

Kent Quarterly

FALL 2023



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It's a rare privilege for former students to witness the talents and creativity that current Kent faculty possess and carry into the classroom for their students' benefit. And much like youth not fully noticing or appreciating, for the last five years we readers of *Kent Quarterly* magazine have been informed, entertained, and delighted by the reporting, stories, and marvelous imagery arrayed in Kent School's communication flagship. In issue after issue, the content in our community's principal tether to the School has been coaxed, curated, created and placed by Editor Robert Desmarais, Jr. and his talented team.

Robert has been Chair of the Classic Languages Department since 2006 and the incumbent in the William H. Armstrong Teaching Chair since 2019. But what he has accomplished in his tenure as *Kent Quarterly* Editor is nothing less than a sparkling gemstone in his sterling 54-year career at Kent School that thankfully continues.

With intellectual acuity, an artist's sensibility, and deep dedication to the purpose of both place and publication, Robert has led a sustained effort that has elevated the *Kent Quarterly* magazine's character and quality. With a sure and steady hand, he has guided readers to a keener understanding of Kent School's many dimensions. Under his watch, the magazine has catapulted from compendium of alumni news and notes to visually vibrant trove of school history and lore, current campus news, and record of student achievement and community activity.

In the last issue we learned Robert's captaincy has ended. School leadership has shifted editorial responsibility for the magazine to the folks in Marketing and Communications. While anxiously

hopeful for continued evolution and perhaps greater frequency, we are mighty grateful for the seamless integration of compelling narrative and visual storytelling that has appeared in the *Kent Quarterly* in recent years.

Thank you, Robert! Your readers salute you and your team for outstanding performance. You set a very high mark!

Vic Evans '67

I give thanks for Bob Ober's "The Order of the Holy Cross Withdraws from its Schools" (Spring 2023) excellent article. The institutional politics, positioning, posturing, power dynamics, etc. were quite evident, though Bob did a great job of softening what I suspect was a harsh reality. Of course, the tough dynamics were rarely put in writing.

It reminded me of a recent conversation about the Episcopal Church.

When we are at our best, we have a history of paying attention to the depth and beauty of worshiping and watching for God. Part of that is that we have so many "packages" at our disposal to "point to God" in worship: Morning and Evening Prayer; Holy Eucharist with various forms, Compline, Funeral, Healing, Baptism, Marriage, etc. Most contain some deep roots in the Celtic tradition, which we are uncovering more and more. The big problem and when we are at our worst, is when the institution uses the "package" to "point to itself" and not to God. This is Sin. When the institution (or the person) points to itself as the most important, as the focus/center, as the one who is to be worshipped, we are sinning and are in need of correction and redemption.

The only reason the Church exists is to point to God, help people see that God is in the midst and finally, that in Christ, we realize/see that it all starts with God saying, I love you. No exception.

The Rev. Thaddeus Bennett '71

Trustee, Kent School
Volunteer Rowing Coach, Deerfield Academy
Steward, Friends of Dartmouth Rowing





From the Head of School



In the past three years, my colleagues and I have been working hard to be more intentional about what we teach our students, and how we teach it.

More specifically, we have been trying to be more focused on what the School has done so well for over 117 years: providing an outstanding education that attends, to use Father Patterson's word, to the "wholeness" of our students—their intellectual, social, ethical, and spiritual formation.

Over the course of its history, the School has succeeded in providing a first-rate whole-child education delivered through strong and healthy relationships. This remains true today, but we can no longer assume the recipe for our continued success is as simple as bringing the best students, faculty, and staff together in this special place. The pandemic reminded us of the hard work and vigilance it takes to build and maintain a thriving learning community, and research is showing us the negative impact social media has on relationships,

community bonds, and the well-being of children and adolescents. In fact, social media is likely more harmful to the foundation of our community than the pandemic was. The term "online community" not only appears contradictory, it also devalues the essence of our shared life.

It was within this context three years ago that I asked members of the community to describe what we deliver as educators. What skills, sensibilities, or competencies should every student possess when they graduate from Kent School? After nearly a year of conversation, we arrived at five interrelated competencies: active empathy, servant leadership, critical and creative thinking, effective communication, and engaged citizenship. That these competencies rose to the top of our minds should not surprise you. In fact, I viewed the exercise in some measure as naming what the School has done over the course of its history. In taking the step to name these competencies, we are better able to hold ourselves accountable to our mission and sharpen our curriculum as it is most broadly understood.

Last June, I had the privilege of spending time with a graduate from the mid-60s who I find to be someone who understands and practices active empathy. He is deeply appreciative of his Kent experience, and the friends he made at the School remain important to him. In fact, when he recalls his Kent friends, he is quick to cite their unique gifts as people. In this way, he is a relentlessly positive person. He is also introspective about his life and the obstacles he has overcome. He exudes wisdom seemingly unconsciously. Needless to say, I very much enjoy spending time with and learning from him.

One part of his personal narrative that I learned in my conversations with him is the fact that over the last 50 or more years he has fostered more than 20 children. He lives in a community that has both extreme wealth and extreme poverty and many of his "kids" suffered from abuse, addiction, or both. One of his gifts as a parent to these children was understanding them as individual human beings. His empathy was accompanied by action. He provided structure, support, and love. And as he modestly says, "Most have made it." He has funded college and graduate school tuitions and helped a handful start their own businesses. His impact has been enormous for these people, but also on the community. When I asked him why he took on the work of fostering children he said, "It was the right thing to do, and I could do it."

While Father Patterson may not have used the phrases active empathy or servant leadership, I am confident he would recognize this alumnus as a wonderful example of a Kent School education put to good use. In the following pages, you will learn some of what we are doing to advance active empathy at the School.

Better than reading about the School today is experiencing it in action. I invite you to come and visit anytime.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Hirschfeld", written in a cursive style.

Michael G. Hirschfeld

Mission

We are guided by our motto-Simplicity of Life, Directness of Purpose, Self-Reliance-to educate our students intellectually, socially, ethically, and spiritually so that they will be prepared to contribute to the common good in the world beyond Kent School.

Active Empathy

Servant Leadership

Critical & Creative Thinking

Effective Communications

Engaged Citizenship

Competencies

Between the Hills and River Shore

FACULTY MILESTONES

Faculty Awards

We look forward to sharing with the community the forthcoming updates regarding additional faculty awards and recognition in acknowledgment of their outstanding contributions.



Mike Benjamin has been awarded the Norman Scott Jr. 1940 Teaching Chair in Physics, established in 1999. Mr. Benjamin was honored for his expertise in teaching the physical sciences and his contributions to the broader scientific community. Mr. Benjamin's contributions as a problem-solver, a thoughtful and creative educator, and a community member always ready to lend a hand make him an ideal recipient of the award.



Carlie Robbins has been awarded The Thomas L. Wing Fellowship in English, given in recognition of a newer member of the Kent School English Department who shows particular excellence, promise, and loyalty to the school. Ms. Robbins has contributed to all aspects of school life from dorm life in North and Case dorms to the theater program to the diving team. In the classroom, she has established herself as an excellent teacher of writing and a reflective practitioner with creative and engaging methods. From the design and production of student-made Frankenstein bookmarks to the much-talked about and highly anticipated trial of Daisy Buchanan, Ms. Robbins demonstrates that learning need not be a bore.



Maddie Schade has been awarded The Elinor S. Wing Teaching Fellowship in History, established in 2008 by John R. Wing in honor of his mother, to recognize a member of the History Department who demonstrates particular excellence, promise, and loyalty to the school. Ms. Schade has made a significant impact on campus in the classroom and beyond, all with a focus on improving the student experience. A four-section teacher of history, Ms. Schade has played an integral role in the History Department's curricular evaluation. Serving as the dorm head for Field Dorm, she has made a significant contribution to the residential experience in Field and she has helped shape the culture of the field hockey and lacrosse teams she coaches. Additionally, Ms. Schade is a member of the Disciplinary Committee and advises Kent's Model UN team.

CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

Kent Students Advocate for Ukraine

Lisa Popova '25 and Diana Mirenlova '25, accompanied by faculty members Mike Benjamin, Tim Booth, and Olivia Gogola, met with Representative Maria Horn and other legislators to discuss Ukraine's history and how the current war has affected them, friends, and families.



ATHLETICS

Podium Glory: Relay Team Triumphs

Congratulations to Wendy Cui '25, Lexie Pace '24, Shannon Ambery '25, and Olivia Piasecki '25 for placing third in the 200 freestyle relay at the 2025 Founder's League Swimming Championships with a time of 1:45:05.





ATHLETICS

Varsity Baseball Plays at Dunkin' Park

The Kent Varsity Baseball team showcased their skills in an exciting game, cheered on by alumni and parents, against Noble and Greenough School at Dunkin' Park.

ACADEMICS

Personalized College Planning



Kent School is excited to partner with College Kickstart, an innovative tool for rising sixth form students. This student-centered web application aims to promote a balanced and healthy approach to college planning.

College Kickstart takes the complexity out of college planning by utilizing comprehensive national and high school-specific admissions data. It empowers students to make informed decisions about their college choices, considering factors beyond rankings and brand names. The focus is on creating a well-rounded college list that aligns with each student's interests, goals, and financial considerations.

With College Kickstart, students can explore a range of schools that match their aspirations and values. The tool encourages open conversations between students, families, and college counselors, fostering a collaborative and supportive approach. By incorporating affordability constraints and identifying merit scholarship opportunities, College Kickstart ensures a realistic and sustainable path toward higher education.



COMMUNITY LIFE

Moving for Good Causes

In a noteworthy event for Kent's community, the inaugural Move for a Cause Color Run took place, drawing an enthusiastic turnout from our students, faculty, and staff, all united for a noble cause. Not only did participants revel in the colorful fun, but they also made a substantial impact by raising funds for several non-profit organizations. These charitable beneficiaries included the Innocent Project, Be You Live Well, One Love, The Trevor Project, and Rachel's Challenge.



CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

The Class of 1971 Prize for Multicultural Equity

Members of the Class of 1971 announced the Class of 1971 Prize for Multicultural Equity to recognize and support Kent students who have demonstrated—by their life and conduct—the value of a multicultural community, the dignity of each individual, and the imperative of equity and justice.

“I am so grateful to the Class of 1971 for their commitment to our community and for making this meaningful work a priority,” says Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Torrey Hall. “Their vision of what Kent can be is aligned with our mission and illustrates our Kent Competencies of engaged citizenship, servant leadership, and active empathy. This is another important step in Kent’s journey to educate whole students and develop servant leaders who contribute to the common good.”

The prize is memorialized on campus by Octave of Gyres, an outdoor sculpture by George Sherwood '72, that captures the essence of the multiple cultures represented in the Kent School community engaging with one another in mutual respect and dignity, with no one culture prioritized or dominant over the others.

In addition, the names and photos of the recipients will be displayed prominently on campus in a way that students will see them and in an effort to keep multicultural equity in front of the Kent Community.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Social Media Study Raises Awareness



Julia Gavin '25 embarked on an independent study about the impact of phone and social media usage on adolescent wellness. With the support of Director of Wellness Dr. Ann Kearney, Julia presented her findings, including the results of a survey of the Kent community. Julia concluded the presentation with an overview of habit changes and ways we can feel more in control of our phone and social media usage.

ARTS

Art Students Create Portraits for the Memory Project

Students from Kent’s Introduction to Studio Art and Painting classes have teamed up with The Memory Project, a youth arts organization that promotes intercultural understanding and kindness between children around the world through art.

The project involves students using their artistic talents to create personalized portraits of children in orphanages from around the world. These portraits will be sent to the children in India as special memories, providing them with a tangible reminder that they are loved and valued.



COMMUNITY LIFE

Fuller Center Spring Break Service Trip

Students participated in a meaningful service project at the Fuller Center for Housing, where they dedicated their time helping with the renovation of a historic Quaker meetinghouse for a community housing initiative.



ATHLETICS

New Swimming & Diving Record Set

Congratulations to Ben Lowy '24, who set a new Kent Swimming and Diving record for 6 dives with a score of 248.50. Ben will compete in Founders and New England Championships with his eyes on the 11 dive record. The record has been held for nearly a decade by Ryder Sammons '15 with a score of 242.65.



ARTS

Spring Musical

Congratulations to the forty-plus members of the cast, crew, and orchestra of the Performing Arts Department's presentation of *The Little Mermaid*. Mattison Auditorium was sold out for both of the amazing performances.



CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

Boardwalk Improvements

The campus boardwalk has undergone a significant transformation, with comprehensive rebuilding efforts resulting in enhanced accessibility, safety, and weatherproofing for the Administration Building. This revitalization ensures a seamless and secure pathway for students, faculty, and visitors, contributing to an overall improved campus experience.





COMMUNITY LIFE

2023-2024 Senior Council

Congratulations to the newly appointed Senior Council members. These exceptional students are chosen for their dedication, leadership abilities, and commitment to improving the school community.

