knows and loves Taft, he is an empathic, caring, and principled person, he will be visible and present in the

community, he is a brilliant and innovative leader, and he will serve Taft with that rare combination of youthful energy and seasoned school head. I have the utmost respect for Peter, and I am so excited for Taft and for Peter and Amy Julia, who is incredibly accomplished and impressive in her own right. Taft is in great hands."

In early December, Becker visited Taft to meet members of the community and spoke in Bingham Auditorium. "Leading this great school is humbling and daunting, and it is the opportunity of a lifetime," Becker said.

In an uplifting and enlightening address, Becker spoke of his experiences as a Taft student and of the changes he has seen in the school community since that time. Changes, he said, that have made Taft a place where a sense of belonging and connection have helped strengthen and define what Taft is as a school, and we are as a community.

"A great school constantly pursues

excellence," Becker noted. "Excellence requires the habit of defining our goals—our aspirations, reflecting on how well we're doing in our pursuit of those goals, and then committing to improvement."

He and his family are committed, he said, to continuing the important work of growth and meaningful change, and doing so in the spirit of "beloved community" as articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"At the most basic level," said Becker, "this work happens not out of good intentions alone. My motivation in this work is, at its core, about love: love of neighbor, love of self, love of community—of the ecosystem that we create together every year at boarding schools." ■

Watch Becker's full address preceded by remarks from Head of School Willy MacMullen '78, Search Committee Co-Head Kate Genung Taylor '94, and Board Chair Grant Porter '69 at www.taftschoool.org/about/head-of-school-search.

"Together, in partnership, we will build upon what is already a remarkable school."



Becker during a visit to Taft in December, meeting members of the school community at a reception in the Faculty Room.

Alumni SPOTLIGHT



Andrew Pearson '91, chief medical officer of the nonprofit The Jewish Board in New York, at Marsha's House, a shelter for LGBTQ youth named in honor of Marsha Johnson, a transgender activist who established the first safe haven for gay and trans kids who were homeless.

Addressing Societal Trap Doors

"THE LAST PLACE I EVER THOUGHT I would end up after graduating college," Andrew Pearson '91 says, "is medical school."

We both chuckle while he says it, because of how absurd it sounds. As the chief medical officer of the nonprofit The Jewish Board, Pearson now holds one of the most influential and prestigious medical positions in New York City, where he has become a leading voice on hot-button

issues like adult and child mental health, homelessness, addiction, and trauma.

But there, right on the bottom on his LinkedIn page, is listed his major at Dartmouth: creative writing. "It's worse," Pearson laughs. "My thesis was a book of poetry."

He had been a devoted English student at Taft, which makes sense considering he was an advisee of Willy

MacMullen '78. After Dartmouth, he applied for a single job out of school: teaching poetry to kids in San Francisco.

Medical school never crossed his mind, even after he left the West Coast and returned to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, unsure of what to do. He fiddled around with some odd jobs—woodworking, funeral services—and started reconnecting with old classmates, a few of whom were just

beginning clinical work in medical school.

Though uninterested in the "science" of medicine, he began to contemplate the "art" and elegance of a field like psychiatry, which seemed to rely more on his ability to listen as well as the possession of emotional empathy.

"Psychiatrists got to spend the most time with patients," Pearson says. "I really wanted to talk to people and hear people's stories and listen to them and try to help them feel better internally."

He especially liked doing volunteer work with children, and he started to see how his poetry background might actually help some young patients.

"There are a lot of parallels between the poetic impulse and psychiatry," Pearson says. "A lot of times, you're working with similes and metaphors. Kids often enact their inner lives through their toys or through their play."

He attended medical school at Temple University, then enrolled in a program

at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, where he could train in medical pediatrics as well as child and adult psychiatry simultaneously. While at Temple, he had worked at Covenant House, a charity serving homeless and at-risk kids.

"I don't want to sugarcoat it," Pearson says. "It is brutal work. But I've met so many truly amazing young people who are miraculous, talented, sharp, funny, generous, amazing people. They have just been dealt an incredibly [unlucky] hand in life."

After years of clinical work, Pearson's position at The Jewish Board now gives him the opportunity to address broader, societal trap doors that can send kids and adults spiraling down darker paths, like those that he calls the "pipeline from foster care to homelessness."

"Your heart can't break for the 5-year-old who is molested, then revile the 45-year-old passed out drunk or high on Columbus Avenue at 1 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon,"



Pearson says, "because they are [effectively] the same person. That statement isn't the speculation of a hemorrhaging-heart child psychiatrist; it's an observation buttressed by mountains of data."

"Maybe if you can do something further upstream to make changes, a kid gets help earlier," Pearson adds.

On the day I spoke with him late last fall, New York City Mayor Eric Adams had just directed the city's police and emergency medical workers to hospitalize mentally ill people involuntary. The controversial decision was intended to calm anxious New Yorkers after several high-profile acts of violence on the streets and subway, and the media was abuzz with debate about its effectiveness and morality.

Pearson, who encounters and intervenes with psychotic patients on a daily basis, viewed the mayor's impulse with skepticism.

"There's a part of me that does favor being more aggressive about involuntary hospitalization," Pearson says. "One of the real symptoms of schizophrenia is anosognosia, which is lack of knowledge about one's condition. People who are schizophrenic think there is nothing wrong with them and the problem is everyone else. That can potentially be dangerous."

On the flip side, even "as a psychiatrist, it's very different to predict who's going to be suicidal or violent," Pearson says. "The idea that the police are going to be able to discern between those two—how are they going to be able to tell?"

People and politicians demand simple solutions. But Pearson knows that issues like homelessness, addiction, trauma, and mental health rarely present black or white cases. He hopes to better understand and interpret the nuances.

There's an art to that. ■

—Zach Schonbrun '05

"I've met so many truly amazing young people who are miraculous, talented, sharp, funny, generous, amazing people. They have just been dealt an incredibly [unlucky] hand in life."



Jeff Magnin '74 is a volunteer instructor at Mount Tamalpais College, a college housed within San Quentin Prison.

Write from Wrong

FOR JEFF MAGNIN '74, who spent nearly two decades as an English professor, teaching was more than just a profession—it was a way for him to use his talents on behalf of others. And last year, he increased this commitment to education and service, becoming a volunteer instructor at Mount Tamalpais College, a small liberal arts college housed within San Quentin Prison

on the north shore of San Francisco Bay. The only degree-granting college located inside a U.S. prison, Mount Tamalpais offers its students the opportunity to use their time in incarceration to earn an associate's degree. Former offenders paroled with an associate's degree are far less likely to return to prison. Yet while Magnin estimates that only 200 of the nearly 3,200 members of

"As a society, we always talk about second chances and third chances, but a lot of these students haven't ever had first chances. They had poor educations. They came from unbelievably difficult circumstances. So I feel that this is one way that I can give back."

the prison population are enrolled in the college, he is glad to help equip these students with the tools for future success.

"As a society, we always talk about second chances and third chances, but a lot of these students haven't ever had first chances," he says. "They had poor educations. They came from unbelievably difficult circumstances. So I feel that this is one way that I can give back."

Passionate about literature from a young age, Magnin received an MFA in dramatic criticism from Yale before heading to Los Angeles to evaluate scripts for Hollywood production companies. But the work was far from fulfilling. "I would read something on the order of 400 screenplays a year, and of those 400, I could probably expect to find three or four that were promising. It really was a slog," he explains. So he decided to return to academia, this time as an educator, a role which he says was more consistent with the values instilled in him by both his parents and his time at Taft.

Magnin went on to teach throughout California—including stints at California State University in Northridge, University of Southern California, and UC Berkeley—before landing at the University of California, Davis, where he taught courses on nonfiction writing, 20th-century dramatic literature, and documentary film. This work kept him busy for the next 15 years, over which time he developed an increasing interest in volunteering at Mount Tamalpais. Only with his retirement in September 2021 could he finally apply for the program.

Now Magnin teaches a dozen students ranging in age from mid-20s to early 70s each semester, leading them through the fundamentals of composition and acclimating them to proper academic conventions,

such as incorporating outside research into their work and properly citing sources. Much of the class centers on two assignments, each around 1,000 words, and Magnin purposefully chooses prompts that speak to his students' experiences—for instance, potential improvements to the prison and parole systems.

"These inmates go for years without having someone ask them what they think. They might have been turned away by people or told things about themselves that were denigrating or untrue," he says, "but by improving their writing, they can begin to express themselves, which will hopefully give them a sense of empowerment."

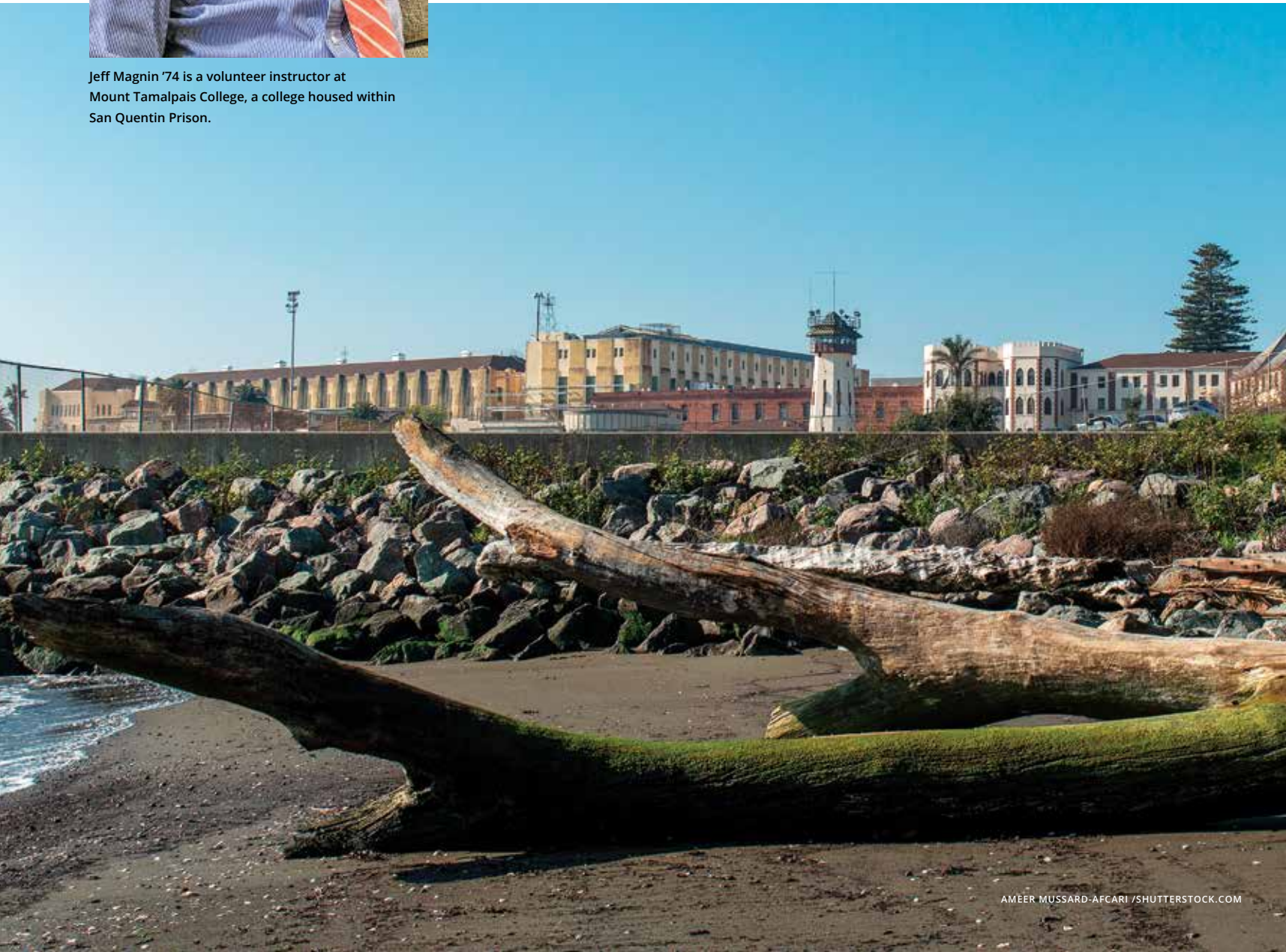
Very quickly, Magnin perceived noticeable differences between his students at Mount Tamalpais and those in the university system. "College students these days are so concerned about their GPAs that they sometimes have a real difficult time in class, they freeze up," he says. "But for

my students at San Quentin, it's all so new and liberating—they just take off! They take part actively in discussions, and the classes are very lively and very interesting."

But while the students may be different, Magnin says that his teaching hasn't changed. "I always have the same goals when I put my classes together. I want my students to gain confidence in themselves as writers and to be more equipped to write under diverse circumstances outside of class," he says. "And that's even more important for the men at Mount Tamalpais. Even after they're paroled, they're not entirely free. They face challenges getting work or finding a place to live. So to be able to teach them skills that are transferable—that can really help them make their way in the world once they're released—makes this work especially meaningful." ■

—Christopher Browner '12

"To be able to teach them skills that are transferrable—that can really help them make their way in the world once they're released—makes this work especially meaningful."



AMEER MUSSARD-AFCARI / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Right: Magnin with friend Biff Barnard '63 during a visit in California, where they both live.



Elaine Meyer '75 with colleagues from Australia and Abu Dhabi who were part of the Saudi Health Simulation Conference in November.

Being Present, Not Perfect in Health Care

YOU NEVER KNOW where a TED Talk will lead you. For Elaine C. Meyer '75, a Watertown, Connecticut, native, a TED Talk led her to dozens of speaking engagements across the globe, from Saudi Arabia to Buenos Aires.

