

Summer Journeys

Students and Faculty Explore, Learn & Serve



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Photography by Robert Falcetti



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Students welcome Tafties for the new school year on Arrival Day. ROBERT FALCETTI

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EDITOR
Linda Hedman Beyus

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Kaitlin Thomas Orfitelli

SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Debra Meyers

PHOTOGRAPHY
Robert Falcetti

WEBSITE AND SPORTS INFORMATION MANAGER/CLASS NOTES
Seamus F. Conway

DESIGN
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CORRECTION

In our fall issue, we mistakenly reported the final season scores for Girls' and Boys' Crew (page 52). The Girls' Crew final season score was 48–28, and the Boys' Crew season score was 6–8.

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taftbulletin@taftschool.org
or write Taft Bulletin
110 Woodbury Road
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860-945-7777
TAFTALUMNI.COM

CONTACT EDITOR

Email beyusl@taftschool.org
or write
Linda Hedman Beyus, editor
Taft Bulletin
110 Woodbury Road
Watertown, CT 06795-2100

SEND ADDRESS CORRECTIONS TO

taftrhino@taftschool.org
or write Alumni Records
The Taft School
110 Woodbury Road
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ON THE COVER

A trek through Sumatra's Bukit Lawang Forest, an orangutan safety forest, where Jasmine Pun '25 (pictured bottom right) learned about how orangutans live, while she served in Sumatra and Bali to help preserve habitats and to help out area schools. (See page 30)

PHOTO COURTESY OF MIA VAUGHN.

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On MAIN HALL

A WORD WITH HEAD OF
SCHOOL PETER BECKER '95

A Vibrant Total Institution

Boarding schools are unique in education because they are what sociologists call “total institutions”—places where most members of the institution conduct nearly all parts of life. Other total institutions include monasteries, nursing homes, and some parts of the military, among other examples. Total institutions have incredible formative power—they are purpose-driven and are typically organized around intentional rhythms of life, of work, play, and rest. Healthy versions of these communities often share in common not only clear goals and outcomes for the people who constitute them, but also dense connective tissue, both formal and informal. They are what David Brooks, *New York Times* columnist and author, and others have referred to as “thick.”

At the Convocation ceremony that marked the official start to this year, I described three “shifts” that Taft seeks to help every student make during their time here. First, the shift from xenophobia—the innate human instinct to fear strangers—to philoxenia, befriending the stranger. Second, the shift from a “serve myself” mindset (hard for most teens to escape these days) to a “serve others” mindset. And third, the shift from pure drive to healthy drive—purposeful and sustainable hard work.

Taft is a healthy total institution with a thick culture in the best sense. It has been such a joy to see this manifested in so many different areas of school life in just our first few months here. The connective tissue of “Not to be served but to serve” married to the founding imperative to educate the *whole* student, mind, body, spirit, and emotion—and played out in the rhythms of dorm life, School Meeting, classes, advisor meetings, I-Block, clubs and affinity groups, athletic practices, arts rehearsals, and service programs—weaves together the school's culture and bends it in particular directions. The school augments these with additional layers of intentionality—the Moorhead Academic Center, class deans, the Student Life Office, regular grade-specific meetings to review the progress of individual students, our counseling department, the Health Center, and athletic trainers, among so many others. Some of these are long-standing while others are newer. Combined, they make the place hum as an incredibly powerful place for Taft students to learn, grow, and thrive. High school is often hard. The culture at Taft today is clearly one oriented toward making sure that our students' experience is hard only in the best ways.

A thick culture makes the shifts described above much



“Total institutions have incredible formative power—they are purpose-driven and are typically organized around intentional rhythms of life, of work, play, and rest.”

more likely. Ideally, students enter Taft and become aware of the degree to which they may be instinctively fearful of peers not like them—and learn to counteract that instinct, or learn that part of what it means to be a member of the Taft community is to serve others *and* to pursue ambitious goals, existing and newly discovered, in ways that are life-giving.