Senior Prefects:

Dymond Johnson and Robby Ober

Blue Key Heads:

Gianna Espinosa and Will Kirkiles

Student Life Stewards:

Morgan Clarke and Colin Pfeifer

Sacristans:

Sar Thwaites and Sam Booth

Vergers:

Megan Duplainte and Kerry Zhou

Class Representatives:

Youbin Hyung and Will Reiland

Dorm Prefects:

Phoena Dadson (Field Dorm), Brandon Cooke (North Dorm), Maya Karafotas (Case Dorm), Haakon Oyen (Middle Dorm South), Anni Shah (Case Dorm), Bilgoon Borgil (Borsdorff Hall), Anqi Hou (Hoerle Hall), Teddy Mallgrave (North Dorm) Elizabeth Cobb (Hoerle Hall, Jack Dec (Borsdorff Hall)



IN THE WORLD

Kent in Hong Kong

Head of School Mike Hirschfeld, his wife Liesbeth, and Chief Advancement Officer Bill Kissick joined more than 100 Kent School alumni, parents/guardians, and students for a reception in Hong Kong in June.



COMMUNITY LIFE

Day of Wellness

Kent hosted a Day of Wellness, which included a presentation from Dr. Whitney Roban, a sleep expert, author, and the founder of Solve Our Sleep.

Dr. Roban's aim is to provide the sleep education and support families, students, teachers, athletes, and employees need to not only survive, but to thrive. Her training and experience as a clinical psychologist paved the way to her success as a leading sleep expert.

Following Dr. Roban's presentation, students gathered in their Community Life classes to discuss the benefits of wellness in a boarding school environment.



ARTS

Organist Accepted into Elite Arts Summer Camp

Veronica Jiang '26 was accepted into the prestigious Interlochen Center for the Arts Summer Camp 2025 in Michigan.

Pursuing her study for Organ performance, a craft that she has been honing under the tutelage of Barbara Kovacs, Choral Program Director, since the fall of 2022, Veronica has showcased her exceptional talent at St. Joseph's Chapel and St. Andrew's in Kent.

"I am expecting to improve my organ skill but also looking forward to meeting peers with the same interest as me," says Veronica. "Moreover, I am excited about the performance opportunities Interlochen provides for organ students during the camp period."

Fewer than 5,000 students in grades three-12 from across the country are accepted into the summer program, which offers an extensive selection of arts disciplines, including creative writing, dance, film and new media, interdisciplinary arts, music, theater, and visual arts.

ARTS

Vocalist Advances to Hollywood Auditions on American Idol

Paula Lanius '25 received an invitation to audition for American Idol and wowed judges Katy Perry, Lionel Richie, and Luke Bryant, earning a golden ticket to Hollywood and creating an unforgettable lifelong memory.



IN THE WORLD

Student Essay Published in the New York Times

Wendy Cui '25, was named a winner in the New York Times fourth annual STEM Writing Contest, a partnership with ScienceNews and Society4Science. Wendy's submission titled, "What the Nose Knows: The Underappreciated Olfactory Sense" has been selected as one of the top 10 winning pieces from a pool of over 5,000 entries. Her well-crafted article explores the underrated sense of smell.

The contest invited adolescents from across the globe to address an issue in science, technology, engineering, math, or health through a 500-word explanation that could be appreciated by scientists and non-scientists alike.

SPRING ATHLETICS



ON CAMPUS

Kent Welcomes New Trustees

**Avery Bourke P'10, '11**

Avery is a self-employed investor and former principal/partner at Foss & Bourke in Connecticut. He served on the Kent School Board of Trustees from 2006 to 2022, including roles as Chair of the Real Estate committee and Executive Committee member. He's also been on the Board of Visitors at Rectory School in Pomfret, CT. Avery holds a B.A. from Boston University and resides with his wife, Allison, in Greenwich, CT and Jupiter Island, FL. They are parents to Ricky '10 and Lesea '11.

**Minki Synn '92, P'26**

Minki is the founder and CEO of Maven Growth Partners, a Seoul-based venture capital firm. With over 27 years in finance, he spans investment banking, private equity, and public equity across global hubs. He led TCK Investments as CEO and directed global trading at Korea Investment & Securities. Minki was Board Chair of Seoul Foreign School and holds an A.B. in Politics from Princeton. He was involved in football, baseball, choir, and tour guiding at Kent. Minki and wife Janet reside in Seoul and Bellevue, Washington, with two children, including Morgan '26.

**Justin Nunez '05**

Justin is an experienced leader in alternative investments, specializing in building and leading diverse investment platforms in public and private markets. He values establishing enduring relationships across investments, media, and sports. Currently, he's a Partner at JAZZ Venture Partners, a \$1 billion human performance investment firm. He oversees Capital Formation & Investor Relations and innovates to expand the JAZZ network. Justin holds a B.A. in History from Columbia University, where he was part of the Division I-AA Football team. He's a dedicated boxer and runner, but his chief joy lies in family time with his wife and two children.

**Mark Whiston '80**

Mark is a private investor and owner of Rubikkon Holdings. Past roles encompass leadership at Fidelity Investments and Janus Capital Group, where he was CEO and Vice Chairman. He chaired the Investment Committee and served as a Board Trustee at Governor's Academy. Mark earned a B.A. from Harvard University, competing in varsity hockey. At Kent, he played soccer, co-captained hockey and lacrosse, and was North Dorm Prefect. Mark and his wife, Eve, reside in Aspen, Colorado, with their two sons.

**Kathy Reiland P'24**

Kathy serves on the Investment Committee at Integrum, a NYC-based investment management firm. She brings over 30 years of investment and acquisition expertise, gained from leadership roles at Standard Industries, 40 North Management, and Evercore Partners, where she was a senior managing director for 18 years. Kathy was actively involved in Evercore's diversity initiatives, including launching the Women's Forum to foster women's leadership. She holds a B.A. from Duke University and an MBA from Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business. Kathy and her husband Bill reside in New York with their son, Will '24.







ACTIVE EMPATHY

Cultivating Understanding
and Action at Kent School

An increasingly connected yet fractured world makes the need for active empathy more pronounced than ever before. As it evolves from a desirable trait into an essential skill, how does Kent School define, teach, uphold, and measure active empathy? Through discussions with students, faculty, and administrators, we shed light on the profound impact of active empathy in shaping the school's culture and guiding its educational philosophy.

"In a community like Kent's, the appreciation we share for learning the perspectives of others—and working actively to forge connections across any real or perceived differences—is a major contributor to our success," says Dean of Community Life Jason Coulombe. "It creates a healthy community and provides the needed foundation for our students to grow intellectually, socially, ethically, and spiritually."

At Kent, active empathy transcends the comprehension of another's perspective; it involves a proactive commitment to advancing mutual understanding, reaching beyond boundaries, and bridging divides. By fostering an empathetic environment, the School aims to cultivate a sense of compassion, belonging, and inclusivity among students. Active empathy occupies a central position within the curriculum as one of the five core competencies that are taught in every aspect of life on campus.

"Active empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person and to take action to help or support that person," says Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity (EID) Torrey Hall. "It is one of the keys to the success of our community."

Understanding Active Empathy

From its founding as a school for families of modest means, Kent has been a community rooted in empathy. As the societal context around inclusivity, belonging, and diversity has evolved over the ensuing century-plus, Kent's practice of empathy has grown in tandem. More than simply maintaining an awareness of how others feel, active empathy requires purposeful action to engage directly with other perspectives and experiences to find common ground.

Each student arrives at Kent with their own level of active empathy, and the School approaches it as a skill to be developed much like writing or time management. Through reflection and intentional effort—a driving force in fostering mutual understanding, promoting collaboration, and cultivating meaningful relationships within the school community—students expand their capacity for active empathy and, in the process, create an inclusive and compassionate environment where diverse experiences are valued and personal growth is nurtured.

"The active component, for me, is when you take the next step and when empathy becomes more reflective and cerebral," says Academic Dean Dr. Kevin MacNeil. "It is something you have to work at." MacNeil believes this effort becomes even more consequential in a 24/7 residential community. "You have opportunities in an environment like this to cultivate active empathy that just aren't available when kids have their own social worlds away from school," he says, adding, "The building of active empathy starts that first night at school: How am I going to manage here with this person whom I've just met?"

Dean of St. Joseph's Chapel Rev. Dr. Kate Kelderman defines active empathy as the ability to see situations, conversations, and the world itself through different points of view to understand one another. "Living together in peace

depends on our ability to shift the crystal and see another's perspective," says Kelderman, adding that living in peace does not imply the absence of conflict but rather a collaborative approach to resolving it. "Teaching teenagers how to resolve disagreements in healthy, whole-making ways is so valuable. It is a critical part of their individuation and makes our community better."

"If we develop a mindset where we are constantly thinking of others," says Coulombe, "we can easily shift into seeing impact as more important than intent. What you intended is not as nearly as important as the impact of your actions. Thinking that way helps us consider if we're doing everything we can to improve Kent for everyone."

Active Empathy in a Residential Environment

Active empathy permeates every aspect of campus life and fuels the multi-dimensional relationships that build a healthy and inclusive environment for faculty and students alike. "Kent is unique in that this is not just a place of learning, but also a place where students and faculty live, eat, and socialize," says Hall. "Fostering a culture of empathy and understanding is essential for promoting a positive and supportive living and learning environment." History Department Chair Sierra Thomsen agrees, stating, "Understanding that we are all in this together, that humans need grace in life, and that we are stronger when we take care of one another, keeps our community healthy."

"Students at boarding schools do not have the opportunity to sit down with their parents at the end of the day and go through their day to process the ups and downs," says Director of Residential Life Cara Clarke. "It is important for us adults to provide students the same opportunity that they are missing from being away from home. It is not necessarily enough to tell them we understand what they are managing as young people—we must find ways to show them as well. We need to show up to support them in all aspects of their lives here at Kent from the classroom to the sports field to the stage and at home in their residential spaces."

Expressing genuine care and concern for one another is a foundational element that shapes the Kent experience, enabling students to contribute to a culture of compassion and navigate the complexities of living in a diverse community. "Meeting people where they are and trying to understand what they need helps us solve problems with them," says Academic Technology Integrator Rachel Sopko. She emphasizes the significance of not making individuals feel inadequate or wrong for struggling with technology or any other aspect of life at Kent, but instead supporting them and helping them develop the skills necessary to flourish. "Active empathy involves respect for the process of learning, no matter the student's background or what skills they bring," says Math Department Chair Kendra Galusha. "Listening to the input of peers and being open to different methods of arriving at a solution is key to positive learning. Encouraging students to give answers and perspectives, even the wrong



"The building of active empathy starts that first night at school: How am I going to manage here with this person whom I've just met?"

DR. KEVIN MACNEIL
ACADEMIC DEAN

ones, helps us all to grow.”

As Kent students develop a deeper understanding of others’ backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, a sense of camaraderie and shared respect arises that guides them through the challenges inherent in communal living. Director of Counseling Jamel Bonello highlights the significance of active empathy in enhancing the connectedness of the community. She explains, “When students live together, it’s essential that they develop the ability to understand and empathize with one another. Active empathy creates a sense of belonging and fosters a supportive environment where students feel seen, heard, and valued.”

St. Joseph’s Chapel plays a significant role in nurturing active empathy. Through discussions and storytelling, students are exposed to narratives that differ from their own experiences, learning to seek commonalities amidst differences. Kelderman explains, “In the Chapel program, students hear stories that are sometimes very dissimilar to their own. They learn to look for commonalities in the midst of differences. They learn about different faith traditions and how to practice respect for a tradition that is not their own.”

Athletic Director John Barrett recognizes the transformative power of active empathy in building team cultures that lead to on-field success, stating, “Empathy is crucial in building high-caliber teams and a championship culture. It starts in the locker room, where student-athletes and coaches truly know and understand each other, and extends out from there. Empathy helps create a sense of value, support, and connection within the team, leading to a more inclusive and successful environment.”

By fostering active empathy in the Kent community, the

School strives to create an ecosystem in which community members build meaningful relationships, embrace diversity, and fully engage in campus life. “The benefit of attending a school like Kent is ultimately not about any specific content learning, it’s about the relationships and the feeling of being here,” says Hall. “We hear from alumni that those relationships carry through the rest of their lives. A student in my algebra class will remember how I made them feel about the subject long after they remember any of the mathematical concepts I taught them. That is why we put so much emphasis on active empathy: because it’s an everyday, lifelong skill.”

Teaching Active Empathy

Teaching active empathy at Kent School encompasses a wide range of programs and pedagogies, embracing an integrated multidisciplinary approach that addresses the nuances of human connection.

A foundational aspect of teaching active empathy is literature. “Research has demonstrated that reading, especially literary fiction, helps develop empathy,” says Director of the John Gray Park ’28 Library Amy Voorhees. “By putting yourself in the shoes of someone else, you experience the world in different ways and gain perspective.” Voorhees highlights the library’s contribution to encouraging empathy through reading and targeted programming. “When people think of libraries, they think of reading, and that is inherently an empathy-based process. We have specific programs that foster reading and research, which intertwine with classroom use.