And that's because her TED Talk, and her research over the years, involves the ethics of having difficult health care conversations, particularly conversations about end-of-life care.

"I think for patients, they're waiting to be invited to have these conversations," she says. "Patients may be interested in telling their story but don't know if they have permission to share."

Meyer's TED Talk, "On Being Present, Not Perfect," is approaching nearly 100,000 views.

How did it come about? Boston Children's Hospital had sponsored a TED event, and Meyer was asked to speak about the "human side" of health care. "In my TED Talk, I share personal experiences as a patient that sensitized me and stories as a nurse and psychologist caring for patients," she says.



"Patients want to feel listened to, to feel heard, to know somebody knows their story, even though they may not be able to make it better."

"Even if we do not have the perfect word or the perfect solutions to make things better in health care, we can always listen and affirm the patient's story, so they feel understood and respected—and not so alone."

"I found that health care providers were unprepared and somewhat fearful of challenging conversations in health care—when serious diagnoses must be conveyed, when treatments are no longer working, when a cure cannot be achieved, or when a mistake has occurred. 'On Being Present, Not Perfect' encourages health care providers, and all of us, to lead with our humanity and to bring our courage, brains, and heart to our conversations and relationships," she says.

Meyer's work emphasizes patient/family perspectives and priorities, end-of-life care, challenging conversations in health care, and simulation education. Her bioethics interests focus on everyday clinical ethical encounters, serving vulnerable populations, and humanism in health care. She is a fellow of the Society for Simulation in Healthcare and has published over 100 peer-reviewed articles.

Meyer is a clinical psychologist at Boston Children's Hospital, nurse, and bioethicist. In addition, she is a faculty member at the Center for Bioethics and associate professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School. She is a founding member of the International PERCS Collaborative (Program to Enhance Relational and Communication Skills) that has partners in Italy, Australia, Germany, and Argentina. She serves as a health care educational consultant at Fundación Garrahan in Buenos Aires and senior scholar at the Academic Research in Complementary and Integrative Medicine Institute in Filderstadt, Germany.

"A recent invitation to Saudi Arabia has been a highpoint. I attended the fifth Saudi Health Simulation Conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, this past November. I was a plenary speaker based on the TED Talk and have been invited to collaborate on a research project and design a course focused on difficult health care conversations in the Saudi context.

"My work at Hospital Garrahan in Buenos Aires also brings great satisfaction



Meyer was honored as a plenary speaker by conference leaders at the Saudi Health Simulation Conference in Riyadh.

as a public hospital with a big heart," she says. "The Fundación Garrahan provides fundraising for the hospital so that all children and their families can be served across Argentina and South America."

Meyer has also researched thorny issues related to education in health care conversations, such as when—and how—to share potentially life-altering news. Many factors can affect these kinds of conversations, she says.

"For clinicians, time and...the busy, demanding environment can create many obstacles," she says. "Time, privacy, space, and more" can impact how a health care conversation can go.

"Many clinicians can be so exquisitely trained in their areas of specialty, yet they can feel unprepared and afraid that open communication will upset the patients, who may be sad or angry," she says. "How can I handle strong emotions? How can I initiate the conversation?"

Meyer is dedicated to helping frontline health care staff and researchers discover new strategies for holding conversations about serious illness and end-of-life care. She has found that both clinicians and patients and their families, listening goes a long way toward a successful discussion.

"Patients want to feel listened to, to feel heard, to know somebody knows their story, even though they may not be able to make it better," she says. "Patients know they're in a hospital and, for example, they might need surgery, so how are we to engender trust? With a child or someone very ill, we want to provide information that's age-appropriate and sensitive. What are they afraid of? What are they wondering about? Sometimes just being in the room with someone and lending your presence is what's needed."

Families may not want to hear bad news, but Meyer says it's important for clinicians to begin the conversation where the family and patients are. "We are wading into the pool with them, not jumping into the deep end."

"We work as part of a team in health care, but we all need to be attentive to patients' psychosocial and emotional care," she adds. "To understand and be able to scaffold what you're doing for the patient medically, in a broader context...is so vital. Taking time to talk with patients and tending to the emotional standard of care allows for the patient to be seen as a whole person. A lot of times that's where the good stuff happens." ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84



Mike Roos '05, policy advisor for the City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment.

"It became clear to me that climate change is the planet's largest, most persistent challenge for the foreseeable future, and I wanted to have a career that made a difference."

worked analyzing utility data and building energy performance," he says. "I eventually moved over to NYC's Division of Energy Management (DEM), which oversees utility activities for city agencies [including police, schools, sanitation, transportation] and seeks to reduce emissions from municipal buildings through energy conservation measures and on-site renewable energy installations like solar photovoltaic."

At DEM, Roos managed large volumes of data, facilitated building energy benchmarking—annually reporting the energy consumption and emissions of

a building to track its performance over time—for the municipal portfolio, and analyzed data to identify opportunities for greenhouse gas emission reductions.

"Transportation is the largest sectoral source of GHG emissions in the U.S.," Roos says. "Transit, particularly in cities, is a climate solution because each transit rider is an individual who would otherwise likely be driving in a single-occupancy vehicle to their destination. Each passenger mile traveled on [public transit] actually offsets greenhouse gas emissions because single-occupancy vehicles consume more fuel per person than transit vehicles."

At Sound Transit, his focus was on tracking the sustainability performance of the agency and greening performance. Roos says the nation must face the challenges of mitigating the significant environmental footprint of public and

private fleets, namely the diesel emissions of heavy-duty vehicles like buses and trucks. While transit-related emissions may be a relatively small component of overall transportation emissions, they are a critical component of the Seattle region's emission reduction strategy, he says.

"As a small sustainability team tasked with facilitating sustainability initiatives and programs across a large agency with many stakeholders, it can be a challenge to get the buy-in from the frontline staff necessary to implement our initiatives and programs," he says. "Motivating institution-wide adoption of climate-friendly technologies and practices is a common challenge faced by sustainability teams across industries and sectors. Overcoming silos within an organization requires ongoing relationship management across the agency."

This paradigm comes into play with regard to the transition of transit vehicles from conventional diesel-powered models to zero-emission alternatives, Roos says. "The gradual integration of zero-emission buses—battery-electric or hydrogen fuel cell—into agency operations is a challenge that requires extensive planning, stakeholder engagement, and a holistic culture shift."

Combating climate change will need to be an economy-wide effort to move our planet to a zero-emissions future, he says.

"I want to play a small part in the world's transition to a decarbonized economy. Whether in my capacity as a data analyst or a project manager, I want my work to have a positive impact on the institution I work for." ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84

Toward Zero Emissions

SINCE EARNING HIS MASTER of Public Administration in Environmental Science and Policy from Columbia University, Mike Roos '05 has been committed to working on issues related to the fight against climate change. Recently Roos has focused on public transportation as a means of reducing planet warming greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. After nearly four years with Sound Transit, he transitioned to a policy advisor role with the City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment.

"I was drawn to climate action as a career

direction in college," Roos says. "It became clear to me that climate change is the planet's largest, most persistent challenge for the foreseeable future, and I wanted to have a career that made a difference."

While in grad school in New York City, Roos became interested in city government, inspired in large part by Mayor Michael Bloomberg's strategic focus on municipal sustainability initiatives ("PlaNYC").

"I got my foot in the door at the New York City Housing Authority, where I



One of several public transportation options in Seattle, where Roos works on sustainability policies. SOUND TRANSIT

Batter up!

Student Engineers Pitch Designs to Tater Baseball

EACH YEAR, DAN CALORE LOOKS FOR meaningful projects for his engineering students that will allow them to apply the skills and tools they use in the classroom to developing solutions for real-world problems. Last year, students designed a water storage system for a small village in Nicaragua. This year, they kept their work local.

“We’re fortunate that we’ve been able to keep our relationship going with Tater Baseball and Miah Vargas ’16,” says Calore. “Tater is looking to move to a new 10,000-square-foot facility and tasked our Intro to Engineering students to help with designing the layout, which includes a 2,000-square-foot retail space, a conference room, the production floor,



Julia Pellegrini '23 presents a physical 3D model of a proposed Tater Baseball showroom.

and a customized batting cage where they can work with their pro hitters in developing the proper bats for them.”

Vargas cofounded Tater Bats, a Waterbury, Connecticut-based baseball bat and accessories company, with his father and brother in 2015. Named after the slang term for a home run, Tater Bats got its start when Miah’s dad produced a training bat with former Major Leaguer and Waterbury native Darren Bragg ’87, P’21,’19,’17. Today, Tater Bats is Tater Baseball. It produces a wide range of custom bats for more than 100 professional players; it also sells stock bats, apparel, custom and stock fielding and batting gloves, team gear, and more. And it’s ready to make that



move to the 10,000-square-foot space.

Calore’s students worked in groups to develop functional plans for the unique spaces inside the multiuse facility.

“My group worked on designing a storefront and retail space for products, clothing, and general business interactions with customers,” explains Skylar Kline ’23. “I personally worked on designing the areas where products could be displayed and the overall organizational layout of our designated area. It was important that we worked closely with each of the other groups to ensure that the plans we delivered were cohesive and reflected the overall layout of the facility accurately.”

The retail space Skylar and her group designed included display walls for bats and gloves, a customization kiosk, display areas on the showroom floor, and customer service spaces. After sketching drafts on paper, the group built a 3D model of the proposed space for their presentation to Vargas.

“Something I definitely took away from this project was the ability to recognize what works and what doesn’t,” says Skylar, “and the importance of producing a design that best fits the parameters of the project. What we did had to work for Tater.”

While Skylar and her group used STEM Lab technology to build a physical model of the proposed space, other groups utilized

different STEM Lab resources, including SketchUp 3D design software, to build a fully digital presentation of a conference room, batting cage, and locker room proposal, and Taft’s laser engraver to “draw” a proposed factory floor layout on plywood. Regardless of the delivery method chosen, the processes and challenges each group faced along the way were remarkably similar.

“We were all challenged to take new approaches toward solving a problem,” says Julia Pellegrini ’23. “We had to incorporate the aspects that were requested by Tater while also creatively designing spaces that were practical as well as visually appealing. It took several drafts to be drawn and edited before we decided on a layout. It

meant building on skills to work creatively and collaboratively while also being able to see new perspectives on a single situation, where we looked at different layouts and designs, working toward a single goal.”

While it remains to be seen whether the student proposals are incorporated into Tater’s final designs, it is clear that the project and process had an impact on Taft engineers.

“I really enjoyed this project because we were able to carry our learning beyond the classroom in a tangible and interactive way,” notes Julia. “I loved that this was connected to a Taft alum as well, and the way this opportunity reflects the lasting connections made at Taft.” ■



Miah Vargas ’16 reviews a design proposal with Calore and his students.



Above: A digital 3D proposal developed using SketchUp software.

Right: Jacob Podhajsky ’23 with a plywood design draft created using Taft’s laser etcher.



Celebrating Academic Excellence

HEAD OF SCHOOL Willy MacMullen '78 frequently speaks of the "life of the mind" and academic excellence. Both are celebrated each year during Taft's annual Cum Laude Society induction ceremony. Founded in 1908, the Cum Laude Society is the national scholarship society

in secondary schools, corresponding to Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi in colleges and scientific schools. A maximum of 20 percent of the Senior Class may be elected into membership in the Cum Laude Society. Fifteen seniors representing the top 8.4 percent of their class were inducted during the fall

ceremony. They are Charlotte Brodhead, Jude Celebi, Emma Chambourova, Brian Chi, Grace Deng, Alexander DiCorpo, Seoyoung Kim, Amelia Lancaster, Michael Mangel, Iok Tong (Rena) Shao, Brendan Staines, Xiting (Amy) Wang, Xuwei (Figo) Wang, Hanyu (Angela) You, and Yuwei (Nicole) Zang. ■

Vincent Chen '24 plays Carnegie Hall

WHEN THE WINNERS of the American Protégé International Concerto Competition took the stage at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York City, Vincent Chen '24 was among them. "I performed *Zapateado* by Pablo de Sarasate," says Vincent, whose selection came in the year American Protégé received its largest number of competitive applicants to date (2022), representing 64 countries. This was Vincent's third time playing Carnegie Hall—an extraordinary achievement for any high school student.

But Vincent is not any high school student. In addition to being an upper mid at Taft, Vincent is a student of the Starling Preparatory String Project at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music (CCM). Before arriving at Taft, he flew to Cincinnati from his home in Virginia every Saturday for violin lessons, music theory classes, and performances. He has continued his studies weekly online with CCM's renowned professor Kurt Sassmannshaus, son of violin pedagogue Egon Sassmannshaus. Vincent works with Professor Sassmannshaus each summer at the Bowdoin Music Festival.

At Taft, Vincent studies and performs with Instrumental Music Teacher T.J. Thompson. "Vincent is undoubtedly one of the most advanced, creative, and approachable problem

solvers I have had the opportunity to teach," says Thompson. "He will always rank as one of the most inclusive students and artists I have ever encountered, lifting everyone in some way to learn and grow together through the process. This has always been the case whether playing violin (or viola) in Chamber Ensemble, working in Music Theory or Composition, performing in musical theater, and now learning fiddle in Jazz Studies."

The respect and admiration are mutual. "Mr. Thompson has transformed the way I view music and helped me expand the scope of my understanding of music beyond playing the violin," Vincent explains. "It has been fascinating and refreshing to see how my musical knowledge from violin can be applied to other genres of music, instruments, and composition."