On one of our first Sunday nights with students on campus, my family and I enjoyed a meal with other faculty in Laube Dining Hall and then walked around campus. Our kids remarked on how *vibrant* campus was—students sitting on the Jig patio, others getting a jump on homework in the library, a group of seniors watching the U.S. Open tennis final in the first-floor Centennial common room, students practicing all kinds of sports, a teacher and student meeting at a dining hall table reviewing some sort of work, and beautiful piano music filling the Choral Room, Main Hall, and Lincoln Lobby. The timing of this twilight amble certainly contributed to the positive vibe—for one thing, it was early enough that papers and tests hadn't been assigned yet—but it illustrated for us the health of this total institution and its incredible potential for the students who are the reason the school exists in the first place.

Peter Becker

Peter Becker '95



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Taft

New Beginnings. New Adventures. New Opportunities.

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

The start of a new school year always begins with hope, excitement, energy, and anxiety. Reconnecting with old friends or bumping into new ones as we traverse the hallways to Wu, the fields, or sit-down dinner. This year, however, the excitement is palpable. You can sense it while standing in line at the serverly or prepping for dorm duty.

The new school year reminds us of something as old as the Taft *Alma Mater* song that this campus is special. Not because of the nostalgia seeped in every brick of the building, but rather because of the people who call this place home. Community is not something that can graduate with the most recent class of seniors and postgrads. Instead, it is something that is a living, breathing organism. Community is part of who we are, the very fabric of the school. As we

celebrate a new chapter in the history of this great place, we are going to be very intentional about reminding everyone about the importance of community. As the potential and possibilities of a new year unfold, new traditions are surfacing to support the greatness that is Taft! Last year, we introduced a celebration calendar in which the faculty chose a specific month to discuss with their classes various contributions that marginalized groups have had within that subject. This

year, we are excited that faculty will be engaging in those conversations again. Additionally, we are eager to introduce ways to support one another as leaders in our spaces. Working to intentionally create time for our affinity faculty leaders to collaborate with another so that we can all be celebrating one another is something we are happy will be part of our experience. Our world is rapidly shifting and changing. The one constant that remains is community. ■

**“Community is part of who we are,
the very fabric of the school.”**

ILLUSTRATION BY FRANZI/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Upcycling Coffee Byproducts



"In coffee, there's a huge inequity between the producers and the consumers. Coffee farmers make barely sustainable living wages."

HOW DOES ONE get to be *obsessed* with coffee?

For most of us, it's a utility. We need caffeine to survive the day. Does it really matter how we get it? We put a single-serve cup in a machine, push a button, and there's your coffee. Or we load our Starbucks orders with froths and pumps and sweeteners, caramel this, pumpkin spice that. It's a good drink. But not coffee.

For a while, Taylor Love '93 shared the same dismissive attitude toward his morning joe. Then one day he walked into a café in Denver and the barista handed him an Ethiopian coffee. "It was unlike anything I'd had before," Love says. "From that moment on, it was like I realized there was something more here."

He became, well, slightly obsessed. He left his job in 2013 after more than a decade in equities trading and commercial real estate to stay home with his young twins. While they were at school, he started ordering bags of green coffee beans



on Amazon. He purchased a small roasting machine and learned to roast his own. Eventually, he had so much coffee on his hands his wife, Kristin, suggested (or let's just say politely requested) he begin selling some of it at the local farmers market in Colorado Springs to get it out of the house.

"I bought a tent and a table and some burlap coffee bags and set up shop," Love says. "What was amazing

Opposite page: Taylor Love '93 at a coffee nursery in Costa Rica where all the plants have been treated with Husky biostimulants.

Above: Husky team members Crawford Hawkins, Alveiro Salamanca, and Taylor Love in Huila, Colombia.

Left: Taylor Love standing next to a *chiva*, which is the typical mode of transportation in rural Colombia.



small-holder farmers have to contend with fertilizer prices, which skyrocketed following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, a large producer of the world’s fertilizer. Love had been talking with a friend named Crawford Hawkins who was developing ways to utilize coffee byproducts—the discarded fruit that encases the valuable beans. Historically, coffee husks were considered useless.