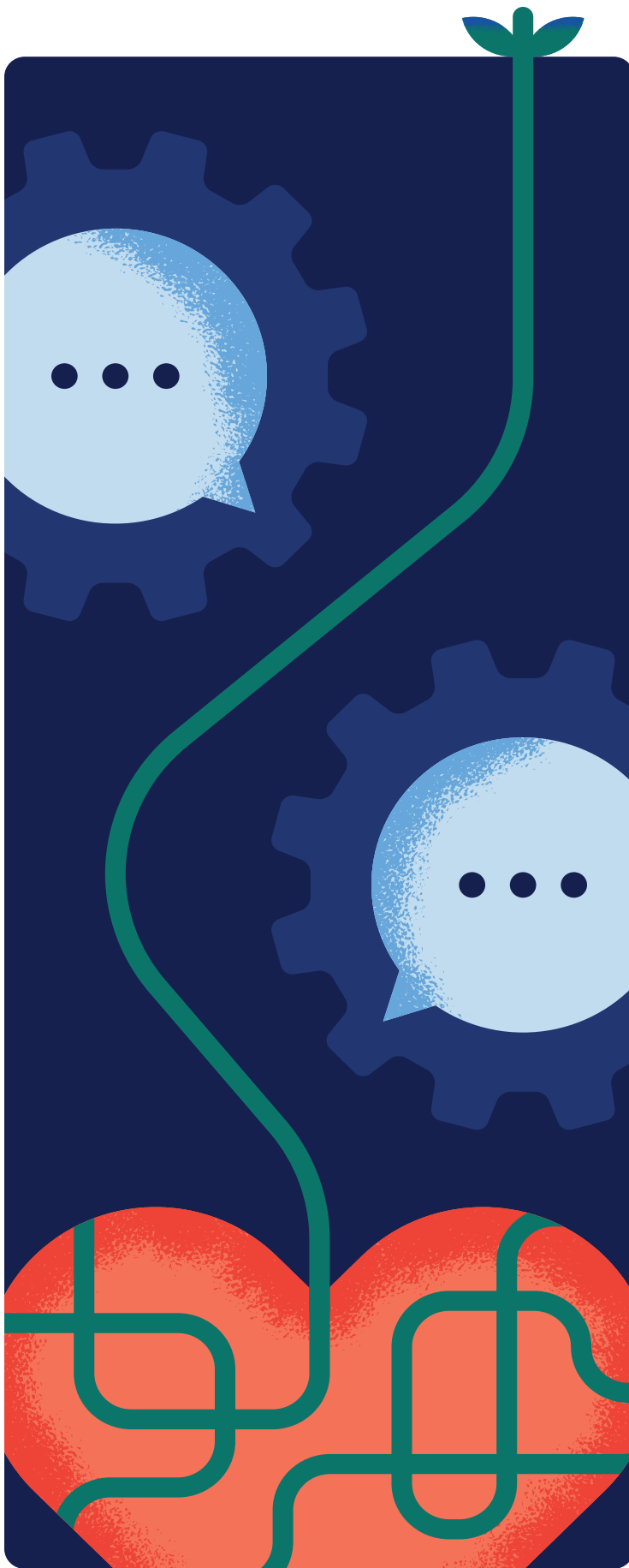
Through a combination of thought-provoking literature,



“Listening to the input of peers and being open to different methods of arriving at a solution is key to positive learning. Encouraging students to give answers and perspectives, even the wrong ones, helps us all to grow.”

KENDRA GALUSHA
MATH DEPARTMENT CHAIR





meaningful discussions, and the practice of exploring different perspectives, the English Department creates an environment that encourages active empathy and deepens students' understanding of the world around them. English Department Chair Andrew Baird explains, "While reading texts that often are outside of their own experience, we ask students to enter into those characters' experiences, imagine what it's like, and try to understand their motivations and perspectives." This diversification of the curriculum allows students to engage with different viewpoints and engage in meaningful, carefully-facilitated discussions where they listen to, acknowledge, and expand upon each other's contributions.

Baird is proud that he and his colleagues honor the unique challenges and opportunities of teaching American literature in a school with an international population. "If you have international students, you can't just assume that we're working from the same cultural experience or set of values," he says. By actively getting to know students and their lived experiences, the English Department promotes deeper understanding and empathy within the classroom.

The integration of classroom conversations and Chapel Talks further enhances students' understanding and application of empathy. These interconnected discussions provide a holistic learning experience, allowing students to delve deeper into diverse perspectives and witness empathy in action.

The Visual Arts program encourages students to share their views and unique stories with the community through creating and exhibiting artwork. Class critiques and discussions promote respect for each other's artistic instincts. Visual Arts Department Chair Jenna Lynch and her colleagues work to broaden students' references through exposure to various creative viewpoints. "That way," says Lynch, "students not only develop their artistic skills but also cultivate empathy as they learn to appreciate and understand the perspectives and intentions of others."

In Visual Arts classes, students are introduced to a wide range of artists from diverse backgrounds to inspire their artwork and foster understanding and respect for different points of view. Lynch and her colleagues provide examples of recent artists studied, such as John Akomfra, Julie Mehretu, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, and Kehinde Wiley.

The Modern Language Department promotes active empathy by fostering an understanding of different cultures and perspectives, incorporating authentic primary sources, and engaging students in discussions about global issues. Through language learning, students develop empathy skills that extend beyond the classroom and help them navigate a diverse and interconnected world.

"In my class, we might learn about how girls in remote villages in Francophone Africa are being encouraged to attend school rather than drop out to get married," says Modern Languages Department Chair Kristen Benjamin. "A Spanish class might learn about conservation initiatives in the Amazon that spur local community engagement."

Alumni Perspective

KAREN RULE '96



Karen Rule '96, LCSW, Kent School alumna and a Master's Degree holder in Social Work, is an authority in children, adolescent, individual, and family therapy. Drawing from her time at Kent School, Karen defines active empathy as "the ability to understand, listen, and actively share someone else's feelings." Beyond understanding, she advocates for actively driving change and offering support to individuals and communities.

Throughout her experiences as a student at Kent School and subsequent career in social work, Rule has found active empathy to be crucial in today's world. She notes that active empathy can foster understanding, unity, and progress in a society where finger-pointing and lack of listening are common. Rule recalls how the Kent School community came together during a tragic event, illustrating the power of empathy in providing support during challenging times.

In her capacity as a clinical social worker, Rule witnesses the transformative effects of empathy in her therapy sessions. By creating a safe space, she helps clients navigate their experiences, offering genuine understanding and actively challenging their thoughts. This approach enables clients to grow and embrace

"It's about taking a moment to actively listen, engage, ask questions that will help you understand. I found that most people will appreciate if you work hard on trying to grasp what was going on for them, even if it's something foreign to you."

positive change in their lives.

Drawing from her experiences, Rule advises current Kent School students to actively listen, engage, and ask questions to foster deeper connections with others. Genuine kindness and the willingness to learn from diverse perspectives can significantly impact their community, paving the way for positive change.

Rule's journey as a former student at Kent School exemplifies how active empathy, a core value at the school, resonates throughout alumni's personal and professional lives, creating a ripple effect of compassion and understanding in the world beyond.



“We’re changing the mindset that helping others is a zero-sum game because relationship-building and empathy are synergistic. It’s a win-win.”

JASON COULOMBE
DEAN, COMMUNITY LIFE

The learning process in the Modern Languages Department is scaffolded, meaning that the complexity of discussions and materials varies based on the language proficiency of the students. Even in the very beginning of the language learning process, it is hopefully evident to students and reinforced by teachers that we are learning these languages because real people use them in real interactions every day around the world.

Thomsen elaborates on the specific teaching practices employed by the History Department to cultivate active empathy, emphasizing the selection of historic narratives that encourage empathy and the integration of these narratives into debates and discussions in the classroom. “We ask students to take on different viewpoints and argue opposing ideas to their own, to debate with themselves,” she says. This approach encourages students to embrace active empathy and incorporate it into their interactions with others. “I see empathy in the ways we engage in the past in the classroom and relate it to today,” she says, adding that teaching empathy further benefits students by prompting them to more deeply consider their place in the world beyond Kent.

In Performing Arts, empathy is most directly taught through the teamwork and direction involved in mounting a concert or production. “The way that our performers support each other as they perform is the biggest example,” says Director of Performing Arts Geoff Stewart. “And we model empathy as we work. We try to understand our students and give them direction that will produce the right results while taking into account the way they’re going to feel about the direction. If you’re not empathetic towards your students, you’re not going to make any progress.

“There’s a culture in the arts when you’re asking someone to do something, you have to be empathetic because so often it involves something personal to the student,” continues Stewart. “Someone is playing a character where the student has to empathize to be able to play it correctly. As we direct them, we try to connect their own experience to the role. And often you get there by thinking about what’s similar in my own life.”

In the Engineering Department, Director of Engineering Carlos Bezerra works with students to practice empathy in daily interactions, emphasizing its role in team projects, discussions, and brainstorming sessions. “All of our engineering interactions start with listening intently,” says Bezerra, highlighting the importance of a harmonious environment when grappling with the many complex challenges that arise in project-based, hands-on learning. “We discuss in class and through our projects what it means to be part of a team: how we must be empathetic and non-judgmental to be successful. We create an inclusive, no-blame culture that empowers our students to contribute their ideas and find consensus with confidence.”

In the Science Department, active empathy is not explicitly scaffolded in the curriculum, though Department Chair Jesse Klingebiel and his colleagues incorporate it into teaching methods and highlight its presence in the

material. “Environmental science, in particular, lends itself to understanding the perspectives of others,” says Klingebiel. “In the curriculum, we look at worldviews and examine both the human-centric worldview and the broader impact on the ecosystem as a whole.” Klingebiel and his colleagues facilitate discussions where students can express their ideas and work together. “I will put students into small breakout groups to discuss various topics and scenarios. This allows them to have meaningful discussions and learn how to support each other,” Klingebiel says.

By integrating discussions and collaborative projects, the Science Department fosters active empathy among students. Moreover, Klingebiel recognizes the tremendous value of collaborative projects and lab work in providing students with a deeper understanding of their classmates’ lives and responsibilities outside of the classroom. When working on lab reports or long-term projects, students must coordinate schedules and consider the time demands of their lab partners. This experience helps them appreciate the different



commitments and interests of their peers.

The Math Department takes a similar approach to empathy. “The most common way we address active empathy is in how we encourage students to work in teams and mix up groups so they are interacting with different peers on different projects,” says Galusha. “In particular, the Computer Science course includes a project that studies the digital divide amongst various ethnic and financial groups. The study of data sets in several of our math classes are used to encourage conversation and discussion that challenge students to think about different backgrounds and effects on various types of people in the world.”

In the Community Life curriculum, active empathy is a key focus of the fall term. “Our conversations are aimed to get into what it means to be empathetic and how acting on that is foundational to being in this community,” Coulombe says. “And it’s not just sitting and talking about why being empathetic, understanding, inclusive, and equitable is important,” he continues, “but, why is it important to act on

these things? And why do we benefit when we act on these things? We’re changing the mindset that helping others is a zero-sum game because relationship-building and empathy are synergistic. It’s a win-win.”

The Residential Life program, which incorporates dormitories and advisory, embraces the teaching opportunities inherent in one-on-one interactions with students. “Every time we sit down with a student individually, we are teaching empathy,” says Clarke. “Whether we’re guiding a student through conflict resolution, navigating the relationship with their roommate, the dynamics of their friend group, or beyond, we’re asking students to consider how they can keep kindness, care, and empathy at the center of their actions.”

Dean of Students Dale Reinhardt echoes Clarke, highlighting the powerful learning that occurs in advisory. “Dedicated time to connect with students on their level, model for them behaviors, and discuss topics that are important to them on a personal level is a critical element to their growth,” says Reinhardt. “We aim to facilitate conversations that help us gain a better understanding of each other’s needs and expectations.”

Designing curricula that address the nuances of active empathy is critical; however, according to MacNeil, lessons in active empathy ultimately start with the adult community. “It is important for teachers to understand who these young people really are. What are their learning styles? What are their impressions and attitudes about the subject, and what is the best way to reach them?” he says. “All of us student-facing adults are accomplished practitioners of active empathy in part because, as a profession, teaching in a boarding school environment is self-selecting. People who go into this line of work usually are people who possess a high degree of empathy and the capacity to reach a variety of people.

“One of the most effective techniques we have to teach active empathy is to serve as role models to our students,” MacNeil continues. “Students are interacting with us and each other all day long. The spontaneous connections that come from a lesson in the morning through practice in the afternoon to a moment with a dorm parent in the evening—those instances of connection and feedback are probably the most effective teaching and learning moments. A boarding school is sort of a laboratory of virtue, which makes them exciting places to be. And active empathy is one of those virtuous forces.”