In addition to expanding his understanding of music, Vincent was eager to expand his formal performance experience and repertoire. Knowing that winners of the American Protégé International Concerto Competition would be invited to perform at Carnegie Hall, Vincent submitted the two unedited video clips and biography required to be considered for the competition early last year; he was notified fairly quickly that he was among the winners.

"I love playing in Carnegie Hall," Vincent



Above: Vincent Chen '24 on stage at Carnegie Hall during the American Protégé International Concerto Competition Winners' Recital. BRIAN HUTTON PHOTOGRAPHY LLC

Below left: Soloist Vincent Chen in Stern Auditorium with the Capitol Symphonic Youth Orchestras. © SYNTHIA STEIMAN

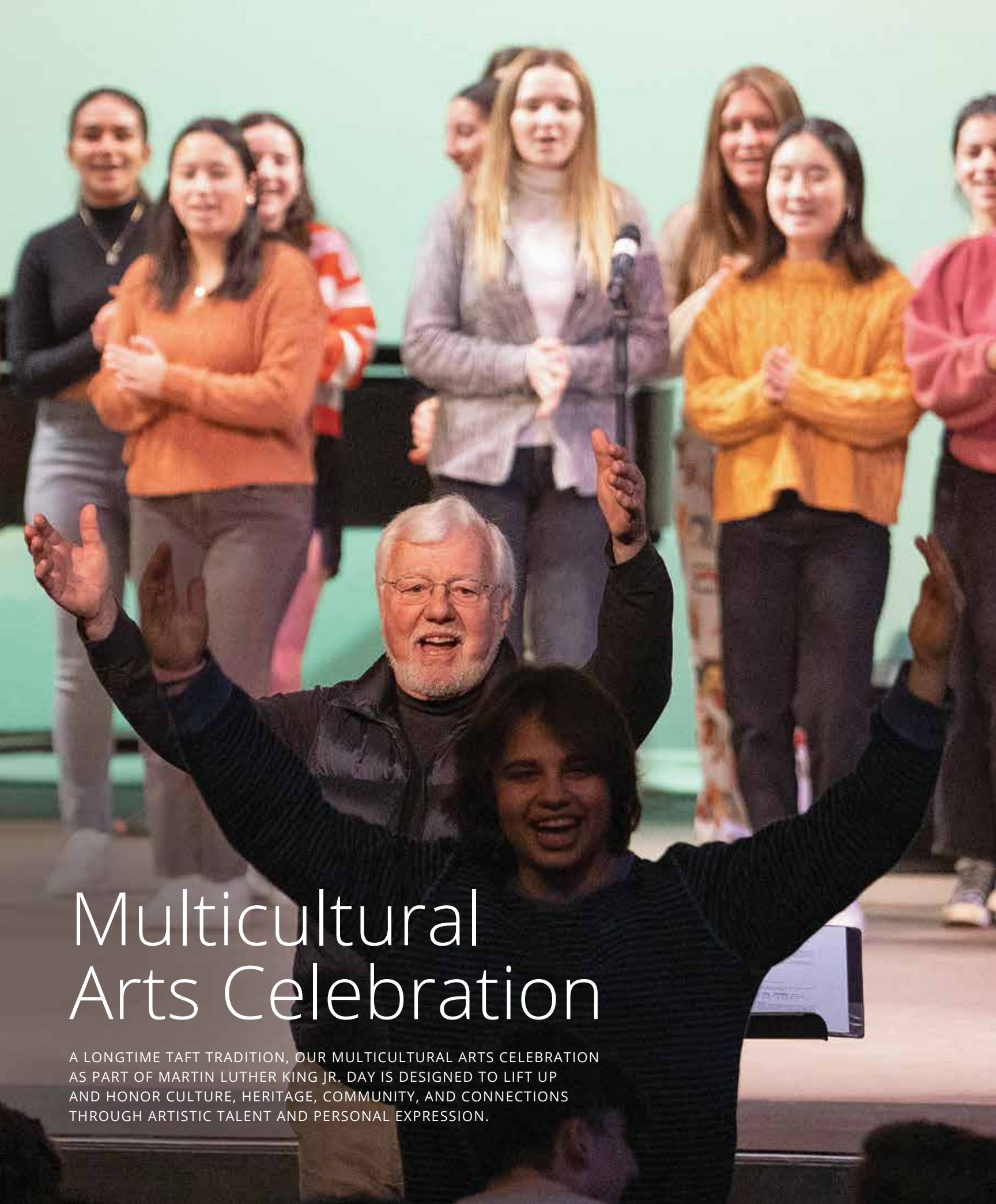
says. "Weill Recital Hall has warm acoustics but also generates a very crisp sound."

The marks Vincent's second win in the American Protégé International Concerto Competition. Six years ago, he performed the *Bruch Violin Concerto* during the Winners' Recital in Weill. In 2019, Vincent also won first prize in a concerto competition hosted by the Capitol Symphonic Youth Orchestras (TCSYO). The prize: a solo performance with TCSYO in Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium.

"I was a soloist playing the *Saint-Saens Violin Concerto No. 3*," recalls Vincent. "I remember playing more powerfully to be heard over the orchestra and to fill the larger Stern Auditorium. When I listened to a recording of my performance, I was amazed at how brilliant and resonant every note sounded." ■

Enjoy a clip of Vincent performing his competition piece by Sarasate, recorded in a studio in the days after the recital.





Multicultural Arts Celebration

A LONGTIME TAFT TRADITION, OUR MULTICULTURAL ARTS CELEBRATION AS PART OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY IS DESIGNED TO LIFT UP AND HONOR CULTURE, HERITAGE, COMMUNITY, AND CONNECTIONS THROUGH ARTISTIC TALENT AND PERSONAL EXPRESSION.

“

My beliefs about education and our obligation to community are rooted in the words of Dr. King. He said, 'The purpose of education is twofold: to build knowledge and character.'

Dr. King reminds us that it is not just your education, but what you do with it that is important.”

—Martin Luther King Jr. Day speaker
U.S. Representative Jahana Hayes



The Drowsy Chaperone

TAFT THEATER MOUNTED A SPECTACULAR VERSION OF THE TIMELESS CLASSIC *THE DROWSY CHAPERONE*. THE MUSICAL WITHIN A MUSICAL CELEBRATED THE EXTRAORDINARY TALENTS OF NOT ONLY TAFT'S ACTORS, SINGERS, AND DANCERS, BUT MAKEUP ARTISTS AND COSTUMERS, SET DESIGNERS, LIGHT, SOUND AND STAGE CREWS, AND AN INCREDIBLE ORCHESTRA. BRAVO!



Female Entrepreneur Fellowship



Taft's 2022 Celebration of 50 years of coeducation was a time of reflection—a time to honor the women who faced down sometimes seemingly insurmountable challenges to help make Taft the community it is today. For some, including upper mids Ivy Kargman and Theodora Ryan, it was also a time to reflect on the challenges many women continue to face outside of Taft's walls.

"Despite tremendous progress over the years, women continue to face adversity in many workplaces," Theodora says, "especially in the business world."

Believing that knowledge is power and that experience is a proven teacher, Ivy and Theodora developed a plan to harness both for the benefit of the Taft community. Taft's Female Entrepreneur Fellowship (FEF) lies at the heart of that plan.

FEF is, as their mission statement reads, "meant to inspire and encourage

women to strive for financial and societal success," while empowering them through knowledge, skills, and insights from female role models to stand up to "the adversity women often face in the world of business."

"The club is meant for everyone, not just women," notes Ivy. "We believe the first steps toward equality in business truly begin with acceptance and acknowledgment from *everyone*."

Before arriving at Taft, Ivy attended an all-girls school.

"As you might imagine, it was all about female empowerment there," says Ivy. "I thought I could use some of the lessons from that experience to contribute to the Taft community in a positive way. Theodora also had ideas around female empowerment and leadership from her own experiences."

Through FEF, Theodora and Ivy are creating opportunities on campus for learning and networking while

offering a supportive space for sharing perspectives and exchanging ideas.

"We want FEF to be a mix of conversation-based seminars, somewhat formal mini-lectures, and guest speakers," says Ivy. "We will research and develop content for the mini-lectures, which will cover everything from navigating the workplace as a woman to presenting research on well-known entrepreneurs. The first presentation we did was on Whitney Wolfe-Herde, CEO of Bumble, for example."

For their first guest speaker, Ivy and Theodora tapped into resources a bit closer to home: Former Taft faculty member Anne Romano came back to campus to talk about her book, *Winnie Taft*. Together, Anne and Winnie

Above: Female Entrepreneur Fellowship founders Ivy Kargman '24 (left) and Theodora Ryan '24

represent not only strong and influential women, but the critical role women have played in the history of Taft School.

Within a year or two of founding the school, Horace Dutton Taft married Winifred Thompson, a teacher at New Haven High School. Together they scouted sites for a new campus, one that would support the kind of growth that would allow them to fully realize their vision for the school. The 1893 move from Pelham, New York, to Watertown, Connecticut, represented the combined leadership and efforts of Winnie and Horace. Winnie's

premature passing in 1909 had a profound impact on Horace, and on Taft students.

"Winifred Taft added an intellectual, fiscal, artistic, and social depth" to the school, Romano wrote in her book. "It was Winifred who met with architects, managed the daily account books and endless details, while Horace saw to scholarship, lessons and ideals."

"Mrs. Romano was brilliant, she was funny, but most importantly, she was passionate," says Ivy. "We are so grateful to her for bringing Winnie Taft to life and taking the time to join our FEF event."

Theodora and Ivy are working to schedule FEF's next guest speakers and are in talks with two female company founders/CEOs. In the meantime, FEF continues to host meetings, and its numbers continue to grow.

"FEF is a perfect example of how the diversity of our community can create opportunities for growth and learning in and out of the classroom. Everyone brings something different to the table. Learning from our peers has been incredible, and we look forward to learning even more. Our goal is to reach the entire Taft community." ■



Above: *Winnie Taft* author and former faculty member Anne Romano signed copies of her book for FEF members.

Left: Romano was a guest speaker at a Female Entrepreneur Fellowship meeting.



Dance Showcase

AT THE CLOSE OF EACH TERM, STUDENTS IN SARAH SURBER'S DANCE FOR EVERYONE AND DANCE 1 THROUGH 4 CLASSES BRING THE CULMINATION OF THEIR PRACTICE AND STUDIES AS BOTH DANCERS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS TO THE BINGHAM AUDITORIUM STAGE. THIS YEAR'S FIRST SHOWCASE INCLUDED TRIBUTES TO THE '80S CLASSIC *FLASHDANCE* AND CURRENT ARTISTS; AN INTERPRETATION OF MOVING ON AND THROUGH DIFFICULT LIFE MOMENTS; AND EXPLORATIONS OF SHARED DIFFERENCES, FAMILY BONDS, AND LONGING.





Beyond Main Hall

Exploring the Region's Cultural Resources

A GREAT ADVANTAGE of Taft's location is the plethora of cultural resources available to students for study, research, enrichment, and enjoyment. In recent months, Tafties have performed at concert venues in Boston and New York; taken in performances by the Boston Symphony, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Hong Kong Ballet at New York City Center; and conducted research at the New York Botanical Garden. They have visited galleries, historic sites, and museums. Most recently, students

in Taft's Honors Humanities and Honors History of Western Art classes visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art, home to over 5,000 years of art from around the world. "Humanities students spent time at the Met reflecting on a handful of works inspired by our first-semester texts, including Plato's *Phaedo* and the *Book of Esther*," explains Classics Teacher Justin Hudak. "They also formally analyzed Renaissance paintings, and engaged in sustained scholarly contemplation of a single work that appealed to them and

spoke in some way to our course's themes."

For Ronald Ceesay '23, that single work was Jacques-Louis David's 1787 Neoclassical painting, *The Death of Socrates*.

"We studied the intricacies and symbolism of the painting in class," notes Ronald. "It was difficult to fully appreciate and understand it simply seeing it on video. But seeing it in person made it all click. Whether it was the colors, the layering, or the depth, it was majestic. I studied it for a very long time."

As a filmmaker, Ronald explored not

just David's painting, but all of the works at the Met through his own unique lens.

"Every shot in a film is a meticulously crafted photo that helps tell the larger story," Ronald says. "So for me, I looked at the paintings and sculptures at the Met as shots from scenes that are part of a greater story that was carefully and thoroughly crafted by the artist."

Like Hudak's students, Alex Werrell's Honors History of Western Art scholars also worked to connect classroom study and personal perspective with specific works at the Met. His class focused in part on depictions of Hatshepsut, the fifth pharaoh

of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt.

"Students studied the progressive and transgressive ways in which Hatshepsut appears in sculpture, shattering traditional gender norms in pharaonic Egypt," explains Werrell.

Roma Mykhailevych is a senior in Werrell's class. It is there, she says, that she came to fully understand what it means to look beyond the visual aesthetic of art.

"In our class, we learn about different functions of art: how it reflects the values and ideals of the past and how it serves as a tool for shaping the present. Art can be used as a weapon to divide



humanity and justify terrible crimes; art can be used as a common ground where everyone can relate to each other's experiences."

And like Ronald, Roma brought not just a trained eye to the art, but a deeply personal perspective.

"To me, being in a museum means looking for my name inscribed in the creations made by people who never knew me," Roma says. "Appreciating art in the Met, I could go through the parts of my mind I knew very well and the parts I was not conscious of. Art allows me to have a very private moment that encompasses the privacy of seeing myself as an individual with a unique identity and the privacy of being on my own with everyone else in the world." ■

Opposite page: Tafties in front of the Metropolitan Museum's Temple of Dendur.

Above: Hatshepsut and Sky Comfort '25.

Left: Ingrid Spencer '23 and an ionic column from the Temple of Artemis at Sardis.