“When you drive through the coffee-producing areas of Latin America, you’ll find there’s this unbelievably distinct smell of rotting coffee cherries,” Love says. “And you’ll see these piles in a field where it’s

Left: A pile of rotting *cascara*, or coffee husks, on a farm in Colombia, showing the problem if not properly managed. Husky has found a practical solution for using these to make their biostimulant fertilizer.

Below: Coffee cherries ready to be harvested.



been dumped. The rotting fruit eventually leaches into the groundwater and river systems. It can be very problematic to the downstream communities.”

Hawkins was attempting to use the juice from coffee cherries to form a new beverage. He sent a few samples to Love. “It just didn’t taste very good,” Love says. “And Crawford agreed—he’s like, ‘I know.’”

The juice might not be tasty, but it could still serve a purpose. Love and Hawkins discovered that the coffee byproducts have the potential to be utilized as a biofertilizer—a plant-based alternative to chemical fertilizer.

Last year, Love and Hawkins cofounded a start-up, Husky Ag, that is working to develop biofertilizers using upcycled coffee byproducts. Working with researchers at the University of



Above: Love visiting coffee farms in Salgar, Colombia.

Below: Love at the coffee byproducts processing facility in Costa Rica.



California, Davis, and the University of Cauca in Colombia, they have been field-testing their biofertilizers on a number of different crops, including coffee, tomatoes, corn, and avocados. So far, the results have been very positive. Ideally, Love says, their product will get registered for commercial use in the United States. But his primary focus is helping the Latin American farmers who produce the coffee he and billions of other people drink every day.

“We’re working on developing effective nutrient management strategies for farmers in Colombia,” Love says. “What’s important to us is helping the small-holder farmers who are most affected by fertilizer prices and climate change.”

Work with the new start-up has left Love too busy to roast much of his own coffee these days. Now living in Manhattan Beach, California, sourcing from local roasters often has to suffice. “I love finding coffee that was produced by one of my Colombian friends,” Love says. “Knowing how much effort it took to put that cup of coffee into your hands is incredibly special.” ■

—Zach Schonbrun '05

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TAYLOR LOVE

to me is that complete strangers were walking up and buying my coffee.” Ecstatic, he bought a larger commercial machine, cleared out an old garage, turned it into a small roastery, and began to learn the craft of coffee roasting. His coffee eventually made its way into local and national roasting competitions. He traveled to Latin America to source beans himself. And while there, he started learning more about how coffee is produced—and the difficult and dangerous conditions facing those on the production end of the supply chain.

“In coffee, there’s a huge inequity between the producers and the consumers,” Love says. “Coffee farmers make barely sustainable living wages. Depending on the quality of the harvest and the commodity prices of green coffee, they maybe make enough to live for nine or 10 months of the year. What happens after that is

that people get hungry, get desperate. That’s when you see upticks in crime and trafficking, awful things.” While in Colombia on a sourcing trip, Love connected with an asset management firm that had recently invested in several coffee farms near Medellín. They needed someone to manage their post-harvest operations and develop their international sales networks. It was Love’s way in. And his first step toward making an impact.

“As partners and landowners, we had an opportunity to try to change how things happen,” Love says. “We hired people full time, we paid benefits, we set up retirement benefits for workers. We wanted to be partners and community members.”

In addition to unpredictable rainfall, a changing climate, and rising labor costs,

Creating Possibilities

AS A STUDENT, Julianne Torrence '87 took the Taft motto, *Non ut sibi minstre-tur sed ut ministret*, Not to be served but to serve, to heart. She became the youngest person to become a certified hospice volunteer in Connecticut.

"I couldn't run cross-country during my senior year" due to an illness, she says, so

she was looking for something to fill that time and saw an ad looking for hospice volunteers. Having lost her grandfather as a young child, Torrence knew a little about grief. Initially, she thought she'd only do the training in order to write an article for the *Papyrus*, but she was hooked.

"Taft's motto was in keeping with

my whole moral compass," she says. "I always try to embrace everybody."

Now she serves the needs of troubled youth through her work with CJR, formerly known as the Connecticut Junior Republic. There, she had the opportunity to start a group home for boys with serious problems.