Encouraging Students

Lessons in empathy extend well beyond the academic day. By harnessing the transformative power of hands-on experiences focused on service, leadership, equity, and inclusion, students are exposed to a variety of situations that allow them to apply empathy in real-life situations and foster a sense of social responsibility.

Coulombe emphasizes the importance of community service and social initiatives in helping students develop a



“Whether we’re guiding a student through conflict resolution, navigating the relationship with their roommate, the dynamics of their friend group, or beyond, we’re asking students to consider how they can keep kindness, care, and empathy at the center of their actions.”

CARA CLARKE
DIRECTOR, RESIDENTIAL LIFE



Alumni Perspective

JON GELLER '06



Kent School alumnus and Certified Athletic Therapist Jon Geller '06 reflects on an impactful experience during his time as a student that underscores the significance of active empathy. He shared a dorm room with a roommate from Korea. "Living far from home for the first time, our backgrounds were distinct. We actively empathized with each other's challenges, forming a bond that eased our adjustment process."

Kent School's commitment to active empathy extended beyond classrooms. Geller fondly remembers formal dinners as a unique platform for connection. "Formal dinners encouraged lively conversations and genuine interactions among students. It was during these gatherings that we actively listened and embraced diverse viewpoints, enriching our understanding of each other."

Transitioning to his personal and professional life after Kent, Geller realized the transformative impact of active empathy. "In my personal life, active empathy fostered deeper connections with loved ones. Professionally, as a Certified Athletic Therapist, empathetic engagement facilitated trust with patients and colleagues, ultimately enhancing care quality."

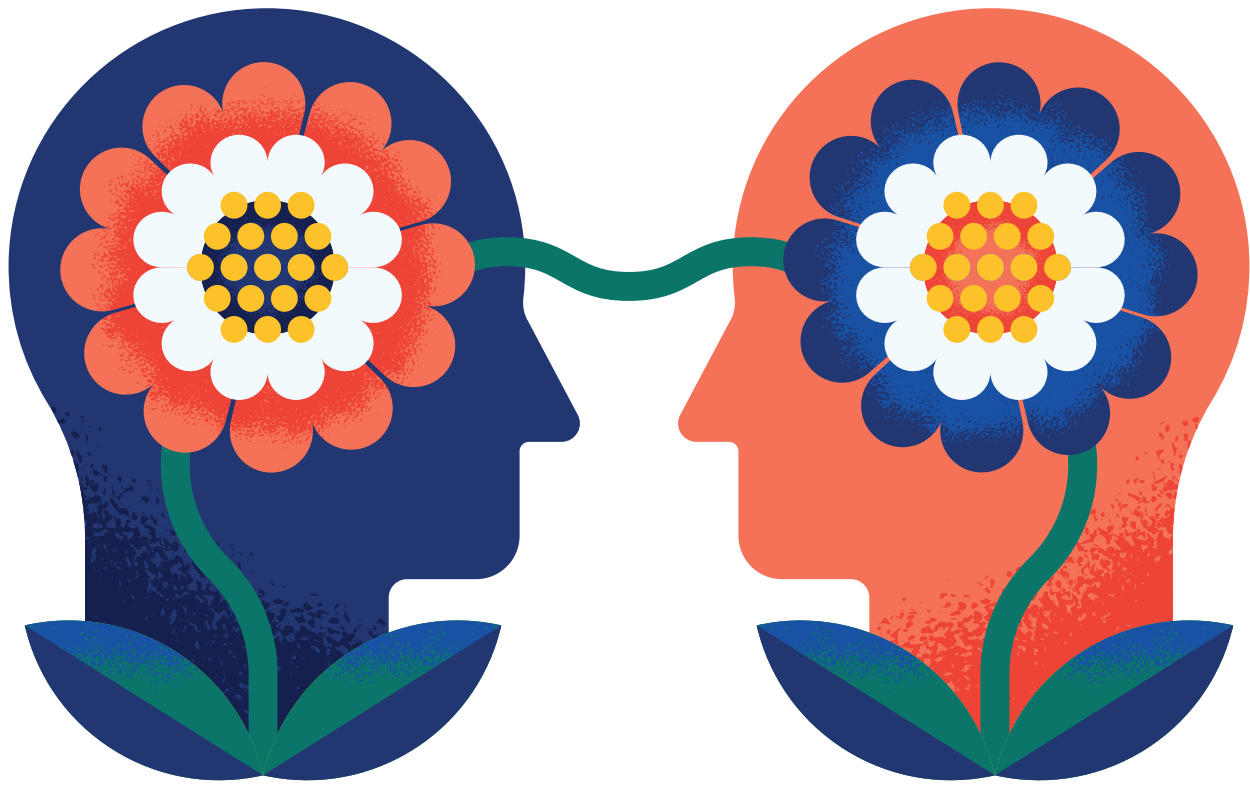
"Recognizing and accepting difference in others. The willingness to understand another person's perspective, emotions, thoughts and actions. In today's world, difference should be accepted, respected, and celebrated."

Acknowledging challenges in practicing active empathy, he shared, "Some individuals have barriers that require time and patience to break down. Respecting their boundaries is crucial, as active empathy should never force openness."

Geller's journey in active empathy, he attests, is a continuous process of growth and reflection. "I assess my growth by regularly reflecting on my interactions. Honest introspection helps me adjust my approach, ensuring I remain open to learning and evolving."

He attributes Kent School's emphasis on discussion-based learning and open communication to his empathetic development. "The habit of actively listening and inquiring to understand was cultivated during my time at Kent. This skill, combined with the school's diverse environment, laid a strong foundation for empathetic interactions."

For current Kent School students, Geller's advice resonates deeply: "Embrace differences openly. Challenge your perspectives and approach conversations with empathy. Vulnerability and caring are the cornerstones of active empathy, fostering positive change within your community."



deeper understanding of others' experiences.

"Through hands-on involvement, students learn to apply their empathetic mindset beyond the School's boundaries and make a positive impact in the broader community," he states. "They gain a sense of agency and the realization that their actions can make a difference." By engaging in service projects and advocacy work, students not only contribute to the betterment of society but also develop a greater appreciation for the array of needs and challenges faced by others.

"We attract a very diverse group of students here that come from many different backgrounds and cultures," says Barrett.

"It's critical that we strike on all cylinders to live in harmony and understand each other. We want to make it normal to understand where we're from, ask questions, and respect each other regardless of what our beliefs are."

Hall highlights the EID Office's collaborative efforts with faculty and staff to integrate active empathy into day-to-day life. "We emphasize the importance of listening, asking questions, and seeking to understand others' perspectives," he says. "These are essential elements of active empathy and of the Kent experience to provide students with opportunities to practice those skills in different contexts." Hall explains that the School's approach is scaffolded, with younger

students receiving age-appropriate instruction and opportunities to develop empathy skills.

Director of College Counseling Shawn Rousseau and his team intentionally model empathy and understanding while guiding students and their families through the college counseling process. "We focus on providing information and responding openly to all concerns and questions," says Rousseau. "By striking a balance between empathy and realism, and with an understanding that the process may not always yield consistently good news, we provide a level of support that goes beyond simply strengthening our students' applications.

"The college process is so different for each candidate, and it can be a source of anxiety for some while others may have different experiences," Rousseau continues. "We encourage students to be thoughtful with each other, respect individual differences, and understand that everyone's journey is unique." He cites the growth of students and the support they provide to one another as examples of the caretaking and support the College Counseling Office demonstrates.

When addressing violations of policies and community norms, Reinhardt and his colleagues in the Dean's Office strive to lead with empathy. "We recently adapted the Disciplinary Committee and created the Community Conduct Council in

an attempt to be less authoritative and punitive and more restorative in upholding our community standards," says Reinhardt. "We have also fostered stronger relationships with our student leaders to gain a better understanding of the needs of our students and provide them a more defined voice. The increased agency provides us as adults a clearer platform to express the 'why' of what we are trying to accomplish from a policy and procedure perspective."

"My colleague [Director of Bands and Music Technology] Tom Bouldin recently asked the question: can we have entertainment without empathy?" says Stewart. "That is how an audience responds to a performance and it is what we depend upon. One of my all-time favorite Kent stories is a musical we did that involved a dead body on the stage for much of the show," says Stewart. "We cast [former Athletic Director and current Director of Planned Giving] Todd Marble as the dead body. He had never done anything in the performing arts at Kent and the thing he said afterward was, 'I had no idea how much teamwork went on in this situation. It's just like the football team.'"

"Kent is a place that can pride itself on being a warm, kind community where being empathetic to each other is really important," says Rousseau. "We're here for the students, not just for college,

but for all different reasons," he says. "Building trust and being a resource for them is an important part of what we do."

Student Perspectives

Purposefully incorporating active empathy into life at Kent School is a fundamental part of the student experience. "Since we know our community so thoroughly, active empathy is a constant practice in our daily lives," says Linnea Saxton '25. As students actively engage with others, relationships are formed and countless situations to demonstrate empathy result.

As a member of the 2022-2025 Senior Council, Saxton strived to acknowledge the challenges that others face in all of her interactions with fellow students. "Demonstrating that I am willing to empathize with others' situations fosters trust and encourages them to open up," says Saxton, underscoring the steps Kent students take to actively create a sense of belonging among the student body.

Dymond Jonhson '24 incorporates simple but significant gestures, citing, "Just smiling and waving on a regular basis" as an effective way to infuse active empathy into everyday interactions. Beyond that, Jonhson highlights the importance of peer support. "People know me to always be out there, and I will show up on any occasion," says Johnson, illustrating a dedication to supporting peers and exemplifying a reciprocal effect of active empathy. "Even on my worst days, thinking that maybe if I put a smile on someone else's face can do so much more for me," she says.

Hudson Small '25 emphasizes the depth of understanding that can be achieved in an environment like Kent where he shares classrooms and dorms with classmates from 50 different counties. "Having students from different parts of the world in our classes brings such a wealth of perspectives," says Small.

When reflecting on his own growth in active empathy, Small finds inspiration in his math teacher, Ms. You, citing her genuine care and thoughtfulness towards students. "Ms. You checks the database and marks every student's birthday on her calendar," Small explains. "She sends them a personalized email, regardless of how well she knows them." Her commitment to recognizing and celebrating each student's special day serves as a shining example of her unwavering empathy and kindness.

Assessing Growth

Faculty and administrators recognize the importance of tracking and measuring students' progress in developing empathy to ensure continuous growth and improvement, though there is an inherent challenge in assessing a so-called soft skill like empathy.

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) team under the leadership of ARC Director Bethany Booth plays a vital role in fostering and assessing students' development of active empathy. Through ongoing communication and collaboration with teachers and advisors, the ARC team collects feedback and evaluates students' progress in key areas such as

communication, relationship-building, conflict resolution, and perspective-taking. "Students learn by practicing empathy with some guidance and reminders during our meetings," Booth explains, underscoring the value of this comprehensive feedback system. It encourages students to engage in introspection, identifying areas for growth while consistently prioritizing active empathy in their learning journey.

For Coulombe, a quantifiable metric of Kent's empathy education lies in disciplinary cases, absenteeism, and traffic in the Counseling Center. "The curriculum and programs related to wellness, service, and leadership development that directly support active empathy are constantly evolving and adapting to meet the needs of the students," he says. "Through these programs, we aim to be proactive and help students consider choices and actions that allow faculty to focus more on teaching and advising and less on responding to issues around discipline, attendance, and the need for counseling services."

Hall's approach involves collecting data that can be measured over time. "We distribute surveys and assessments of student attitudes and behaviors regularly," he says. "We use the results to measure active empathy and refine our approach, ensuring ongoing evolution and growth."

"Because we are speaking to active empathy in so many different venues—Community Life classes, dorm meetings, advisory, leadership training, athletics and activities, and beyond—we take a holistic approach to measuring empathy," says Clarke. "We observe closely and ask ourselves, how is the overall wellness and growth of our community? Are students thriving? Are they giving back? Are they happy?"

Measuring growth in active empathy also involves personal milestones. Saxton considers the willingness of her peers to open up to her as an external indicator of her growth in empathy. When others feel comfortable sharing their struggles with her, it serves as evidence of her development in active empathy. Additionally, Saxton acknowledges internal milestones, such as feeling a sense of connection and concern for others' problems or hardships. These reflections on her empathetic capacity provide valuable insights into her personal growth.

MacNeil believes the measurement of active empathy should respond to the age and circumstances of the student. "With younger kids, it might be watching happy interactions in the Dining Hall or an obvious illustration that they are having fun and enjoying their experience," he says. "That probably means they're learning the right things. For sixth formers, you would look more closely at what they say, and how they say it, in regards to a variety of issues on campus and beyond. With an increase in group work in classes, you can actually watch how students interact with each other around any subject matter. You can see whether they are listening carefully to others and how they are responding to what they're hearing from their teammates."