Photos courtesy Alex Werrell

Non ut Sibi: Living Our Motto

THIS YEAR, TAFTIES ARE ENGAGING IN REGULAR COMMUNITY SERVICE INITIATIVES AFTER CLASSES, WITH THEIR AFTERNOON PROGRAM GROUPS (ATHLETICS TEAMS, ARTS GROUPS, ACTIVITY COLLABORATIVES). THIS ALLOWS OUR LONGTIME SERVICE PARTNERS TO BENEFIT FROM THE TIME AND TALENTS OF OUR STUDENTS MORE OFTEN, STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS AND DEEPENING THE IMPACT OF THE WORK. A SAMPLING OF WORK FOLLOWS:

- 1 Elite Strength and Conditioning participants worked with Taft's partners at Brass City Harvest weeding, doing site cleanup and harvesting habaneros.
- 2 The varsity volleyball team visited Girls Inc. to help with facility maintenance.
- 3 Ski team members visited the Rivera Memorial Foundation to provide academic support to students enrolled in its afternoon program.
- 4 Team Theater Tech conducted sitework at the Bent of the River Audubon Center.
- 5 Taft Tour Guides planted 1,300 flowering bulbs on the Watertown Town Hall property.
- 6 Taft Drama shared their talents with Children's Community School in Waterbury.
- 7 Varsity field hockey also spent time at Children's Community School.
- 8 Girls' JV soccer players volunteered at Judson School in Watertown.

Ongoing initiatives also include rotating volunteers serving food on Friday nights at the St. Vincent DePaul Shelter [9](#), and frequent collections to keep the shelves at the Watertown Food Bank stocked [10](#).



Bringing the World to Taft

THIS YEAR'S ROSTER OF MORNING MEETING SPEAKERS HAS BEEN AMONG THE MOST INTERESTING AND DIVERSE OUR COMMUNITY HAS SEEN. SPEAKER TOPICS ALIGNED WITH INTERNAL CELEBRATIONS (WHICH DO NOT ALWAYS ALIGN WITH NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS), INCLUDING NATIONAL HISPANIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH AND ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH, AND REFLECTED CURRENT EVENTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES, AS WELL AS THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF OUR COMMUNITY.



1 José Olivarez

"Our neighborhoods and our societies are run on implicit agreements. Just because this is the way we've constructed our society, that doesn't mean that we can't use our powers of imagination to construct it in other ways. And if we do construct it in other ways, then how do we do it, and how do we do it in a way that is not just a replacing of one hierarchy with another one? How do we imagine a world that is truly more liberating for everyone?"

Poet, educator, and performer José Olivarez is the son of Mexican immigrants. His debut book of poems, *Citizen Illegal*, was a finalist for the PEN/Jean Stein Award and a winner of the 2018 Chicago Review of Books Poetry Prize. It was named a top book of 2018 by *The Adroit Journal*, NPR, and the New York Public Library. He was awarded the first annual Author and Artist in Justice Award from the Phillips Brooks House Association and named a Debut Poet of 2018 by Poets & Writers. In 2019, he was awarded a Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation.

2 Dr. Evelyn Hu-DeHart

"Asian-American presence cannot be denied, but Asian-American incorporation into American society is still an elusive goal."

Dr. Evelyn Hu-DeHart is Professor of History, American Studies and Ethnic Studies at Brown University. She was the director of the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Brown. She is primary collaborator on two international research, public humanities, and digital humanities projects: "Asia Pacific in the Making of the Americas: Towards a Global History" at Brown University and "Chinese Railroad Workers of North America" at Stanford University. Her Taft presentation was titled "The Illusion of Inclusion: The Case of Asians in America from Yellow Peril to Model Minority."



3 Maria Hinojosa

"The beauty of activism is that you are chipping away at achieving justice and humanity. You are the ones who are going to have to chip away. Our privilege has to light a fire of responsibility."

Maria Hinojosa's storied career includes reporting for PBS, CBS, WNBC, CNN, and NPR, and anchoring the Emmy Award-winning talk show from WGBH "Maria Hinojosa: One-on-One." Hinojosa was the first Latina to anchor a PBS FRONTLINE report, "Lost in Detention," which aired in October 2011 and was the first to explore abuse at immigrant detention facilities. Hinojosa is the author of two books and has won numerous awards, including four Emmys, the John Chancellor Award, the Studs Terkel Community Media Award, two Robert F. Kennedy Awards, the Edward R. Murrow Award from the Overseas Press Club, and the Ruben Salazar Lifetime Achievement Award from the NAHJ.

4 Robin Wall Kimmerer

"We say metaphorically that the land is a dish that Mother Earth has filled for us."



The gifts of Mother Earth come to us with responsibilities to keep that dish clean, to keep that dish full. And from the dish that Mother Earth has filled for us we will all eat with one spoon. This is a statement about justice. This is a statement about sharing the gifts of Mother Earth."

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a mother, scientist, professor, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She is the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* and *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*. She lives in Syracuse, New York, where she is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology, and the founder and director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment.



5 Darryl Bellamy

"It's easier to sit back and stay quiet than to stand up for what you believe. Your superpower is to stand up and use your voice. You deserve to be heard."

Darryl Bellamy is a fear researcher, author, TEDx speaker, CEO, and entrepreneur who has collected, read, and shared thousands of fears from and with audiences worldwide. He offers audiences actionable strategies to move from "fearful to fearless" by leading and acting through and beyond fear, and by creating unforgettable experiences that build community and encourage more belonging, community, courage, and overall happiness in people's lives.





6
Stephen Southard

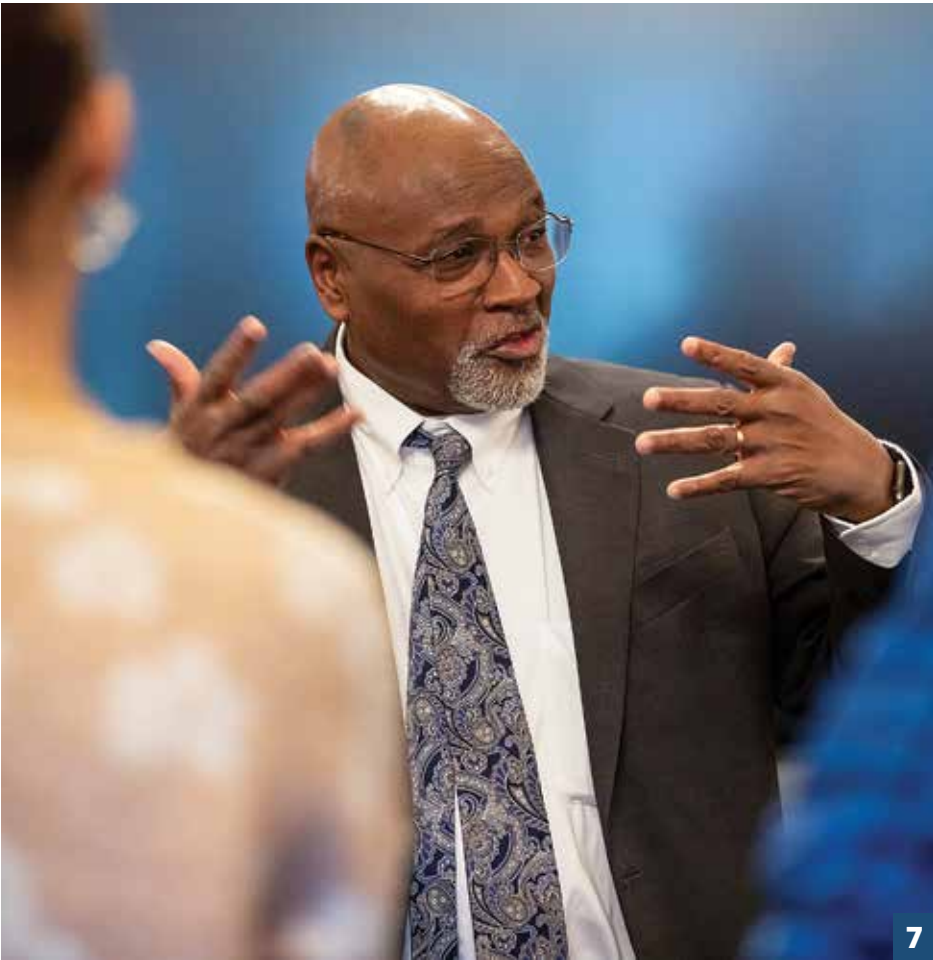
Staff Sergeant Stephen Southard joined the United States Marine Corps in 2011 as an engineer equipment operator. Over the course of his career, he has been on three deployments. The first was a special purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force in Kuwait and Bahrain. His second deployment was to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. His last deployment was with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, focused on the Pacific and having a ready force. S.Sgt. Southard currently serves as a Marine Corps recruiter.

S.Sgt. Southard visited Taft in honor of Veterans Day. He shared his thoughts on the importance of the day, as well as details of his duties and deployments as part of the United States Marine Corps.

7
Richard Robinson

“Think of it as an iceberg. You start making assessments as soon as you see someone. But what you see is just what’s above the surface. The majority of the iceberg lies beneath—you can’t see it. You have to talk to people to learn what’s underneath.”

The Honorable Richard A. Robinson is the chief justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court. He is the first African American man to be appointed to that position. His career began in 1985 when he was named staff counsel, then assistant corporation counsel for the city of Stamford. He remained in Stamford until his appointment as a judge of the Superior Court in 2000. Chief Justice Robinson’s extensive record of judicial and public service spans his entire career, and includes work on the Judicial Education Committee, the National Judicial Task Force to Examine State Courts’ Response to Mental Illness, and time as Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Competency, to name just a few. He is also the recipient of numerous awards.



8
Ilyasah Shabazz

“My hope is that these most challenging years will produce present and future generations of problem solvers who focus on a wholistic approach to human rights. Central to this discourse is community-led institutions that reflect our collective visions for what freedom really looks like, and for what accountability, democracy, and self-determination really are. It is our responsibility to find our voices, and make our voices heard—together.”

Author, artist, mentor, educator, motivational speaker, and citizen of the world, Professor Ilyasah Shabazz connects and activates networks and resources to create measurably positive outcomes, and promotes higher education for at-risk youth and interfaith dialogue to build bridges between cultures for young leaders of the world. She also participates in international humanitarian delegations. She served as a member of the U.S. delegation that accompanied President Bill Clinton to South Africa to commemorate the election of President Nelson Mandela and education and economic development initiatives. The daughter of human rights activist Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz, she credits her mother’s influence for the wisdom, courage, and compassion that guide her.



9
The Three Amigos

“We are a rabbi, a priest, and an imam. We’ve come to know that discovering truths best happens when we engage one another, and others. We each support traditions that beseech us to be just and compassionate, to place the good we seek to do into a larger context, and, like Dr. King, create impact beyond ourselves.”

—Rabbi Eric Polokoff

The Three Amigos are (from left in photo), Imam Aga Gazi, Rabbi Eric Polokoff, and Monsignor Joseph Donnelly, a trio of local religious leaders who travel across the region sharing perspectives on current events, cultural touchstones, and sociopolitical and geopolitical topics, rooted in history and informed by their own education, experience, and religious training. Their Taft visits are always informative and thought-provoking. ■



Fall SPORTS wrap-up

BY SEAMUS F. CONWAY
Photography by Robert Falcetti

Ashley Wright '23 looks to make a pass versus Sacred Heart in September.

Field Hockey 17-2-1

FOUNDERS LEAGUE CHAMPIONS,
WESTERN NEW ENGLAND
CHAMPIONS, NEPSAC CLASS A
TOURNAMENT FINALISTS

This year's team was led by tri-captains Chloe Agopian '23, Amelia Lancaster '23, and Ashley Wright '23, and seniors Bridget Brockelman '23, Emma Cook '23, Finley Davignon '23, Lucy Duggan '23, Evelyn Hidy '23, and Ingrid Spencer '23. With a veteran senior class and a solid core of young talent, spectators witnessed fast-paced play, smart tactical skill, and a competitive drive that would carry the program to new heights. Starting the season with a victory on the road over Milton Academy, the team hosted Sacred Heart for their home opener. With relentless attack and poised defense, Taft sent a nationally-ranked Sacred Heart team home with a 5-2 loss. A few games later, Taft ended up on the short side of a Greenwich Academy team, giving up a corner with less than five minutes to play—a 1-0 loss that was their only for regular season play. Highlights included an overtime victory over Deerfield during Fall Family Weekend, blanking Hotchkiss for the second year in a row sending them home with a 5-0 loss to seal the undefeated Founders League Championship, and a double-overtime thriller against Nobles in the second round of Class A playoffs to stamp their ticket to the championship. A rematch against Greenwich Academy for the Class A Championship was a tightly contested game with spirited back-and-forth action, but GA proved to be too much for the Rhinos to handle. Ashley Wright and Maisy Ricciardelli '24 were named Western New England All-Stars. Bridget Brockelman, Emma Cook, and Amelia Lancaster were named Founders All-League. NEPSAC All-League was awarded to Ashley Wright, Chloe Agopian, and Maisy Ricciardelli and honorable mentions to Amelia Lancaster, Rachel Turer '25, and Truus Van Wees '24. The captains-elect for the 2023 season are Maisy Ricciardelli and Truus Van Wees.



Charlotte Murphy '25 in an October meet versus Choate.