By assessing and nurturing the growth of active empathy, Kent School ensures that students continue to develop their empathetic mindset, fostering a community characterized by understanding, respect, and positive relationships.



"We distribute surveys and assessments of student attitudes and behaviors regularly," he says. "We use the results to measure active empathy and refine our approach, ensuring ongoing evolution and growth."

TORREY HALL
DIRECTOR OF EQUITY,
INCLUSION, AND DIVERSITY

Desired Outcomes

The intentionality of teaching active empathy at Kent is matched by the clarity of the desired outcome: developing the strongest possible community and ensuring Kent School remains a leader in attending to the wholeness of each student.

A critical outcome is the cumulative, community-building impact of truly caring for one another that comes from nurturing students' character, interpersonal skills, and social consciousness. "The culture of care and mentorship is nurtured within the Kent community, where older students guide and mentor younger ones," says Religion Department Chair Dr. David Greene. "This cycle of empathy and support creates a sense of belonging and fosters our compassionate community." Voorhees adds, "We want students to be more understanding of differences and more respectful of the experience of others."

"Our hope within the residential program is to teach our students through example the importance of showing up for each other," says Clarke. "It takes a village to raise and support our students and we hope they will not only feel the support of the faculty but also know they have support from each other."

Rousseau agrees that developing a genuine understanding of community and caring for fellow classmates is the clearest objective. "The goal is for students to embody empathy as they navigate college counseling and other aspects of school life," says Rousseau. "Through this emphasis on empathy, we aim to shape individuals who can bring their empathetic mindset into their future endeavors, fostering positive relationships and making a difference in their communities."

Barrett echoes the importance of understanding others' emotions and feelings, then using that understanding to create a connected environment in which each member feels valued. "Active empathy is assuring that everyone understands their value and their place within our community," he says. "From the classroom to your team and beyond, empathy can help you see where you need to grow to improve yourself and the community." To meet the desired outcome of every student feeling valued, supported, heard, and connected, Barrett is focused on incorporating empathy into coaching through workshops and a culture that translates into tangible actions on the field in the thick of competition.

Stewart echoes that sentiment, adding, "I think the ideal outcome is that students who graduate have an appreciation for people who are different from themselves because they've been exposed to that here."

Lynch sees how Kent positions students to move through the world as ambassadors. "The ideal outcome is for students' experiences at Kent to shape them into compassionate and creative citizens with the ability to think critically," she says. "With big hearts and broader understanding, they will, in turn, be compassionate and creative citizens."

Active Empathy Beyond Kent

The impact of active empathy extends well beyond the lovely valley land. As students graduate and enter the wider world, they carry with them the skills and perspectives gained through their experiences. They become servant leaders, advocates for positive change, and caring community members who prioritize kindness and understanding.

Saxton recognizes that active empathy is a lifelong skill that will continue to benefit her beyond her time at Kent. "The focus on individual friendships and commitment to each relationship at Kent can easily transfer to larger communities, fostering empathy and connection," she says of her ability to support others in various aspects of her life.

This ripple effect is not taken for granted among the faculty, as Kelderman notes: "The learning community at Kent School mirrors the larger world community, enabling students to carry their empathy into the wider world."

Johnson believes that the practice of active empathy will benefit her future endeavors, especially when it comes to navigating environments with many types of people. She explains, "I'm [interacting with a diverse community] on a daily basis at Kent, and I will most likely be required to be around lots of people when I leave Kent. I'm already prepared."

Small firmly believes that active empathy extends beyond his time at Kent and will profoundly impact his future endeavors. He recognizes the inspiring influence of individuals like Ms. You, who contribute to creating a supportive school community and shape his own understanding of empathy. The transformative experiences and role models he has encountered at Kent have instilled in him a deep appreciation for empathy as a guiding principle in life.

"Our learning community is a microcosm of the larger world community," says Lynch. "Our students can carry what they learn at Kent into the wider world."

In Conclusion

Kent School's mission to educate students intellectually, socially, ethically, and spiritually so that they will be prepared to contribute to the common good hinges upon a community that prioritizes, teaches, encourages, and measures active empathy.

Through an intentional, cross-functional effort, Kent students understand how active empathy catalyzes personal growth and self-awareness. By engaging with diverse perspectives and experiences, students broaden their horizons, challenge their assumptions, and develop a more nuanced understanding of the world around them.

Kent's emphasis on active empathy is a model for how schools and other organizations can spark compassionate leadership, caring communities, and advocacy for positive change in a complex and interconnected world.



"I'm interacting with a diverse community on a daily basis at Kent, and I will most likely be required to be around lots of people when I leave Kent. I'm already prepared."

DYMOND JOHNSON '24



Memory Lane

Inspired to learn about Kent's traditions, practices and customs—some long lost, some still beloved—Larry Gile '75 mined the School's archives and interviewed dozens of alumni to unearth a treasure trove of history and memories. Each issue will unveil one of Mr. Gile's finds.

Active empathy sits at the fore at Kent School today as a recognition that a top-flight educational institution must address the importance of understanding and supporting both the world around us and the world within us. A vital factor that has existed and been

practiced at Kent since its founding, active empathy has evolved to meet the increasingly complex demands placed on both students and the School. This column explores specific moments of empathy and outreach in the School's first 67 years.



SCHOOLHOUSE IN MACEDONIA where Sunday School classes are conducted regularly by Kent undergraduates.



The Early Days of Outreach and Looking Beyond the Self and Community

During the School's first twenty years (1906-1926) its gaze was not directed entirely inward, as acts of charity and outreach were undertaken consistent with the School's Christian values:

Sending \$21.00 collected from the students' Chapel offering to the Canadian Red Cross to purchase Christmas stockings for soldiers (Kent News, November 4, 1916)

In 1917, establishing a Sunday school in Macedonia, run by Kent School students, teaching 22 children between three and 15 years old.

Sending \$425 to an alumnus working as a missionary in China. These funds were profits from the School's Co-Operative stores. (Kent News, January 17, 1919)

Starting a Boys' Club, run by fifth and sixth formers, working with six young boys from town. The goal of the club was to "bring the town youths not only into more intimate terms with the School but to institute athletics among them. (Kent News, January 30, 1920)

In 1921, a group of Kent students met with Fr. Sill to discuss plans to establish "friendly relations" with the George Junior Republic, an institution for youth that would have been described at the time as a "reform school." Relations with George Junior Republic were established and deepened to include athletic competition.

The Student as "A Unit of a Machine"

During much of the School's early period, the main role of a student was to fit in and obey the rules:

The Kent boy, although treated as an individual, is a unit of a machine. He has his duties to perform. Whether these duties are difficult or seem unfair is another matter. He must perform them regardless of his own sentiments. (Kent News, September 30, 1922)

The consequence of a student's failure to subordinate his own interests to those of the community could be profound:

As a community becomes larger individual desires become more diversified, and although some of these desires are antidotes to each other, the far greater part are in opposition. This conflict of cravings will soon result in chaos unless checked. (Kent News, December 1, 1925)

The rewards, or outcomes, of adhering to expectations of the community, could be profound. In a December 19, 1954 Kent News editorial titled "Kent and The Depression," a letter from an alumnus to Fr. Sill was reprinted. It comments on the apparent ability of Kent alums and students to weather the depression better than many in society:

But more than work, play, discipline, and the other matters which came along in a routine day by day, is a deeper set of factors which are difficult for me to describe even in retrospect, but which subconsciously make a fellow realize that life is well worth living, that life is really uncomplicated if he develops a purpose and an incentive to attain it, and that life is nothing to be afraid of. In other words, I believe that most Kent fellows are psychologically well-balanced to look life right in the eye.

As for tending to the inner self, this was a task left pretty much to the student. A Kent News article of April 25, 1919 implies that a good chum can be among the most effective responses to life's vicissitudes:

No boy is without difficulties and problems which he and a true friend consider thinking about... some of these he can fight out by himself to advantage, but others there are which need sorely a little outside advice.

The Patterson Era – Change is Afoot

Due to medical issues, Fr. Sill stepped down as the School's Head in May 1940, and was succeeded by Fr. William Chalmers who served as acting and then as permanent Head effective June 1941. Fr. Chalmers stayed in this role until

Top left:
Macedonia Schoolhouse

Top right:
1921 Sunday School

1949 when the Rev. John O. Patterson assumed the full-time position. He, in turn, served in the role until 1962 when Sidney Towle took over. During the Patterson era, the School had a renaissance as old belief systems and practices gave way, creating new opportunities for students to better understand those in the world around them, their place, and the roles they might fulfill. Below are some examples of this awakening:

The Kent News of November 16, 1949 featured an editorial proposing the end of the School's practice where the youngest students acted as de facto servants for sixth formers for a specified period of time each academic year. Introduced by Fr. Sill in 1953 (see the May 3, 1953 Kent News), the practice was originally considered a sixth form privilege. Over time it came to be viewed as "a time for horseplay over and above the amount originally intended."

The Kent News of October 3, 1951 includes an article about two members of the School's kitchen staff ("pastry men") who were both from Aibonito, a village in Puerto Rico. The article describes the journey both men, Gilbert Cartyena and Jose Torres, took to employment at Kent. The article is significant and unprecedented as it considers, at a very human level, the life journeys of two lower-level employees at the School, a demographic generally relegated to anonymity in School publications.

The School admitted the first two African American students as well as the first Korean student in the Fall of 1954. The first Haitian student of color was admitted in the Fall of 1956.

The School engaged in a protracted, public, and ultimately unsuccessful effort in 1955 to recruit a Black South African student to Kent on a full scholarship funded by both students and faculty. This opportunity could never be realized due to the South African government's unwillingness to issue the young man an exit visa.

A News editorial of May 5, 1955, recommended either the abolition or repurposing of "Hell Week," a time when the incoming and outgoing sixth forms could do what they could to make the other's week a misery. The editorial recommended instead a week whose purpose would be to create cohesion, understanding, and respect rather than chaos.

The very end of the 1950s, the 1960s, and the early 1970s saw a proliferation of initiatives and organizations whose goals were: greater understanding of others and their needs and effective ways to act upon these needs. It was not until the early 1970s that we see a clear institutional initiative on the School's part aimed at helping students develop and maintain resilience. Examples include:

Formation of the Vance Committee in 1958 to investigate co-education and the opening of the Kent Girls' School in the Fall of 1960.

International Relations Club (IRC) – The Kent News of February 26, 1959, announced the creation of the IRC under the guidance of Mr. Anson Gardner (Kent 1908 and Director of

Admissions.) The IRC was "intended to be an informal society dedicated to a clearer understanding of foreign peoples through spontaneous discussion."

The Kent News of October 11, 1965, announced the creation of a lecture series to be sponsored by the Max Richter Foundation. This program brought "visiting lecturers on the subject of the Judaic contribution to Christian religion and theology."

Students For Civil Rights – This group was started in the Spring of 1965 by Fr. Thomas Hanson and was in part the result of a visit to Kent in February of that year by the Yale University Chaplain, the Rev. William Sloan Coffin, during which he spoke candidly and forcefully to the student body on civil rights, saying:

"That the time for recognition of the Negro has arrived... that we students could assist the rights movement in several ways and, most importantly, if you don't stand for something, then you'll fall for anything; and there are lots of people lying prone around the landscape."

Kent students responded in large numbers to Rev. Coffin's challenge. In the Spring of 1965, a group was formed called "Students For Civil Rights" under the aegis of Fr. Thomas Hanson. In April 1965, the group participated in a work camp sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee. Working alongside community members and other activists, students gained a much clearer sense of the everyday struggles of community members and some of the realities of protest. In May 1965, a large contingent (50 boys, 10 girls, 3 chaplains, and 7 faculty) traveled to Hartford to participate in a large civil rights demonstration sponsored by CORE, the NAACP, and other organizations.

In November 1965, the School, through the Students for Civil Rights group, began a collaboration with the Danbury NAACP to begin a tutoring program involving Kent students and Danbury youth in the fourth and fifth grades. Kent students helped fund the initiative through a car wash and benefit concert. Hill Anderson '66, a leader of Kent's civil rights group, clearly stated the importance of this outreach work:

The reason and need for this program are basic. It is the role of the church to be a servant and a redemptive community. Through this program, we, as a church school, will demonstrate some of these qualities. The boys will go into an area of human need to serve, and in the process, all people will grow in stature as human beings.

The Kent News of November 26, 1965, reported the creation of the "Committee of Concern," a group allowing students to volunteer in civil rights causes and/or at nearby New York State psychiatric institutions (Harlem Valley State Hospital and Wassaic State Hospital) housing adults and children. Christine Tailer '72 recalls her experiences at Wassaic where, in addition to a cigarette machine in the basement, she had

Next page, top:
1971 Black Student Union

Next page, bottom:
Committee of the Concerned

deeply meaningful experiences:

We were actually able to establish ongoing relationships with individual children at Wassaic, and felt that we were not only escaping the confines of Kent, but really adding to the children's lives. The child that I spent time with was a non-verbal girl about ten years old. She had short dark hair and could hardly feed herself, but she tried. She was wheelchair bound and the delightful smile that lit up her face when I wheeled her outside, no matter what the weather, was beautiful. She smiled just to see me walk in the room.

Another chapter in the activism of Kent students began with a visit by Ned Coll, founder of the Revitalization Corps (the Corps), to Kent in early October 1967. Coll, a Hartford resident, founded the Corps in 1964 in response to widespread problems in Hartford caused by poverty and segregation. By 1967, Corp chapters existed in Boston, Bridgeport, New York City, and Los Angeles. The *Kent News* of October 20, 1967 described his message and challenge to students:

One of Mr. Coll's strongest beliefs is in the necessity of integration of age and background, as well as racial integration. Having a sense of personal involvement, and the initiative to get things done were two other key points He urged his listeners to join the war on apathy pointing out that apathy must die before the grave problem of poverty can be solved.

The October 10, 1970 *Kent News* reported changes to broaden counseling services available to students. New positions were created: Assistant to Dean of Girls – Bonnie Kerr, Assistant to Dean of Boys – Don Gowan, and Assistant Chaplain – Fr. Richard Elwood. Head of School Sidney Towle explained the rationale for the changes:

In making these new appointments, we are attempting to provide our young people with as many opportunities as possible for dialogue and communication in the hope that understanding and human relationships at Kent can be maintained at a high level.

The November 6, 1970 *Kent News* reported creation of the "Human Relations Group," designed to "open channels of communication in the Kent community" through discussions of areas of interest to students. The groups are not intended to be "psychotherapy clinics nor just bull sessions, but rather a group in which people will feel free to confront one another openly and honestly with opinions, experiences, and feelings. The groups would consist of eight students, one or two faculty and faculty spouses if they were so inclined. The *Kent News* of November 18, 1972 reported that while the Human Relations program is very popular with students, it was difficult to attract enough faculty volunteers to meet student demand. The article notes that only "a scant 19% of the faculty indicated a willingness to participate."

Kent School's ongoing commitment to student resilience and well-being has a long history, one of which it should be proud.



As South Kent School Celebrates Its Centennial, Let's Recall Fr. Sill's Foundational Role

Robert F. Ober Jr. '54



Photo courtesy of South Kent School



Situated five miles from Kent School on an expansive lake, South Kent School embarks this year on its centennial celebration. As is widely known, Kent's Founder, Fr. Frederick Herbert Sill, OHC, was instrumental in bringing South Kent into being. Fr. Alan Whittmore, OHC, who lived on the new school's campus during its first months, tells the story:

...it happened that a woman in Washington made repeated petitions to Pater to admit her nephew to Kent. The reply had been all along, that there was no room. At last came a letter in which the good soul asserted that she was praying three times a day about the matter. To which Father Sill replied substantially as follows: "My dear Miss so-and-so, you say that you are praying three times a day that I will admit your nephew to Kent. Well, I am praying three times a day for ten thousand dollars." He proceeded to explain just why the money was needed, and wound up saying, "If you will answer my prayer, I'll answer yours." A check for ten thousand dollars arrived by return mail.

With that gift, Fr. Sill was able to purchase a farmhouse and 287 acres which would become the new school's campus. He then turned to two graduates of his own school, Samuel Slater Bartlett '18 and Richard M. Cuyler '18—also graduates, respectively, of Lafayette College and Princeton University—to launch the school. They in turn adopted the Kent motto: Simplicity of Life, Directness of Purpose, and Self-Reliance.

Pater was deeply involved in the new school's planning. A page, now in Kent's archive, from a diary belonging to Bartlett, refers to a meeting which he, Cuyler, and Pater held at New York's Columbia Club (to which Pater as an alumnus belonged) on December 28, 1922, and their "talk on the general idea of a new school to be started the following fall." Nine months later, in September 1925, Fr. Sill dispatched a letter to all Kent alumni reporting the establishment

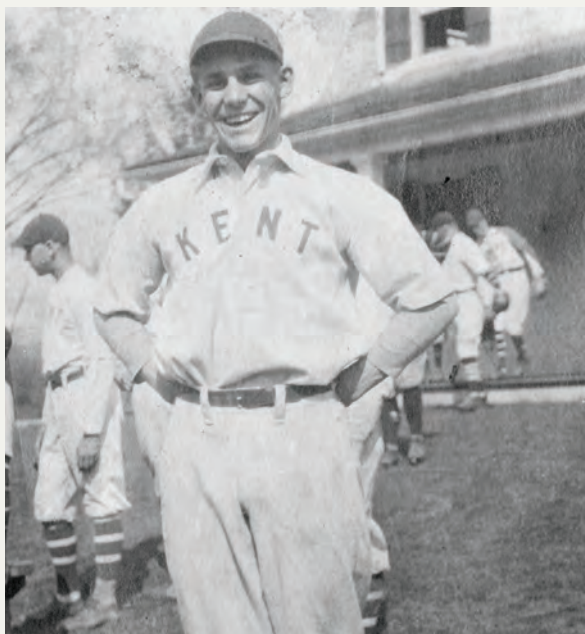
of the school "on the same general plan as Kent", identifying Bartlett as the Headmaster and Cuyler as his assistant. Cuyler, he added, had already served as "a master at Kent in 1918-19."

The tuition would be \$750 per year with an additional \$50 fee for athletics, infirmary, etc. The letter directed that all inquiries concerning the new school be addressed to "Samuel S. Bartlett, Kent School, Kent, Conn." Pater made no mention of the Order of the Holy Cross in his letter while signing off with his usual "OHC" designation. It is likely Fr. Sill had earlier encouraged Bartlett to visit the West Park monastery, although its own archive doesn't record such a visit. A further page, however, from Bartlett's diary dated May 25, 1924, toward the end of South Kent's first year, includes this entry: "Stan took Mother, Sister, Bob, Hogen and Boos to West Park Monday afternoon, and they had a great time... The Ford burnt out several bearings two miles north of Poughkeepsie and is now at P. being fixed. Another tremendous bill is expected." Stan, according to Marge Smith '75, who is helping to organize South Kent's Centennial events—her brother Lawrence A. Smith is the school's former Headmaster—suggests that Stan might have been Stan Goodwin, the first faculty member hired by South Kent. It is likely, to my mind at least, that Sam Bartlett himself would have first visited the monastery before sending his mother and sister there.

How then did Samuel Slater Bartlett emerge as the co-founder and first Headmaster of South Kent School? He did have a sterling record at Kent, both as Senior Prefect and athletically, according to the 1918 Kent Yearbook. If he entered Kent as a twelve-year old in 1911 as it reports, he may have stayed back more than the one year which Fr. Sill had suggested to his mother after his first year, according to correspondence in an archival file. Sam had prepared for Kent at a well-known pre-prep school in the area, Rumsey Hall.

Sam's father, Spaulding Bartlett, was an executive in charge of a textile mill in Webster, Massachusetts, in Worcester County, in a town not far from the Connecticut border, and later, a Bank President in Webster. He came from

a distinguished family, and his own father had been honored by having the Webster High School renamed Bartlett High School in 1917. Spaulding's wife Georgia, whose correspondence with Pater comprises an inch-thick file in the Kent archive, was the granddaughter of Samuel Slater, the founder of the Pawtucket, Rhode Island textile mill which became a model for that industry throughout New England and even beyond. Upon Slater's death in 1855, he was said to be the owner or part owner of twelve mills and a millionaire.



Top:
Fr. Alan Whittemore's crucifix

Bottom:
Sam Bartlett

Samuel Slater had died in Webster, a town which he is said to have founded, and had named after his friend Daniel Webster. Most of his surviving children seem to have settled there. One son bought land for the construction of the town's Immanuel Episcopal Church, consecrated in 1871. One of his sisters donated a Hook and Hastings organ to it in 1875, and another member of the family purchased the bell, first rung in 1884, for the Church's 52-foot Bell Tower.

The wife of the Headmaster and Rector of St. Paul's School in New Hampshire seems to have apprised Fr. Sill of Spaulding and Georgia's interest in schooling young Sam at Kent, she also having recommended the boy. When Spaulding, in turn, wrote to request an application, Pater promptly replied with his standard form. "On its return to us, I can let you know definitely as to his admission... I do not think I should be justified in taking him unless you give me the opportunity of taking some boy who could not pay even the price we ask here, namely, \$550 [for a term]. It is a very delicate matter to ask you but I believe I am justified in putting it up to a parent. A boy's standing in the School is just the same while the boy pays seven hundred dollars as one dollar." This was an expression of the then novel "sliding-scale" tuition plan which Fr. Sill had designed to ensure that Kent, unlike most other boarding schools at the time, could accommodate children from families of modest means. On June 16, 1911, Mr. Bartlett wrote to say he could afford \$700. A second Bartlett son, Asa, one year older than Sam, then matriculated five years later, in September 1916, thereby graduating with Sam in the Kent Class of 1918.

There was also the first-born son of Spaulding and Georgia Bartlett (altogether they had five children) with whom Fr. Sill became quite close, George Hodges Bartlett, known in the family simply as "G." Because of his frail health, George could not attend Kent but, by all accounts, was intellectually gifted, and Fr. Sill brought him later to the school, after his two brothers had graduated, as a History Master. In the very first of his series of ten "Letters to Sam, A Headmaster's Handbook" which Fr. Sill sent Sam Bartlett in the course of 1925, to guide him as the new school's first Headmaster (letters which together add up to some 15,000 words), he included this statement: "As you know, your brother "G" hoped to start a school and he and I used to talk about it a good deal during that last year of his life. I doubt if you or I have the peculiar gifts which "G" would have contributed to the work, but we must keep him in mind and try to inject some of that liberty-loving, unconventional spirit so characteristic of your brother."

Pater saw that G's salary was remitted to him in Webster whenever he was absent from Kent due to his bouts of illness. He valued G in part because he also played the organ in Fr. Sill's first Chapel.

In a letter dated March 10, 1921, G's mother Georgia wrote Sill that G was now at home and failing, but this was not to be mentioned, she added, to Asa and Sam, then away at their colleges. Pater responded that he wished he could see G again (he had already traveled to Webster several times): "maybe when the roads are good again, I shall rush up to look in on him." Having witnessed Pater making his way—partially paralyzed, wheelchair-bound as he was—to our Chapel services almost up to his death, I imagine he made that trip.

George Bartlett died May 5, 1921. His memory is recalled at Kent by a plaque, originally installed next to the first organ, inscribed with the phrase "First to Use the Organ", and by a History Prize awarded every year in George's name on Prize Day to the sixth former excelling in History. When St. Joseph's Chapel was consecrated in 1951, the brochure, which Fr. Sill prepared for that occasion, noted the same plaque had already reinstalled near the organ in the new Chapel, and Sill added his written appeal, "Pray that this organ may ever lead the boys in their hymns of praise."

The late Noble Richards, of the South Kent Class of 1949, and the Headmaster of South Kent, 1992 to 1996, confirmed to me that indeed George

was Fr. Sill's original candidate to open South Kent School. Noble, as the Senior Prefect of his Class, working closely with Headmaster Sam Bartlett, told me also that the Head would telephone Fr. Sill regularly, "faithfully", being his word. Sam Bartlett, after thirty-two years as Headmaster, retired from South Kent in 1955.

Although South Kent had no official relationship with the Order of the Holy Cross, priests from the Order were often on its campus. Noble told me once that Fr. William Chalmers OHC, who worked alongside Fr. Sill after his first stroke in 1959 before formally becoming Kent's Headmaster, had taught him Sacred Studies for a period, before his graduation from South Kent in 1949. On occasion, he said, an OHC priest would deliver a sermon or commencement speech at South Kent.

There was one OHC priest, the Superior of the Order from 1956 to 1948, who always remained in close touch with South Kent School: Fr. Alan Whittemore. He lived on the new campus for a period in 1925, and created

then a Christmas tradition which has lasted to the present day, a Nativity Play, in which students act on the very eve of their departure for the Christmas holiday. And Fr. Alan's nephew, Dr. Charles Wittemore, not only graduated from South Kent School in 1959, but joined its faculty in 1945 with a Ph.D., and remained at South Kent, as a legendary history teacher, for 45 years.

Both of South Kent's Founders, in their upbringing, had been exposed to Christianity, and then, of course, under Fr. Sill's tutelage, at Kent. Because Sam Bartlett retained, when serving as Headmaster, a residence on Cape Cod where he belonged to an Episcopal church, he was a member, for a period, of the Standing Committee of Vestrymen of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, an elected body responsible for advising its Bishop. As mentioned, Fr. Sill also provided the two men with a veritable roadmap, through his "Letters to Sam", for teaching Sacred Studies to South Kent's boys. Surely, Fr. Sill never doubted he found the right men to lead South Kent.