Girls' Cross Country 6-1

3RD PLACE, DIVISION I NEPSTA
CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS;
2ND PLACE, FOUNDERS
LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

The cross-country team had another great season, going 6-2 during the regular season, and finishing second at the Founders League Championship and third at the Division I New England championship race. In fact, in the last two seasons, the Rhinos have gone 13-3 and bested every team other than Exeter and NEPSAC champions Loomis. One highlight was Fall Family Weekend, which saw perfect conditions, full crowds all over campus, and a great race versus Williston on the 3-mile home course. Many Taft runners recorded personal bests, including top runner Charlotte Murphy '25, who flew

her way to a new course record of 18:55, edging Livvy Barnett '15's record of 18:58. In the Founders League race, Taft had four All-League runners: Murphy (2nd), Kate Cicchetti '24 (6th), Annabell Sorensen '23 (11th), and Sydney Grogan '24 (15th). The following weekend, Taft had its best day of the year, placing third among 14 teams at the NEPSAC Division I Championships, edging out Milton and Andover in fourth and fifth place. Two Taft runners finished in the top 10 in a field of 90, with Murphy (4th) and Cicchetti (8th) earning All-NE places, while Sorensen (22nd), Rina Kurihara '24 (37th) and Sydney Grogan (42nd) made sure of Taft's podium finish for the second year in a row. Kurihara, Grogan, Cicchetti, and Brooke Wilcox '24 will captain next year's team, which returns five of their top seven runners.



Malin Adams '25 competed against Choate and Trinity-Pawling in October.

Boys' Cross Country 5-2 2ND PLACE, FOUNDERS LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

The 2022 season was a great one for boys' cross country. The year started with convincing wins over Choate and Trinity-Pawling. A week later, Taft knocked off Hotchkiss. This was the first time in a decade the team had beaten both Choate and Hotchkiss in the same season. A crucial victory over a very strong Williston squad during family weekend gave Taft the confidence to take on any opponent. All seven of the varsity runners broke the 18-minute mark, the first time in recent memory a Taft team had accomplished this milestone. A crushing 15-50 victory over Kent completed the dual-meet season with a 5-2 record, the best in over a decade. Then it was on to the Founders League Championship. The team's second-place finish served as its best result in 25 years. Even more amazing, the top five runners

finished within 15 seconds of each other on the grueling Choate course. Captain Jude Celebi '23 and his brother, Tate '25, led in each race of the season. They were firmly supported by Rory McNamara '25, Ali Griswold '24, Huck Griswold '25, Augi Booth '24, and Malin Adams '25. Tate and Ali were named All-Founders League, and Jude won the John B. Small Award.

Girls' Soccer 10-6-2

The girls' varsity soccer team registered their first winning season since 2019, finishing the year with a 10-6-2 record and narrowly missing out on the NEPSAC Class A Playoffs. The season was highlighted by strong wins against Suffield Academy (6-2), Berkshire School (4-0), Deerfield Academy (1-0), Northfield Mount Hermon (1-0), and Hotchkiss School (2-0). These strong performances, among others, were indicative of a renewed focus and positive momentum that the Rhinos created for themselves throughout the year. The Rhinos' roster,

Sofia Torres '25 in game action versus Hopkins in October.



Fall Postseason Results

Congratulations are in order for **Taft varsity field hockey** as they finished the season with an overall record of 17-2-1 while going undefeated in league play. They beat Hotchkiss 5-0 on Hotchkiss Day, claimed the Founders League Championship for the first time since 2005 as well as the Western New England Championship, earned the No. 1 seed in the NEPSAC Class A Tournament, and finished the season as NEPSAC Class A Tournament finalists, falling to Greenwich Academy in the final. Props to Coaches Ann Bell and Jillian Danaher.

More congratulations to **Taft's girls' varsity cross-country** runners who finished second at the Founders League Championship, and for the second consecutive year earned a spot on the podium at the Division I NEPSTA Cross Country Championships. The Rhinos finished in third place overall, thanks to stellar performances by Charlotte Murphy '25 (4th place) and Kate Cicchetti '24 (8th place). Their top 20 finishes earned them both All-NEPSTA honors again this year. A great race by Annabell Sorensen '23 (22nd place) and solid pack running by Rina Kurihara '24, Sydney Grogean '24, Leyla Zhaksybek '23, and Lena Rukkas '23 ensured the third-place finish out of the 14 schools and 100 runners.

Boys' varsity cross country finished their season with an overall record of 5-2, and placed second at the Founders League Championship, their best result in 25 years, with their top five runners finishing within 15 seconds of each other. Tate Celebi '25 (8th place), finished right before his brother, Jude Celebi '23 (9th place). Ali Griswold '24 earned 11th place, with Rory McNamara '25 right behind him, finishing in 12th place. Huck Griswold '25 completed their scoring by taking 14th place, and Malin Adams '25 finished the race in 19th place, placing six runners in the top 20 of the entire league.





in the Skyline Conference and at Amherst College the NESCAC, respectively, with the latter joining former Rhinos teammate and current Amherst College student-athlete Patience Kum '21. The Rhinos look forward to the fall '23 season to continue their individual and collective growth with captains Bryn Gavigan '24, Faith Graziano, and Alessia Schettino '24, and team leaders Kendrick LaPrade '25 and Renata Mercedes '25 leading the way.

Boys' Soccer 10-5-1

Taft's boys' varsity soccer team enjoyed another winning season, finishing the 2022 campaign with a strong record of 10 wins, 5 losses, and 1 draw. The Big Red earned convincing wins over some of New England's top teams (7-0 over Brunswick, 4-0 at Westminster, 2-0 at a college showcase event against Northwood School, 5-0 over Deerfield, 9-1 at Kent, and 9-2 against Hotchkiss). The team fell just shy of making the New England tournament this year, but with a talented and dedicated core of returning athletes, the future of Taft looks bright! This past season, Taft's offense was led by senior forward Ben Osset '23,

La Zai Outerbridge '23 advances the ball upfield against Hotchkiss on Hotchkiss Day in November.

comprised of 26 student-athletes from five states and six countries, was led by senior captains Angelica Megdanis '23 and Maria Hogenkamp '23. Faith Graziano '24 finished the year as the top scorer, with 12 goals and 6 assists. Megdanis and Hogenkamp represented Taft as Founders League All-Stars, while Graziano and Precious Novidzro '23 were recognized for their efforts as

Connecticut State All-State and WWNEPSSA selections. Novidzro was further recognized as a Connecticut State Senior All-Star, while Maria Cortina Fernandez '23 was named the 1976 Girls' Soccer Award Winner. To date, Taft will see two of the current roster go on to play NCAA women's college soccer. Cortina Fernandez '23 and Novidzro '23 will play DIII at Sarah Lawrence College

D'Arco Cup

The Taft boys' varsity hockey team earned a big 5-1 win at Berkshire during the annual Lucille A. D'Arco Cup. Lucille was a passionate fan and supporter of both schools: Her son, Brad '99, captained the Taft team as a student, then went on to coach the Berkshire team after college. In 2008, Lucille lost her life to breast cancer. Since then, the two schools have honored her legacy on the ice in a game dedicated to her memory, to raising funds for awareness about breast cancer, and to commemorate the D'Arco family's involvement with and love for both institutions.



BERKSHIRE SCHOOL/GREGORY CHERIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Hotchkiss Day Magic

In an email to the Taft community after Hotchkiss Day, Director of Athletics and Afternoon Program Andy Dunn wrote the following:
"Wow. It is admittedly hard to leave me at a loss for words, but your efforts on Saturday did just that! From the sheer dominance of our sports teams to the exuberance of our fans, you showed time and time again what makes Taft the amazing place it is. You gave all of yourselves to each other and this school, and greatness happened!
Here's a photo that sums up the day perfectly. Our thirds field hockey team won in the most dramatic fashion possible, breaking a 0-0 tie against our rival as the very last second ticked off the clock. All by itself, this is the stuff that memories are made of. BUT...our fans were there to add to the magic!
Who rushes the field for a thirds field hockey game you might ask? Taft does!"



PETER FREW '75



PETER FREW '75

who tallied 15 goals and added 6 assists. Also contributing to the Taft's impressive offensive were Preston Alessio '25 (7 goals, 13 assists); Alejandro Gharzouzi '24 (7 goals, 1 assist); Enoch Duodu '24 (5 goals, 4 assists); Myzel Pinsker '23 (3 goals, 2

assists); and Jordan Grivekov '23 (2 goals, 3 assists). The Rhinos' midfield was a strength of the team, and many of those players will be returning next fall. This talented group included Alex Henderson '24, Nolan Jacobi '24, Max Rivera '24, and

Joaquín Mañon '25. Taft's defense, led by La Zai Outerbridge '23, was resolute, conceding only 17 goals throughout the entire season. Postgraduates Vincent Hassel '23, and McKenzy Pierre '23 provided speed and tenacity on the back line and were

Hotchkiss Day



On Saturday, November 12, all Taft varsity teams that competed against Hotchkiss on Hotchkiss Day were victorious. Football was able to capture a 38–10 victory over the Bearcats, while boys' soccer

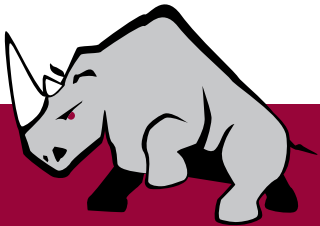
convincingly beat Hotchkiss 9–2, and girls' soccer pulled off a 2–0 win. Volleyball was able to follow suit and beat the Bearcats 3–1. Field hockey capped off their regular season with a 5–0 victory, claiming

the Founders League Championship for the first time since 2005, as well as earning the Western New England Championship, and the No. 1 seed in the NEPSAC Class A Tournament. Go Big Red!

also very dangerous in attack. Goalkeeper Nathan Harlow '23 was spectacular, helping the team record eight shutouts over the course of the season. In closing, this team demonstrated an endless desire to improve and distinguished itself not only through its play on the field, but also with its collective commitment and character.

Volleyball 6–10

With 10 returning players and seven newcomers to the squad, the girls' volleyball team ended the season with a 6–10 record, earning big wins against Hotchkiss (twice), Berkshire, Kent, Miss Porter's, and Hopkins. Each member of the team embraced their role, collectively competed at a high level, and continued to grow from the foundation set last season. Many opposing coaches were impressed with their development from last year and often commented on this feat. Next year they will return 10 players and among those are two of their kill leaders, Katherine Erbstein '24 and Lucy Schwab '24, two block leaders Julia Whelan '25 and Charlotte



FALL 2022 ATHLETIC AWARDS

Field Hockey

Field Hockey Award—Chloe Agopian '23
Founders League All-League—Amelia Lancaster '23, Emma Cook '23, Bridget Brockelman '23

Girls' Cross Country

Girls' Cross Country Award—Annabell Sorensen '23, Charlotte Brodhead '23
Founders League All-League—Sydney Grogan '24, Leyla Zhaksybek '23

Boys' Cross Country

Boys' Cross Country Award—Jude Celebi '23
Founders League All-League—Tate Celebi '25, Ali Griswold '24

Girls' Soccer

1976 Girls' Soccer Award—Maria Cortina Fernandez '23
Founders League All-League—Angelica Megdanis '23, Maria Hogenkamp '23

Boys' Soccer

Livingston Carroll Soccer Award—Ben Osset '23, La Zai Outerbridge '23
Founders League All-League—Nathan Harlow '23, Vincent Hassel '23

Volleyball

Volleyball Award—Marianne Williams '23
Founders League All-League—Naomi Oliver '23, Scarlett Castillo '23

Football

Black Cup Award—Jaylen Carter '23
Harry K. Cross Football Award—Jack Odden '23
Founders League All-League—Eric Facey '23, Brayden Stroh '23



Marianne Williams '23 gets set for a spike versus Kingswood Oxford in September.



Jack Odden '23 makes the catch and turns up field against Hotchkiss on Hotchkiss Day in November.

Fall & Winter Signing Ceremonies

Twenty-seven student-athletes (13 in the fall, 14 in the winter) participated in the first two National Signing Days of the year in Bingham Auditorium. The ceremony celebrates those students making commitments to continue their academic and athletic careers at the college or university level. Coaches, families, teammates, and the full Taft School community were invited to the event. Individual photos of each student-athlete can be found on our Instagram and Facebook pages.