Author's Postscript

Samuel Slater figures importantly in the development of American manufacture; it has been said that he brought the Industrial Revolution to the U.S. In his biography "Alexander Hamilton," Ron Chernow (New York: Penguin Press, 2004, pp. 570-71) describes how Slater, as a young man serving as secretary to Richard Arkwright, the British inventor of the water frame which used water to spin many threads simultaneously, "had slipped through the tight protective net thrown by the British authorities around their textile industry" and made his way to New York where he made contact with Moses Brown, a Rhode Island Quaker. Brown, in turn, financed Slater's first spinning mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and our country's textile industry thereafter rapidly grew.

As briefly described in the Spring 2025 Kent Quarterly, Fr. Alan Whittemore, as the Superior of the Order of the Holy Cross, precipitated the withdrawal of the Order and its monks from Kent School in the Fall of 1945, after Fr. Sill, then Headmaster Emeritus, and Fr. Chalmers, his successor from 1941, failed to accept major changes he had proposed as the Superior, including the establishment of a branch monastery at Kent School. The changes would have seriously altered Kent's longstanding modes of operation. This was, above all, a major clash between two strong-willed members of the Order, between the Superior and Kent's Founder, with perturbations in its immediate wake both at West Park and Kent...yet now, 80 years later, the two institutions enjoy fully respectful, beneficial relations.

Pertinent may be an article by Dr. Giles Constable, the late professor of Medieval History at Harvard, and a one-time director of Dunbarton Oaks, which traces the historical evolution of Superiors' authority among given communities of monks (viz, the doctrine of obedience) in those monasteries subject to the Rule of Benedict, the rule in fact adopted by the Founder of Order of the Holy Cross at its founding, notwithstanding its Roman Catholic heritage. Giles concluded his article from 1982, "The Authority of Superiors in Religious Communities," with a final statement: "Their superiors, however, were increasingly expected, like many secular rulers, to govern as constitutional rather than absolute monarchs."

There's a rather piquant development bearing on both Kent and Fr. Whittemore following his death in 1960. Having no immediate family, he gifted his ornate Cross as Superior to his afore-mentioned nephew, Dr. Charles Whittemore, still teaching then at South Kent. Charles, long a member of St. Andrew's Church in Kent, then decided, before moving with his wife to a nearby extended care home, that George-Ann Gowan, the widow of Kent School's longtime Dean and History teacher Don Gowan '66, and much involved herself at Kent School from years of hosting students and alumni, would be the one to provide the Cross the loving care it deserved. So, he presented it to George-Ann. Passing as it has from the OHC Superior to South Kent's legendary teacher, then to the widow of Kent's own legendary teacher, the Cross has a new home in Kent, the small town where two of the Order's most prominent priests had their memorable encounter.

Acknowledgments

Two members of Kent's archival staff, Katy Armstrong (Hon) '71 and Cynthia Stubbs-Hill, located several documents allowing me to complete this article. Kent's Associate Head of School, CFO and COO Jeffrey Cataldo, clarified that Fr. Sill's "sliding-scale" tuition plan had finally been supplanted by a conventional financial aid program in the 1960s. Larry Gile '75, a regular contributor to the Kent Quarterly, extracted not only several articles from the *Kent News* but also material from other sources which advanced my research.

Fr. Roger B. White, retired from St. Andrew's Church in Kent, and educated at Berkeley Divinity School at Yale and Oxford University, assisted me again as I navigated as a layman the sometimes "treacherous shoals" of theology. As always, Brother Robert Leo Sevensky OHC, the archivist at West Park, was also helpful.

The late Noble Richards, Class of 1949 at South Kent, and its Headmaster from 1962 to 1966 and Trustee, contributed importantly to my understanding of South Kent and its governance. Noble had established, with the late Kent School History teacher Tom Kates, a History Book Club in 2004 which I later joined, and we often discussed Kent and South Kent on the margins of those meetings. Marge Smith, Kent Class of 1975, patiently answered my questions about dates and personnel associated with South Kent. My late brother, P. David Ober, graduated from South Kent in 1955, and I believe I met Sam Bartlett when my parents and I first brought him to the school in September 1950. Elise Andreae LaFosse, my daughter, of Kent's Class of 1979, was able to extract from the Internet an English-language version of the article in French by Dr. Constable, "The Authority of Superiors..."

I found my article's second paragraph, describing Fr. Sill's fundraising, in a fine history of the Order, "Holy Cross, A Century of Anglican Monasticism" (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1987), by Fr. Adam Dunbar McCoy OHC.

Graduation 2023



The Right Rev. Robert Christopher Wright's Graduation Speech

“Good morning!

Greetings to you on this happy morning. Greetings in the name of Yahweh the Almighty, and in the Name of Allah, the Beneficent and in the name I personally know best, Jesus, the Companion. Greetings also in the name of beauty, art, creativity, wonder, memory, reason, and skill. Greetings from the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, where I serve 117 worshipping communities in Middle and North Georgia—56,000 men women, children, teenagers, and feisty seniors. Special thanks to Mr. Hirschfeld and the Board of Trustees for this kind invitation to be with you on this very special day.

I have been charged with the immense task of giving the graduation address. And, I have been given free range to choose my topic. That is a very dangerous approach, I have to say, especially when you invite a preacher to give the address. But, you will be comforted to know that in most places, when an Episcopal Bishop is asked the question, what would you like to speak about? The answer is usually I would like to speak for about 12-15 minutes!

So let me use these precious moments to say that I



am intrigued by your motto here at the Kent School: "Simplicity of Life, Directness of Purpose and Self-Reliance." The statement goes on to say, "... so you may be prepared to contribute to the common good ...". Well done, Kent School! How timeless and altogether delicious your motto is. I hope it's ok if I play with it a bit.

What do we know about simplicity? We know that it's not a simple thing! We know that to arrive at a simple life, an uncluttered life, a life consistently allergic to false charms, we have to work through the persistent temptation to be less than what we are. We will have to look deeply at ourselves and one another beyond what we have or where we come from, or even what we have achieved. And so class of 2023, my first point to you is to say that simplicity is really about seeing! Seeing yourself as you truly are. Seeing that you have inherent value, dignity, and worth. Seeing that you are, in the words of one of my favorite Jewish poets, "fearfully and wonderfully made." That is true for you and for the person you struggle to love the most.

The most direct route to simplicity that I can think of today, is not only purging your life of too many things but knowing who you are and whose you are. Science teaches us that we all share a common ancestor. All the great spiritual traditions insist that we bear an uncanny resemblance to the creator of all the worlds. We are siblings, all of us. I belong to you and you belong to me. Any ideology that runs counter to that is a lie. We are forever linked. All divisions in the human family at the most fundamental and important level are ridiculous. We are members of a complicated global family. We are members of a complicated American family. We are nevertheless family. We must increasingly see ourselves and our

siblings this way if we are going to see one another into any future worth having.

Pablo Picasso has told us that "... art is the elimination of the unnecessary." Marie Kondo goes further and says, "To tidy up is to say yes to joy." And so if they are right, then what needs to be tidied and eliminated first, is in us. Simplicity requires that we purge from our lives and our endeavors, every hint of "...smallness, separateness, and superiority." That is our work as we journey, starting with ourselves as we engage others. Fr. Sill has started us off here at Kent correctly with the call to simplicity.

And then there is the second movement in your wonderful motto, "Directness of Purpose." Purpose is an ancient idea, as old as the scriptures and as new as the recent *Harvard Business Review*. The root of the word purpose is the word "fire." Purpose relative to passion, is like comparing purple to lavender. I like to think of purpose as the deep well from which you and I make our offering to the world as we sustain ourselves. Purpose is the rocket fuel for living and doing. Purpose is an inexhaustible form of clean energy.

It was the directness of purpose that Howard Thurman, one of America's greatest mystics, was pointing another graduating class towards when he said to them, "You sitting there, with so much life in front of you. There is so much I want to say to you on the matters of love and life. Finances and vocation. But the best thing I can say to you is this, pay attention to the Sound of the Genuine." "There is something in every one of you," he said, "... that waits, listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself and in others. You are the only you that has ever lived; your idiom is the only idiom of its kind in all of existence and if you cannot hear the sound of the genuine in





The 10th Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, The Right Rev. Robert Christopher Wright, was elected in June 2012 and ordained on October 13, 2012, at Morehouse College. He became the first African-American bishop in the diocese, which includes 117 worshipping communities in middle and north Georgia. Wright holds a master of divinity degree from the Virginia Theological Seminary. He was ordained as a deacon in June 1998 and as a priest in February 1999. Additionally, he holds certificates from Ridley Hall, Cambridge University, Oxford University, and The Harvard Kennedy School of Public Policy. He has received honorary doctorates from Virginia Theological Seminary, the School of Theology at Sewanee: The University of the South, and the General Theological Seminary. Before his election as bishop, he served as rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Atlanta, Georgia, for a decade.

you, ... you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls ...”

The directness of purpose is conceived when we hear the sound of the genuine. What do we know about this Sound of the Genuine? It comes by hearing, “A small still voice ...” simultaneously from within and without. It moves us toward freedom and calls us beyond our comfort zones. That is why we muffle it when we begin to hear its comforting terrifying whisper. The biggest enemy of directness purpose is the fear of being different. And yet scripture emboldens us to live into being “God’s peculiar treasure.” One of the great dangers of our times is too many of us choose convention over the sound of the genuine—over directness of purpose. Think of it, we would not be sitting here right now were it not for someone who knew in his bones that despite what the coffers and the critics said, a school could rise up out of this river bank!



Dear Class of 2025, on behalf of those here who love you and want the best for you, tame your fears and control the traffic of your mind, make time to listen to the symphony in the silence which is the soundtrack for the sound of the genuine. Make this a regular habit and you will figure out how to run the race that is set before you. And please bear this in mind, the reward of money or notoriety is not guaranteed if you do this, but you will have something the world cannot give or take away, you will be authentically you. And that beloved, is enough.

Self-Reliance is the last movement for us. Though I have to confess, it feels a bit counter-cognitive to celebrate self-reliance on a day like today. The truth is so many have contributed to today. There’s Mom and Dad. Grandma and Grandpa. Siblings and friends. The staff, faculty, and administration team. The board, the benefactors, and the alumni. A deep ocean of gratitude is owed by you today. Take a moment and call out silently or aloud those names for whom you are most grateful.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu used to say, “What do we have that is not gift?” What do we have that is not

gift? We have been helped by many to become self-reliant. So now the question is what do we do with the self-reliance we enjoy? The danger in becoming self-reliant is becoming self-absorbed. We must not become self-absorbed! So, how do we solve the eternal equation of living an other-centered life? If I had that answer, I would have a New York Times best seller.

But what I can share is a story that helps me understand this balance. When I was 18 years old, one week after graduating from high school, I enlisted in the U.S. Navy. In pretty short order, I was on my way to Flight School and then Search and Rescue Diver School. Each day there were miles and miles to run. And when the running was done there were miles and miles to swim. Sometimes even tied to a partner as we swam against the current. But each morning we ran eight miles in formation. For me, it was always around the fourth mile that the cramps would come. The demons would come, too. You know the ones? The thoughts, 'Just stop. It's OK to quit. Why care about this anyway? You don't owe anybody anything.' And what I learned to do, especially when the pain, doubts, and even selfish thoughts would visit was to watch the person in front of me. Watch his foot rise and then strike the ground. Listen to the rhythm of his boot hitting the sand. Yes, it is true, I was responsible for myself and the increase of my grit and endurance. But it was another's example that helped me to rely more fully on myself. Even to discover the fullness of my own potential. But then I realized also, it was possible that the person behind me may have weaknesses or doubts as we ran the course. And that maybe they needed me to be the kind of self whose foot was rising and striking the ground.

All of us are responsible for ourselves, but that responsibility in God's genius and mischievous economy accrues to the strength of the entire group. None of us have been given strength, brilliance, or creativity for ourselves. That is not how humanity best works. All of us have been given gifts for the whole. There is no real life abundant without this understanding and pursuit.

That is what your motto says, that we are "... prepared here to contribute to the common good."

Dr. King said once, "... that many men have remembered themselves into obscurity, but only one man has forgotten himself into eternity." Today as you go from this place, with our hopes, and our pride, do something in this world that will make the next generation stronger, kinder, and more generous. Leave the planet a little better than you found it. You can do it. The ONE that is IN YOU is truly greater than any adversary. We are pulling for you.

Class of 2023, I salute you and pray with many others, that our real, able, good, and generous God will continue to bless you.

Now go get 'em!"

Class of 2023

Cum Laude Society

Christopher M. Bugliosi	Annabelle G. McLean
Paris Y. Chang	Alessandra Nefedenkova
Scarlett Chu	LuLu E. Ransom
Siwen Cui	Aryan Saha
William G. N. Drebitko	Linnea Saxton
Polina Frenkel	Viraj Smitesh Shah
Dora Gao	Jadon K. Tong
Lanlan (Joyce) Hai	Wan Lun (Angel) Tseng
Anlin Hou	Jessie Wang
Niki Hu	Xingyu Wu
Xinran (Shirley) Lin	Margaret Faith Yemington
Nathan Shangru Liu	Jiayi (Emily) Yuan
Lucy Lu	

College Matriculation List

American University	Middlebury College
Babson College	University of Mississippi
Barnard College	The New School
Bates College	New York University
Bentley University	Newcastle University
Boston College	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Boston University	Northeastern University
Bryant University	University of Notre Dame
Bucknell University	Occidental College
California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo	Pennsylvania State University
University of California, Berkeley	University of Pennsylvania
University of California, Los Angeles	University of Pittsburgh
University of California, San Diego	Princeton University
University of California, Santa Barbara	Providence College
Carnegie Mellon University	Purdue University
Case Western Reserve University	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Chapman University	University of Rhode Island
Colby College	University of Richmond
Columbia University	Rochester Institute of Technology
Connecticut College	University of Rochester
University of Connecticut	Sacred Heart University
Cornell University	Salve Regina University
Dartmouth College	Santa Clara University
University of Denver	Savannah College of Art & Design
Emmanuel College	University of Southern California
Emory University	Southern Methodist University
Florida State University	University of St. Andrews
University of Florida	St. John's College
Fordham University	St. Michael's College
Franklin & Marshall College	Syracuse University
George Washington University	University of Tampa
Georgetown University	University of Toronto
Georgia Institute of Technology	Trinity College
University of Glasgow	Tufts University
Haverford College	Tulane University
Hobart & William Smith Colleges	United States Naval Academy
College of the Holy Cross	University of Vermont
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	University of Wisconsin, Madison
Indiana University - Bloomington	Villanova University
James Madison University	Wake Forest University
Kenyon College	Washington University in St. Louis
Lafayette College	Wesleyan University
Lehigh University	Wilkes University
Loyola Marymount University	College of William & Mary
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Williams College
Miami University, Oxford	Yale University
University of Miami	

Alumni News

SILL SOCIETY NEWS AND VISITS

As a tribute to our Founder, the Alumni Council established The Reverend Frederick H. Sill, O.H.C. Society in 2006. The Sill Society recognizes Kent alumni/ae whose personal achievement and distinguished service bring honor and distinction to themselves and to Kent School, especially how such achievement and service significantly impact and beneficially radiate to the larger community, nation, or world.

This year the Alumni Council inducted three alumni into the Sill Society: **Richard Ahlborn Jr. '59**, **Hamilton Fish '44**, and **Whitney North Seymour Jr. '41**. To learn more about the Sill Society and to read the bios of our newest and past inductees, please visit: www.kent-school.edu/alumni.



Claiborn "Clai" Carr III '64, Sill '22 returned to Kent on May 1 to deliver his chapel talk and engage with students. During his visit, Mr. Carr encouraged students to contemplate the significance of the present, the possibilities of tomorrow, and the implications for the future.

"Today, learn who you are looking to be. Tomorrow, lean into the school motto: Simplicity of Life, Directness of Purpose, Self-Reliance. The future, because of your time at Kent, the teachers, the care, the staff, your friends, your teammates, your lab partners, your dormmates, those cold days in the winter—you are uniquely qualified to handle the challenges that are ahead."



On May 5, **Captain Richard "Dick" Ahlborn Jr. '59, Sill '25** returned to Kent, where he delivered his chapel talk, engaged with students, and participated in class sessions. During his address, he shared insights into his post-Kent experiences that ultimately led to his distinguished 26-year service to the nation, including his role as a nuclear submarine Captain. Captain Ahlborn emphasized the role of Kent students as future leaders and urged them to prioritize the well-being of others by "putting your people first" and fostering cultural sensitivity.

2023-2024 ALUMNI COUNCIL MEMBERS



Kent School Alumni Council

The Alumni Council represents the Kent School Alumni Association which is inclusive of all Kent School alumni. The Alumni Council seeks to:

Promote Kent School as an outstanding institution fostering academic excellence, strong

character, and spiritual awareness among its students.

Bring alumni and friends of Kent School into closer relation with the School and provide mutually beneficial relationships among alumni, the student body, and the School.

Advance the growth and development of Kent School through programs supporting the School and the School's fundraising efforts.

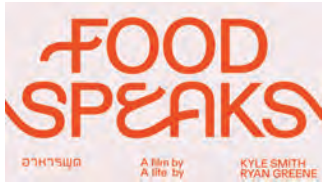
Matthew Andrews '05
David Andrews '76
Ebob Besong '12
Gray Bullard '95
Mark Cheong '09
Tracy Greene Craighead '81
Michael (Tex) Duncan '91
Tracy Fairhurst '75
Barbara Vaughn Hoimes '78
Robin Insley '85
President
Guilaine Jean-Pierre '85
Peter Lewine '65
Vice President
Scott Lister '88

Elizabeth (Lizzy) Malin '05
Mary (Muffy) Mallory '67
Amanda Ward Marshall '08
Secretary
Abby Miller '06
Tyreek Moore '95
Christian Naylor '10
Kristine Palmero '97
Mark Smith '79
Nelson Thomas '16
James Thompson III '95

Special thanks to Ben Armellini '11 and Suzanne Smith Lowe '84 whose terms recently concluded.

FOOD SPEAKS DOCUMENTARY

The Kent community came together in Mattison Auditorium to commemorate the late Ryan Greene '07. Although he passed away in 2019, his enduring spirit continued to shine through in "Food Speaks," a collaborative film created in 2018



by Ryan and Kyle Smith '07. This heartfelt 17-minute documentary captured Ryan's social experiment in Bangkok, Thailand, vividly demonstrating how food acted as his gateway to understanding an unfamiliar culture and its language. For those who held Ryan close to their hearts, the film offered an intimate glimpse into his transformative journey during his final four years in Thailand. The event served as a poignant reflection and included a preview of the film for all attendees.



Kyle Smith '07 (center) with Ryan's parents, David (left) and Donna (right).



AWARD-WINNING FILM COMES TO KENT

Curtis Jordan '70 and his Kent roommate Duncan Browne '70 visited campus to meet with students and share a screening of Curtis' first feature film "Playing Through," inspired by Ann Gregory, the first black woman to play in the United States Golf Association. The film has been selected for the Sarasota Film Festival, the Durban International Film Festival, the Harlem Film Festival, Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival, the Oak Park Black Film Festival, and the Vienna Independent Film Festival, where it won Best Director, Best Actress, Best Feature Film, and Best Overall Film.





DAY OF OUTREACH

Over 200 students participated in Kent's second annual Day of OutREACH on Saturday, May 15, volunteering in Kent, alongside 16 parents and alumni. Additionally, 100 alumni and parents participated in volunteer efforts in seven locations worldwide including Kent and Norwalk, Conn.; Brooklyn, N.Y.; Miami, Fla.; Los Angeles, Calif.; San Francisco, Calif.; and Hong Kong. Thank you to all of those who participated and to the Alumni Council for co-hosting this event with the Alumni & Development Office and Kent's Community Life Program. Save the date and make plans to volunteer and/or host on Saturday, May 11, 2024.



REUNION WEEKEND



Kent School welcomed back nearly 450 alumni for a joyous and nostalgic gathering during Reunion Weekend. The weekend created a perfect setting for former classmates and friends to unite, immersing themselves in memories of their time at Kent and strengthening their bonds. Whether engaged in heartfelt conversations or vibrant gatherings, alumni reveled in the opportunity to reconnect and relive moments that shaped their Kent experience.





ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

The annual Athletic Hall of Fame induction ceremony took place during Reunion Weekend. Charles Guilford Mack '65, Daniel Patrick Madden '98, Joanna (Ashka) Matuszczyk Pfluger '08, and Scott Douglas McLean '08 were inducted as individuals, and the 1958 Varsity Wrestling team was inducted as a group. The ceremony also honored Cathe Mazza '76 and Dan Traub '79 with special recognition plaques. Congratulations to all! To learn more and to submit a nomination, visit: www.kent-school.edu/athletics/athletic-hall-of-fame











MARTHA'S VINEYARD RECEPTION

Peter Getsinger '71, P'02, Bob Hoerle '52, and Andy Smith '94, P'25 hosted a cocktail reception for Kent alumni and parents with Mike and Liesbeth Hirschfeld on August 24, 2025 at the Edgartown Reading Room in Martha's Vineyard.



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8% is not just a number; but a profound testament to our unwavering dedication to Kent's pursuit of excellence. The Annual Fund, by supporting 8% of all costs associated with the Kent experience, further enhances how we educate our students. This support ensures Kent remains a vibrant, engaging, and transformational place of learning for the next generation of leaders.

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For more information please contact:
Michael Ganchegui: ganchegui@kent-school.edu / 860-927-6268
or Elizabeth Vitek: viteke@kent-school.edu / 860-927-6269

In Memoriam

1956

Charles E. Brainard Jr.

July 6, 2025

1946

Peter A. Wickwire USMC (Ret)

December 17, 2022

1947

Frederick F. Irving

August 5, 2025

Anthony W. Erdman

June 5, 2025

Francis M. Huffman Jr.

December 20, 2022

1948

Elliott G. Bates

June 15, 2025

1950

David A. Hoerle

February 15, 2018

1951

Samuel C. Davenport

June 21, 2025

1956

David C. Clapp

July 8, 2025

1961

Wilton S. Burton Jr.

July 6, 2025

1964

David H. Kirkpatrick

June 15, 2025

1966

Peter P. Tilghman

June 25, 2025

1967

Steven B. Bridenbaugh

November 24, 2022

Peter M. Brown Jr.

July 1, 2025

Shigeru Imaizumi

November 22, 2022

1968

Hugh E. Mohr

May 5, 2025

Elizabeth Trotman Davis

March 5, 2025

George E. Shaw

May 8, 2021

James A. Walden

December 25, 2019

1969

Richard T. Williams

June 12, 2025

Jonathan D. Hill 1972

June 24, 2025

1974

Matthew A. Jacobson

March 24, 2025

1986

Joseph E. DiGiacomo Jr.

May 7, 2025

FACULTY/STAFF

Richard Lindsey

Longtime business manager

April 25, 2025



David C. Clapp 1956

Trustee Emeritus

A tribute by Brandon W. Sweitzer '60 P'87 '89 '06 '08 '11 '11 GP'20 '21 '25

Trustee Emeritus

President, Board of Trustees 1998-2011

This past summer the Kent School community lost one of its most devoted and loyal servants, whose active presence will be sorely missed. David C. Clapp, Class of 1956, died peacefully at his home in Jupiter, Florida on July 8. A Memorial Service will be held at Kent's St. Joseph's Chapel on October 6. David is survived by his wife, Connie, his children David C. Clapp, Jr., Katherine Clapp, Alison Bower, his loving grandsons, and his brother Paul, Class of '67.

David, in the view of many, was without doubt the most consequential personage engaged over the past five decades in Kent School's governance and development. He was a trustee for 50 years, and Vice President of the Board for a third of that time. But he was far, far more than just "a trustee." David defined Trusteeship in all its dimensions.

After graduation from Kent, he received his undergraduate degree from Yale and straightaway entered a career on Wall Street that he pursued for most of his life. Among many strengths as an investment banker and advisor, David became a master in the arts of public finance, including the financing of universities, colleges, and independent schools.

He gave Kent School and successive trustee cadres generously and consistently of his trove of financial legerdemain. He was the rock upon which stood the financial architecture of Kent's '80s and '90s consolidation of the Girls and Boys campuses.

Not only his expertise, but his energy and informed enthusiasm gave heart and—truly—courage to Kent's volunteer leadership and full-time administrative cohort to proceed with and magnificently fulfill the Campus Consolidation effort.

Clearly, along with the School's 1906 founding and the launch of the Girls School in 1960, the years-long task of Consolidation was the defining feature of Kent's last half century.

But David did more than guide the Board and successive Heads of School. He was generous in providing personal financial support to numerous development projects (the Consolidation, Dickinson Science Center, Hoerle Hall, Partridge Boathouse.)

David as a Kent Sixth Former was editor-in-chief of the *Kent News* and later established the David C. Clapp Teaching Chair in English. He was a Kent benefactor in the extreme.

David was one-of-a-kind. Blessed with a gruff grace and gravelly-voiced humor, he was a genius at "reading a room." He would be the "deep keel" when matters were in motion; and be the "anchor" when the School's governance arrived at a decision-time harbor.

A loyal Son of Kent; a steadfast classmate; a stout-hearted leader; a generous giver—David was integral to all that Kent School is and represents.

Above all, for me, David was a cherished friend. May you Rest in Peace, my good buddy. Temperantia. Fiducia. Constantia ... farewell.



Embracing the beauty of spring, two students stroll down the campus walkway.



Kent School
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REUNION 2024
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JUNE 21-23, 2024