FALL SIGNING CEREMONY

Congratulations to:

Field Hockey

Chloe Agopian '23, *Merrimack College*

Women's Hockey

Angelica Megdanis '23, *Harvard University*
Ashley Wright '23, *Franklin Pierce University*

Women's Lacrosse

Evelyn Hidy '23, *Cornell University*

Men's Lacrosse

Oliver Bligh '23, *Brown University*
Paul Korian '23, *College of the Holy Cross*
Nick Lancaster '23, *Colgate University*
Alec Levy '23, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*
Max McCarthy '23, *Johns Hopkins University*
Colin McLane Jr. '23, *Duke University*
Peter Moynihan '23, *Yale University*
Ethan Rubenstein '23, *Colgate University*
Brayden Stroh '23, *United States Military Academy—West Point*



WINTER SIGNING CEREMONY

Congratulations to:

Women's Basketball

Mya Hicks '23, *Bates College*

Football

Princeton Cahee '23, *Bucknell University*
Jaylen Carter '23, *Columbia University*
Eric Facey '23, *Bates College*
BJ Mayes '23, *University of Maine*
Michael Reddick '23, *Brown University*
Charlie Symonds '23, *Stanford University*

Men's Lacrosse/Men's Squash

Bo Page '23, *Trinity College*

Women's Soccer

Maria Cortina Fernandez '23, *Sarah Lawrence College*
Precious Novidzro '23, *Amherst College*

Men's Soccer

Jordan Grivekov '23, *Dickinson College*
Ben Osset '23, *McGill University*
La Zai Outerbridge '23, *Hobart and William Smith Colleges*

Volleyball

Omi Oliver '23, *Bryn Mawr College*

over Trinity-Pawling (42–7), Phillips Academy Andover (41–21), Kent School (48–0), and Taft's rivals from Lakeville (38–12). The victory over Hotchkiss was especially sweet for our senior class who hadn't had a home Hotchkiss Day in their careers. Taft's four losses came against teams with a combined record of 29–6. Taft was led by our largest senior class in recent memory—an exceptional group of 21 players, including captains Nick Brown '23, Eric Facey '23, Jack Odden '23, and Jaylen Carter '23. Wide receiver Jaylen Carter (All-Founders, All-NEPSAC) proved to be one of the finest playmakers in New England while also shining as a

kick returner and cornerback. Jack Odden was a productive and dynamic presence at wide receiver, and Charlie Symonds '23 (All-Founders, All-NEPSAC) was simply dominant from his left tackle position. Nick Brown finished his four-year starting career at quarterback with a strong senior season while postgrad Princeton Cahee '23 paced our running game. Postgrads Michael Reddick '23 (All-Founders, All NEPSAC), BJ Mayes '23 (All-Founders, All-NEPSAC), and senior Brayden Stroh '23 led a physical and aggressive defense from their linebacker positions. Reddick had a particularly impressive year with 19 tackles for a loss in seven games. ■



the MacMullen Era

Tributes to Willy '78 and Pam MacMullen, P'14,'16



Willy '78 and Pam MacMullen, P'14,'16 have dedicated themselves to Taft—its students and their families, alumni, and faculty and staff—for a combined 68 years. In the MacMullens' remarkable care for individuals, as well as their thoughtful tending to the school as an institution, they have strengthened the Taft community and leave the school and its people stronger and better for their care.

To honor and celebrate their dedication and service to Taft, the *Bulletin* asked a number of Willy and Pam's colleagues, former students, alumni, and Taft parents for thoughts on the MacMullens and their impact on the school.

What follows is a selection of excerpted tributes.



A Brief History

The Taft-MacMullen story began in 1976 when Willy MacMullen arrived in Watertown as an upper mid. As a Taft student, Willy played soccer, hockey, and lacrosse, was elected school monitor, was inducted into the Cum Laude Society, and received the Aurelian Award at graduation. He went on to receive a bachelor’s degree from Yale University and a master’s degree from Middlebury College before teaching in a wilderness program for intellectually and emotionally challenged adolescents. In 1983, he returned to Taft to teach English and coach soccer.

Known as “Mr. Mac” to decades of Taft students, Willy taught mid and upper mid English and introduced electives in wilderness literature, autobiography, and the course, A Sense of Place, to the English Department curriculum. In his early years on the faculty, Willy lived in the dormitory and served as dorm head, was advisor to the school literary magazine, served as advisor to the school monitors, and coached boys’ varsity soccer, JV hockey, and lacrosse (as coach to the thirds team and assistant coach to the varsity team). As soccer coach from 1984 to 2002, he won more than 150 games, received the 2001 Connecticut Soccer Coaches Association Coach of the Year Award, and placed in multiple New England tournaments. Over the course of his Taft career, Willy has served as class dean, codirector of the Senior Seminar, college counselor, director of teaching fellowships, dean of faculty, dean of academic affairs, and coordinator of the NEASC Accreditation Self-Study. Before being named head of school, he held the Edwin C. Douglas Chair and was a recipient of the Abramowitz Award for Teaching Excellence.

Willy and Pam met while they were each working toward a master’s degree at Bread Loaf, Middlebury College. Pam, who holds a bachelor’s degree in English and minored in secondary education at Middlebury, began teaching at Taft in 1995, after nine years of public school teaching. She served as class dean for eight years, has taught lower mid English and various senior electives, and is a certified aerobics instructor who introduced the program to Taft and has taught hundreds of students.

Pam and Willy have two sons, John ’14 and Tom ’16, both of whom went on to Brown University.

Read more about the campus improvements and programs established during MacMullen’s years as head of school on page 58.

“Of the many individuals I hired in my years as headmaster, Willy and Pam were to have the greatest impact on the school. Great teachers and caregivers, for 68 combined years they have given their hearts, souls, and leadership to the Taft community while influencing thousands of Taft students and faculty. As the old Vermont aphorism goes, our job is to leave the place in a better place than we found it, and this they have done for these many years. Congratulations, and thanks for all they have done for the Taft School.

—Lance R. Odden, P’86,’89
Headmaster Emeritus



Three Taft heads of school with spouses in 2001: from left, Willy ’78 and Pam MacMullen; Lance and Patsy Odden; and John and Katharine Esty.

“

As a former parent and trustee, I was so fortunate to become friends with both Pam and Willy. They leave Taft having created a strong and lasting legacy, one that will be hard to follow. They will be incredibly missed.

—Leslie Herrlinger Lanahan '73, P'08
Former Trustee



“

Pam MacMullen was a Taft force, creating a positive impact on young people in Taft's classrooms and beyond. Mrs. Mac taught me the power of listening, the fundamentals of writing, and how to prioritize our health through aerobic activity. I carry these lessons from Mrs. Mac with me today, along with gratitude that she cared about me, and for me.

—Ribby Goodfellow '00

“

As a head of school, I felt connected with Willy MacMullen from day one of our headships. Willy and I were both internal head candidates (deans of faculty) at the only schools where we ever worked, and our first day of school as heads was 9/11/2001. Even though I am a bit older than Willy, almost immediately Willy became a mentor for me.

I admired his ability to be a school-person. Even as head, he stayed connected with his students and his colleagues. In today's world, it is rare to see a head of school who is able to “do it all.” Willy masterfully led the important external/strategic work we must do while also (partnering with Pam) being approachable and a champion of students and colleagues. That combination just doesn't exist in today's world of headship. No question, Taft was blessed to have Willy at the helm all those years, but I feel blessed to have had Willy as an aspirational model of leadership.

Second, Willy wasn't just an internal head; he made a difference in schools across New England. I was fortunate to serve with Willy when he chaired the NEASC Commission Board. He was a model of board leadership, allowing for discussion and dialogue while also being efficient and keeping us on task. Hundreds of schools benefited from Willy's leadership of the commission.

Finally, Willy has been a mentor, a resource, and a support for countless heads of school. I am one of those heads. I will forever be thankful for Willy's friendship and support, and I look forward to continuing to learn from and with Willy in our next passage of life, retirement.

—Phil Peck

Head of School, Holderness 2001–22

“

Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret:
Congratulations to Pam and Willy for their truly inspirational and outstanding leadership of Taft. With devotion, they have served the school with steadfast loyalty to Horace Taft's high ideals of scholarship and character building through hard work. In his and in her singular ways, they have engendered the very meaning of the school motto.

We value the friendship we share with the entire MacMullen family, a friendship which has deepened with the passing of years. As they pilot towards new horizons, may the first light find them, in the words of another Yalie, with “ceiling and visibility unlimited.”

—Anne and Jerry Romano, P'92

Faculty Emeriti



“Willy’s passion for learning, for teaching, for working with students and helping them thrive was and is a constant inspiration to me, from the time I worked with him as an intern in our summer program to his rising to lead the school. That’s the word: passion. Willy’s passion has sustained and powered the life of Taft.

Pam’s passion has always been for teaching and for engaging students in the joy and discipline of learning. Her classes are marvels of careful artistry, organization, and dedication to what will best help students learn. As a partner in leading the school, Pam has been dedicated to the mission of service and the warm heart of tending to others.

—Linda Saarnijoki, P’12
Faculty Emerita

“As an alum and parent I’m devastated the Macs are leaving Taft, but as their friend I’m ecstatic for their next chapter and wish them every happiness! Willy helped form me as a writer, and his imprimatur on my children through his eloquence, sage advice, and leadership is incalculable.

—Jill Kopelman Kargman ’92,
P’22,’24



“Taft has been a transformative experience for our two boys, and we attribute much of that to the MacMullens. Their leadership, compassion, and inspiration have made our Taft experience incredible and unique. Our oldest son entered as a lower mid right when COVID hit and I was diagnosed with cancer. He was dropped [off] at Taft, full of uncertainty and fear. Pam was assigned as an advisor to our oldest, Thomson. She is compassionate, encouraging, and available, whether showing up to cheer him on at sporting events or providing a safe haven for processing while providing infinite empathy and love. Her perfect balance of holding him to task and challenging him to be his best self while being compassionate is a true gift we are blessed to receive.

One story I have to share about Pam speaks to her generous spirit and care of my boys. I went into a long surgery, and when I woke up from recovery I was greeted with a text from Pam of an image (see photo). She had taken both my boys (who were anxious about my surgery) and had some art therapy with them, making a sign for me to see of my favorite things when I woke up in the recovery room. My single words to my husband were, “God, I love Taft,” but really it was I love Pam....But Pam is Taft to us in so many ways as well, and we will deeply miss her presence and love.

We are beyond grateful for their dedication to our family and the Taft community and will miss them greatly.

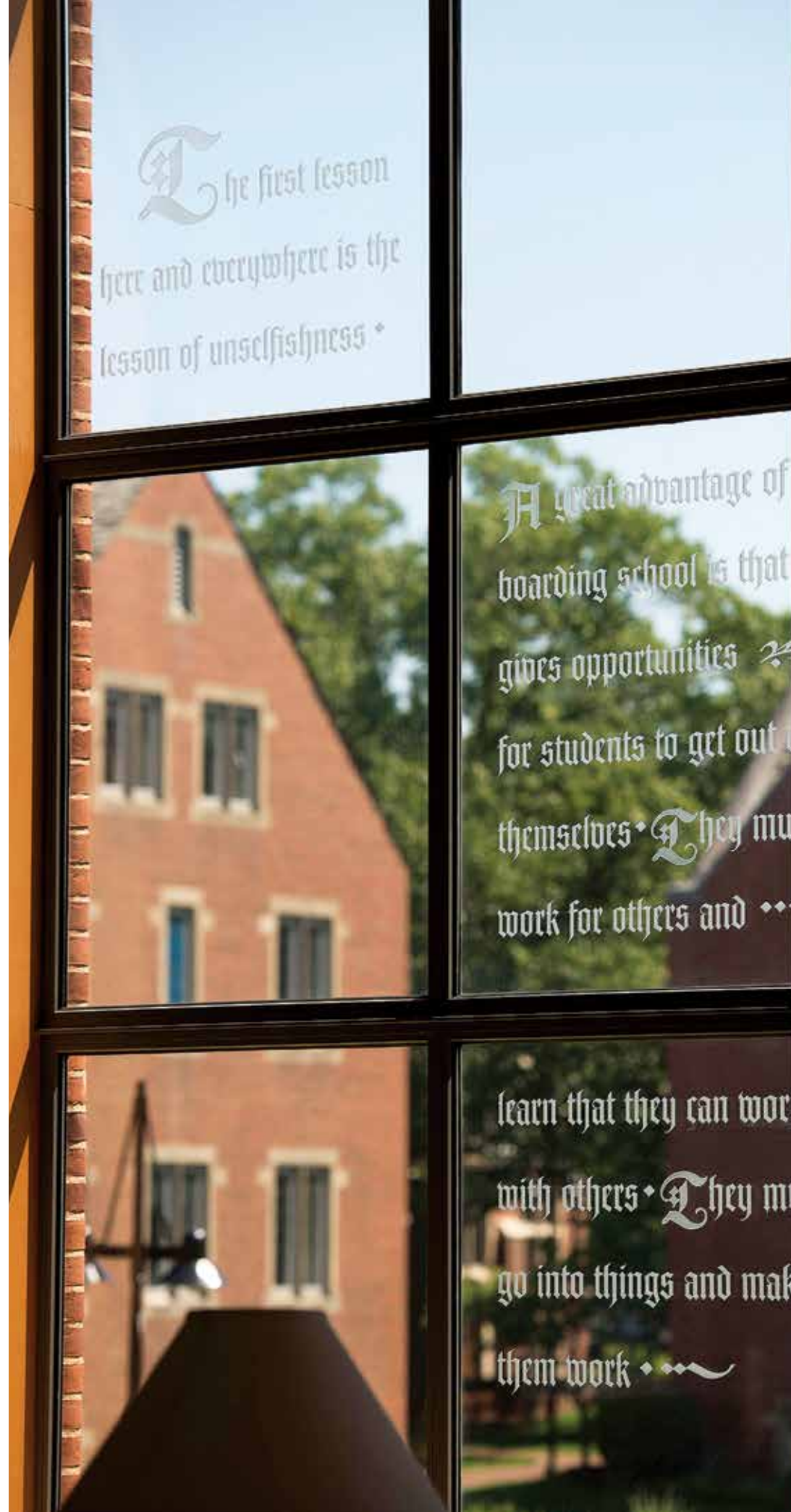
—Alexandra Knight, P’24,’26

“

Most heads of schools, if they stick with it long enough, come to be identified with their schools, which is most appropriate. There are a very few who come to be viewed as an embodiment of their schools in terms of their values, life experience, perspective, and devotion to one and only one institution. Willy embodies Taft and represents what is best about Taft. He is enthusiastic (especially about Taft, Taft students, Taft faculty, Taft you-fill-in-the-blank!), thoughtful, trustworthy, and a wonderfully supportive teammate and fellow traveler. He's a good friend, and I will miss seeing him at Founders League meetings, at games, and especially in mid-November when the Hotchkiss Bearcats go up against the Taft Rhinos.

—Craig Bradley
Head of School, Hotchkiss School

More tribute quotes about the MacMullens can be seen at www.taftschoo.org/honoring-the-macmullens.



“

I recall touring the school with Phil '16 (my oldest son) and noticing a sign taped to Mr. Mac's office door which simply said, "Be Nice." At the time I remember thinking, Shouldn't that say something like "Study Hard"? I later realized that by acting upon that statement all good things could follow, including studying hard—and effectively. When Phil was accepted and we returned as new parents to move him in, one of the most comforting things during that transitionary moment was being received with the warm, familiar, and embracing welcome of Mr. Mac. There is strength in continuity.

[As a student at Taft] I had Mr. Mac for AP English. I found a draft of one of my papers several years ago. He was a tough teacher. When I turned that paper in, I did not realize it was a draft. I thought it was a well-written final copy. I think we all did. Instead he returned them covered in comments and had us redo them and in fewer words. In hindsight, it was a terrific exercise. Seeing that paper a second time recently, I realized just how much thought and work he had put into that feedback—something I certainly did not consider at the time. I learned to write at Taft.

I had not heard the term *in loco parentis* before Phil '16 and Tattnall '18 started at Taft. When Phil wisely selected Mrs. Mac as his advisor, I saw that phrase come to life. The role she played in Phil's life, as well as the watchful eye she had over Tattnall, left an indelible mark on my wife, Laura '85, and me. She exemplified *in loco parentis*, and that is one of the many things for which we are truly grateful to Taft.

—Stephen Holt '85, P'16,'18



“

Ms. Mac was my advisor at Taft and we are still quite close, four years after I graduated. She was incredibly supportive and invested in my academic and personal life and truly helped me grow as a young person. From having her as my Honors English teacher my lower mid year, to graduating as her advisee, she was central to my Taft experience. She really was more than an advisor and felt like a true caring guardian for my four years! She gave the best advice, pushed me to reach my goals, and was always there to support me when I struggled navigating my shortcomings. I could never say thank you enough!

—Quincy Morgan '19



“

I came to Taft as someone who needed direction, and it was Pam and Willy who took up this task. The care they showed me went above and beyond expectations, and it's this care that has inspired me to do the same with my students. I look at Pam especially, as she was my advisor, and I could not be more grateful. I am sad to see my “second mom” go in Pam, and I am sad to see Taft lose such an inspirational leader in Willy, but I am excited to hear about their well-earned retirement in the coming years. Go Big Red!

—Peter Linn '13

“

The Macs have had an unquantifiable but invaluable influence on our family as faculty advisors to two generations of Willards—as well as teaching us in the English classroom, coaching on the soccer field, heading the dorm, and everything in between that is exemplary of how they have defined themselves as the finest educators we have known. Three decades after having graduated from Taft, I am still learning regularly from Willy and Pam. And with two kids who were in Pam's Lower Mid Honors English classroom, I am never without a resource when I have any kind of a grammar question! They are the best of the best.

—Scott Willard '92, P'21,24

Trustee



2022 holiday get-together of the school monitors with the MacMullens.

“

An anecdote about Pam, who was my advisor, captures her selfless heart for Taft. It was the first week of my senior year in September 2009. I just returned from Lucerne, Switzerland, where I visited my older brother, Bryce '07, in the ICU who was in critical care being held alive by machines after a near-fatal quadriplegic diving accident in Lake Geneva. I came back to Taft and senior year started the next day. I told myself I could not afford to miss classes or a semester and still get into the U.S. Naval Academy. The first day of class was a day of hidden tears, feeling alone, everyone asking me how my brother was. As much as I felt loved, being asked and confronted so often, bottom line I felt helpless as I could not help my brother who was a whole world away. It was 2:45 p.m. and I had 15 to 20 minutes before varsity soccer practice to take a quick visit to Pam's office overlooking the Pond. I sat down, and Pam knew I needed a Mom figure (my mom, Jennifer Zaccara, who served at Taft from 2001 to 2013, was in Lucerne with my brother). Pam looked me in the eye and sat me down opposite her after a full hug. Pam did not start immediately overloading me with questions about my brother or trying to heal my emotional rawness. What she did do was sit across from me and let me talk when I was ready. After a few minutes of silent comfort, words were hard to come by, but she listened and waited. “I just miss my brother” were the only words I remember saying at first, as tears came on like a flood tide. Pam started crying too. After a few minutes of crying together, I told her I needed to get to varsity soccer practice, as I could not be a second late (my future naval officer mindset probably), and she gave me a long hug before I walked quickly to get my soccer gear and head out, fighting off tears and putting on a stoic mask so nobody could see.

An hour later, just as practice was in full swing, there was Pam walking down the long gravel road from the head family's house and upper fields. She did not come up to me but rather my Head Coach Will Orben '92, while I was getting blasted with shots in the goal. I noticed out of the corner of my eye that Coach Orben's attention quickly moved from Pam to me, and I knew she came to see how I was doing on the soccer pitch and practice, with my brothers and coaches who were there for me that season. Thanks, Pam, I said to myself. I am where I need to be right now.

—Keefe Wynn Rafferty '10



Campus Improvements & Expansion

Taft's facilities and campus had major upgrades and necessary renovations, along with the acquisition of several properties adjacent to Taft's campus, during Willy MacMullen's time as head of school.

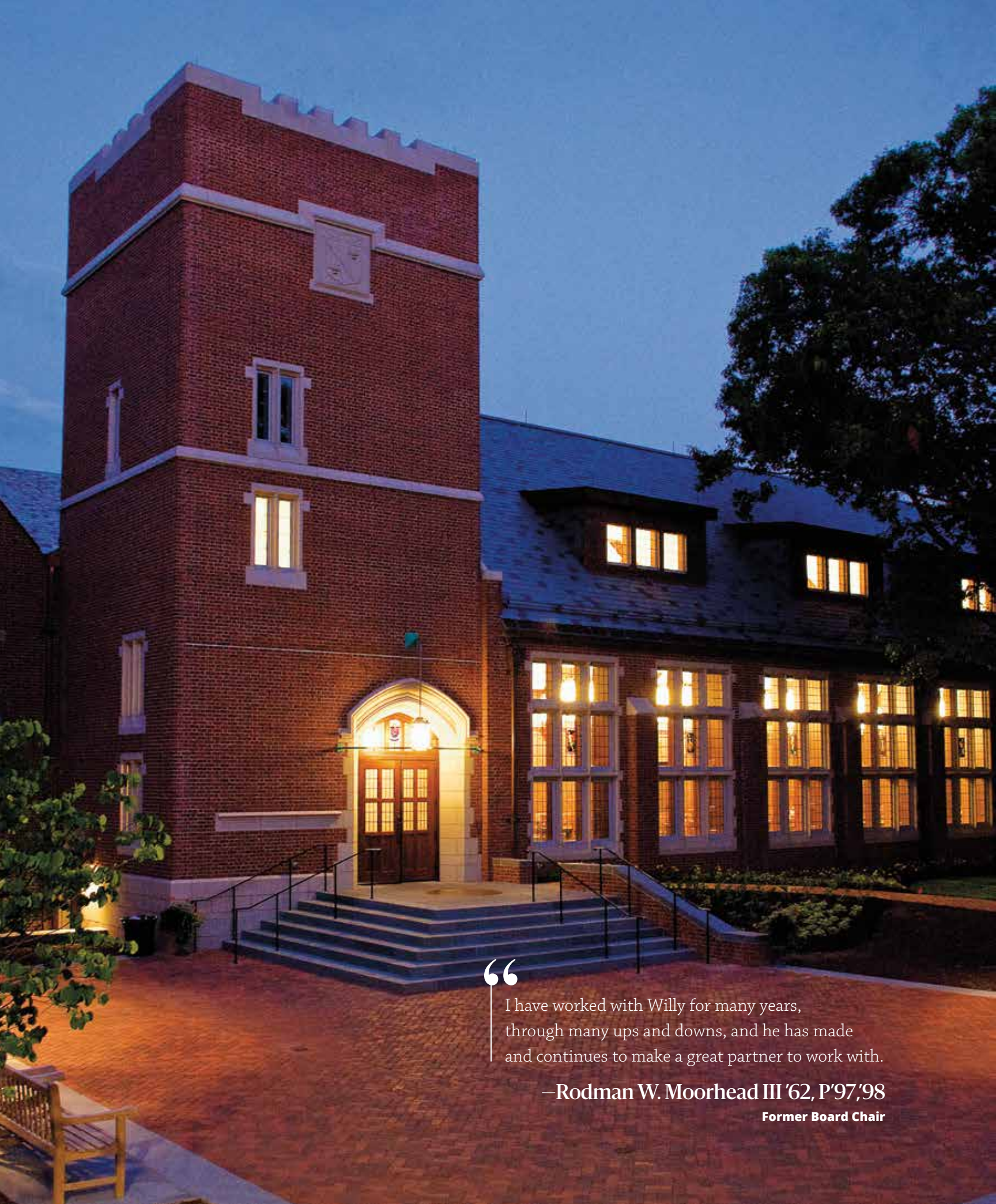
- 2002** Walker Hall purchased
- 2005** Moorhead Academic Center opened
- 2010** Moorhead Wing finished: Laube, Prentice, and East Dining Halls, and Mortara Academic Wing
- 2010** Jigger Shop renovation
- 2010** Woodward Chapel acquired
- 2011** McIntosh House renovation
- 2012** Laube Auditorium renovation
- 2012** Donaldson Family Tennis Pavilions built
- 2012** Pinto Family Language Lab renovation
- 2013** Lawrence Hunter Stone Baseball Pavilion at Rockwell Field dedicated
- 2013** Head of School's Conference Room renovation
- 2014** Baldwin School purchased
- 2014** Congdon House and Martin Health Center renovations
- 2015** Bingham Auditorium renovation
- 2016** Softball Field Backstop built
- 2017** HDT Dormitory and Deans' Suite renovations
- 2018** STEM Lab and 3D Printer Classroom opened
- 2019** CPT Dormitory renovations
- 2019** History Wing classroom renovations
- 2021** Odden Arena renovation
- 2022** Lower Turf Field completed



Programs Established

Several major programs and partnerships were established at Taft in the past two decades since MacMullen became head of school.

- Portrait of a Graduate created
- Purchase of historic Bible, Torah, and Koran
- Strategic Plan completed
- Red Rhino Fund created
- Co-Head Monitors implemented
- The New York Botanical Garden Partnership established
- Police Activity League (PAL) Summer Enrichment Academy began
- Dean of Community, Justice, and Belonging position created
- Academic Day Schedule Revision
- New Grading Scale established
- Global Leadership and Service Collaborative established
- New Academic Habits Rubric began
- Global Online Academy partnership
- High Mountain Institute partnership
- Campaign for the Second Century—Ever Taft, Even Stronger—raised \$187,507,829
- NEASC Reaccreditation in 2007 and 2017
- Creation of Affinity Group Council
- Board Community and Belonging Committee formed



“

I have worked with Willy for many years, through many ups and downs, and he has made and continues to make a great partner to work with.

—Rodman W. Moorhead III '62, P'97/'98
Former Board Chair



“

It was the foundation that Taft, and really Willy, put down for me that was a big part of my ability to handle life's adversity. Every year that passed I grew more fond of the foundation Willy and Taft provided for me, and every decade that passes, that fondness and appreciation grow.

At Taft I could not sit still, and never would have made it through Taft if Willy had not had me sitting in a small room in his apartment every night to do my work. Willy cared a lot, and took a ton of time with a kid he liked a little but needed a *lot* of additional guidance and help. It was all above and beyond what was asked of Willy. Taft had a lot of kids like me, not bad dudes by any means, but who needed a lot of extra help to get through. Without a strong mentor, we would have been lost in the shuffle and who knows how we would have fared in life without the lessons we picked up. I, for one, will always be indebted to what Taft has given me, and especially a very young at the time looking back, Willy Mac.

—Matt Donaldson '88 (“Rhino”)

“

I first met Willy at Hotchkiss when I was hopelessly lost trying to find the head's house at my first-ever Founders League meeting. In the darkness, I heard a friendly voice: “Are you looking for the house? You must be Alex, follow me, and I'll show you where to go.” Could there be a better indicator of the close friendship to come in the next 12 years? When I've been lost or seeking advice, there's Willy's calm, kind voice of support and reason there to guide me and all of my colleagues. Could any of us have asked for a better colleague, mentor, and friend? I think not.

The Founders League has prospered for so long because it epitomizes the best of high school athletics: fierce, hard-fought rivalries certainly, but the competition is always underpinned by fair play, respect, and care for our opponents. No single person is more responsible for this atmosphere than Willy. He's always there in any league conversation reminding us of our guiding principles, leading from the front, and trusting his fellow heads and their schools. There are many reasons that I treasure my friendship with Willy, but one is that he's the person who checks in with you when you are going through a tough time and provides nonjudgmental, unconditional support and advice.

I know the Taft community will miss the ultimate head of school, who knows students, attends games and performances, lives the school's values, and inspires everyone to fulfill their potential. At heart, Willy is still a teacher and coach, never happier than when he's mentoring a student, teacher, or indeed another head of school. We've all been lucky to be influenced in so many wonderful ways by Willy, a legend in the boarding school world and one of the best human beings I know.

—Alex Curtis

Head of School, Choate Rosemary Hall

“

Willy has led Taft with intellect, integrity, and a singular focus on the student. As a fellow head of school, past parent, and now spouse of a [Taft] employee, I have seen Willy in all dimensions of his leadership. While we will celebrate 21 years as heads of schools, the impact of Willy’s devotion to Taft began decades before, when he enrolled as a student and continued when he returned as a young teacher. We live in a time when new is better, and success comes with moving to the next best thing. For Willy, Taft has always been the very best thing. His success has been Taft’s success. Few among us can claim such unwavering focus and loyalty, and it shows in Taft today. Willy’s departure from Taft marks the end of an era.

A fierce competitor, Willy loves a win, but not at all costs. He is fair, evenhanded, quick with a smile and to lend a hand to the underdog. I am grateful for how he welcomed our family to the community, me as a new head of school, our son, Jack ’12, as a new student, and my husband, Jonas Katkavich, as a member of the [Taft] Counseling Center. Willy has served as a role model for generations of students, faculty, and school leaders, and while he will be missed, he will never be forgotten. Thank you, Mr. Mac!

—Dr. Katherine G. Windsor, P’12
Head of School, Miss Porter’s School

“

I’m sure I’m not alone in saying that Mr. Mac was the best teacher I ever had. He brought our senior year English class to life in a way that gave us all a much deeper understanding of the books we read and, even better, made us all appreciate the pleasures of discussing literature together. But perhaps more important than his work in the classroom was his role as an advisor. He was the first teacher who made a specific point of telling me that it was important to pay attention to the voices of girls and women—to make sure they were understood and amplified. With his encouragement, I did an ISP my senior year surveying the current academic theories of adolescent girls’ development and then interviewing 10 fellow women in the senior class. It was through that project that I realized how much I loved helping people tell their stories, and, in many ways, I attribute my career as a journalist and documentary filmmaker to him.

—Braden Cleveland Bergan ’92



Pam MacMullen has taught aerobics at Taft as a certified instructor since 1995.

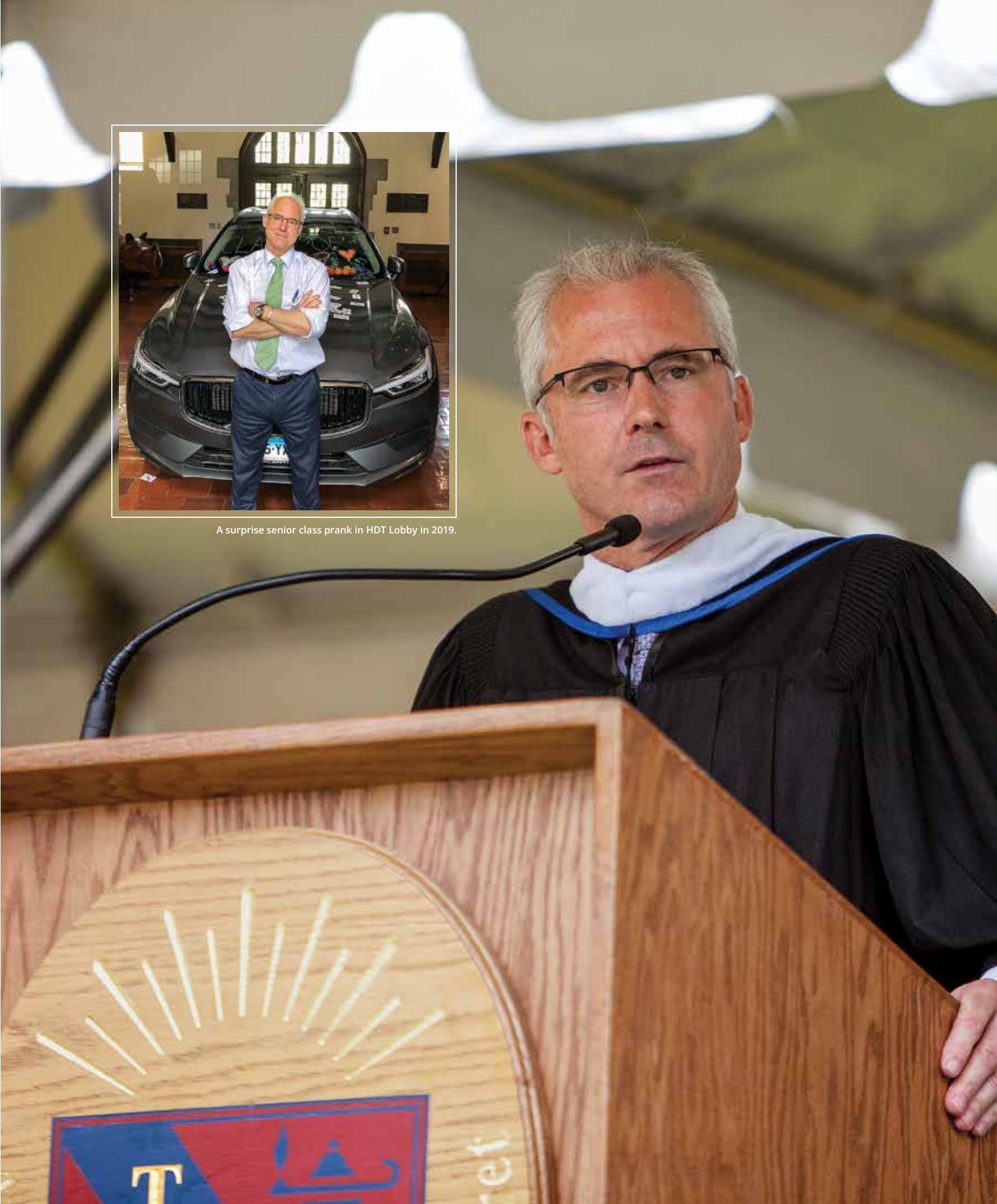
“

It is impossible to overstate the impact Willy has had on my life. He was my coach, my teacher, my dorm head, and my mentor. Many of my favorite memories of childhood took place on the Taft soccer fields learning work ethic, teamwork, commitment, loyalty, humility, and so many other invaluable lessons that define my life. I will never be able to fully repay my debt of gratitude to Willy beyond simply saying thank you.

—Roger Lee ’90, P’23
Trustee



A surprise senior class prank in HDT Lobby in 2019.





Willy on the ice during the
2023 Alumni Hockey Game.



“

Working with Willy and Pam over the past 20-plus years has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I have been on the Board of Taft for the entirety of Willy's tenure as head of school and chair of the board for the last six years. Willy and I come from entirely different backgrounds, other than our collective Taft education. My background is finance and Willy's is clearly academic and yet we have never disagreed in any way on the fundamental direction of the school. It is a true pleasure and honor to have been Willy's partner in the substantial progress Taft has made in the past two decades.

—Grant A. Porter II '69, P'00
Board Chair

“

Willy MacMullen is, heart and soul, a Renaissance Man. The artist in Willy is the man who has an aesthetic sense, who revels in his experiences in the natural world—fishing, hiking, watching the dawn arrive on his boat. Willy has a passion for woodworking, and he has a place set aside on the Cape to practice his craft. Willy's aesthetic sense includes his love of connecting people. He knows that people connect in unique ways, and he is always looking for ways to make that happen. The very architecture of Taft's restorations and additions under his tenure offered little vignettes of possible moments of intersection between students and faculty—he imagines the possibilities before they even happen. A Willy MacMullen dialogue might include mention of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, of Gretel Ehrlich's *The Solace of Open Spaces*, of Shackleton and his sheer will to gather the humanity and tenaciousness of his crew toward survival, or an absolute gem of a speech on his parents during Family Weekend, or his steadfast dedication to being the very best steward of the school he so deeply loves. I am so grateful to have witnessed his love for his school in his daily actions and in the long-standing gifts he gave to Taft.

—Jennifer L. Zaccara, P'07,'10
Former Faculty

“

There are very few things in life that are able to shape not only who you are as an individual, but also have an impact on who your children turn out to be. Because he was my teacher and my coach as well as head of school and advisor to my children, Mr. Mac was just that. I consider myself lucky to have had him as both a mentor and a friend. Not only has Taft thrived over the course of Mr. Mac's tenure, but two generations of Messers are better because of him.

Some of the most lasting memories of Mr. Mac were from the fields with him as my coach. While my children were at Taft, I would hear students complain about a difficult preseason or practice. All I could do was roll my eyes and say, “You have no idea what hard is until you go through conditioning with Mr. Mac as your coach!”

—Chad Messer '90, P'20, '22
Former Trustee



“

Mr. Mac has been a coach, an advisor, a mentor, and a true friend to me for over 20 years. He has always made time for me and has walked me through some confusing times in my years as a boarding school administrator. I'm so happy that he will finally spend [more] time fishing and watching soccer. No one deserves it more than him. I just want him to know that I love him, and I am a better person because of him. Oh, I also want him to know that I'm a really good soccer defender because of him....He will know what I mean :)

—Pape M. Seye '02



“

It is impossible to fully capture all that Pam and Willy have meant to us and our family since the first of our three children to attend Taft matriculated 37 years ago. They are two of the most caring, genuine, talented, and dedicated educators and mentors you could ever hope to know, who have had a profoundly positive influence on so many lives. We have been together in times of great joy and terrible sadness, and we will be forever grateful for their enduring friendship.

—Tim and Karen Largay, P'89,'93,'97

“

Seven years ago, when I first became head of school at The Ethel Walker School, I discovered that one of my responsibilities was joining the other heads at various meetings throughout the year of the Founders League. For me it turned out to be a marvelous array of different kinds of successful headships profiled in one group. Each had her/his distinct character, strengths, and quirks, but for me the most archetypal New England boarding school head in the group was Willy, who relished each and every aspect of his job at Taft, from dorm feeds to coaching to leading his faculty and senior administrative team to partnering with parents to working with his adoring board, and most of all encouraging and cheering on each and every one of the students at Taft. Voluble, ironic, and full of self-deprecating humor, Willy is also one of the biggest-hearted people I know. His presence made every [Founders League] gathering memorable. Willy is more at home with himself than any other head of school I know. Chaucer once remarked, “The lyf so short, the crafte so long to lerne.” Now looking back at the last seven years, I can only agree. Luckily for me, Willy was there to model at every encounter the arduous craft of what it means to lead a boarding school well. ■

—Dr. Meera Viswanathan
Head of School, The Ethel Walker School





THANK YOU, PAM AND WILLY, FOR YOUR MANY YEARS OF DEDICATION AND SERVICE TO THE TAFT COMMUNITY.

Spring Arts Fair & Concert



1

For several decades students looked forward to warm spring Sundays listening to live music out on the fields. Some years the concert ended up in the Choral Room due to weather or equipment issues. The location also migrated as the school grew. What started in the CPT courtyard moved to the soccer field next to the library and then to the Jig Patio. Some of the bands were students, some were local bands and larger bands such as NRBQ. The day often included food, Frisbees, face painting, and a dunk tank.

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

1. A sunny Sunday in 1982 had many students enjoying the fair.

2. Students working the grill during the 1989 Spring Arts Fair.

3. A great day in 1980 to chill and listen to music.

4. Students were entertained by student bands and larger bands from up and down the Eastern Seaboard.



2



3



4

Honoring the past,



looking to the future...

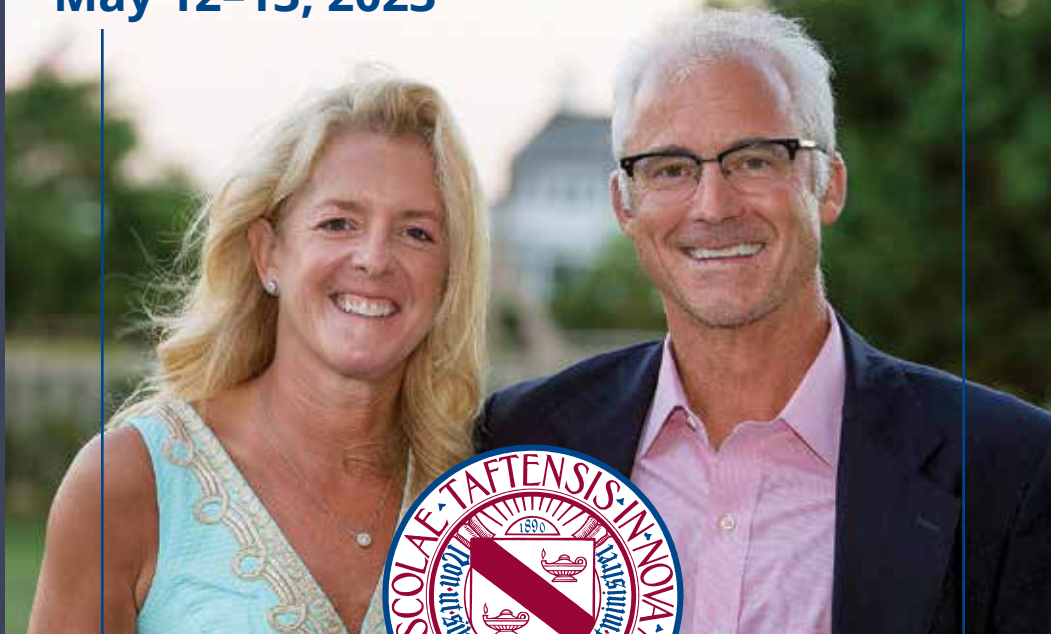
In honor of

Willy '78 and Pam MacMullen, P'14,16, and their combined 68 years of service to Taft students, please consider a gift to the **MacMullen Affordability Initiative**. This initiative will focus on increasing endowed scholarship funds for Taft students.

Your gift will honor the MacMullens for many decades of leadership and service to the Taft community and will make a Taft education possible for future students.

To learn more about how you can participate in the MacMullen Affordability Initiative, please contact Kiersten Marich, Associate Director of Advancement, Leadership Gifts, at 860-945-7814, or Dutch Barhydt, Senior Philanthropic Advisor, at 860-945-7751.

Taft Alumni Weekend May 12-13, 2023



Reunion gatherings for classes ending in 3 & 8

Events for all alumni, including a Celebration of Service
to honor the MacMullens

See you in *May!*

View the weekend schedule and register: taftschoool.org/alumni/reunions