"Not just delinquent, not just broken" she says of the youth. "We can help them figure out how to navigate this world and what has happened to them. These were the kids nobody else wanted. They had nowhere else to go. They had major mental illness and trauma."

"I'd always felt inadequate at Taft," because she was a day student and a scholarship recipient, Torrence says. "But my weekends were filled with people in a safe space. I always had food and a safe place to go. People who loved me no matter what."

She recalls one boy who was living in CJR's group home who waited all day for his father to come for a visit. "At 7 p.m., I had to bring him in because his dad was not coming," she says. "That's the kind of trauma I deal with. It was a group of boys who had literally no place else to go. But we could provide them a safe space."

Founded in 1904 in Litchfield, CJR now serves nearly 2,000 troubled youth and families annually. Torrence has been with CJR since 2007 and has held a variety of roles, including clinical program director for CJR's Therapeutic Group Home, where she developed and implemented a new therapeutic, trauma-informed model for a group home for teenage boys.

Torrence's role has evolved into more of an administrative one. As the director of performance and quality improvement, Torrence is responsible for ensuring that CJR's programs meet evidence-based and outcomes-influenced treatment modalities by reviewing programs and evaluating their successes, or failures. Since 2009, she has overseen a team dedicated to exploring and applying for new programs, as well



Julianne Torrence '87, director of performance and quality improvement for CJR (formerly known as the Connecticut Junior Republic) in Litchfield, Connecticut.

"We can help them figure out how to navigate this world and what has happened to them."



An aerial view of the CJR Litchfield campus. O&G INDUSTRIES INC.

as initiating and maintaining licenses and accreditations for the organization using data-driven strategies to guide programs.

"We do what's right to make things [better], providing things that aren't reimbursable. We look at what needs to happen to strengthen the families of these kids. If we do that, they're probably not going to jail. If we treat them for 60 days on campus and they go back to their community with no sustainable change, nothing's going to be different," she says.

"My job is to look at all the programs to see that real change is made. Is hope reinstated? Did we find a way for them to graduate from high school? We find a way out of the box to meet the needs of the kids. We believe every person has the ability to thrive if they're given the right opportunity."

CJR started as an orphanage for kids who had no place else to go, Torrence says. "And we still [offer residential placements]. We find a way for them to connect to the community and to help them establish roots, nurture change, and grow possibilities," Torrence says.

Prior to CJR, she was a clinical social worker with McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts. She is also a published author, having coauthored a chapter in *Sociocultural Issues in Psychiatry: A Casebook and Curriculum*.

She is excited about recent research being done by her mentor, Dr. Chris Palmer, at McLean Hospital, that she is collaborating on. "Dr. Palmer has started

Right: Torrence and her partner, David, who volunteer at the International OCD Foundation Conference each year, after a long "amazing" day.

Below: Torrence and her partner's old school bus "Happy Ours" that they are renovating to become a tiny home with a mobile office so she can work remotely when they travel around the country making new connections.

a new movement called the Brain Energy Foundation. All the ills we see in the world, he's really taking a deep look at," she says. "He's looking at mental illness through a different paradigm. It's groundbreaking, and it's going to change the world."

In her spare time, Torrence and her partner, David, are rehabbing an old school bus to make a tiny home. "I'll have a mobile office to work remotely," she says. "It's definitely 'glamping,' but everything is self-contained. We're going to go around the country and make connections. This is a great way to be together. I just want to live in the moment and find a way to give to others. That's what we're about." ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84



Gimme Shelter

"I don't do well sitting around, so I started volunteering at the local animal shelter. And that's how I got into animal welfare."

STEVE PORTER'S CAREER has taken a meandering path, but he says there's always been one constant: he loves working with small groups of people who are passionate about what they're doing.

From that perspective, his moves from working in tech to working in an animal shelter—and then into his latest role, building software for shelters—all make perfect sense.

"It is the single most passionate field I've ever worked in," Porter '97 says of animal welfare. "It's inspiring how passionate people are."

Porter's career took off in 2007 when he joined a health care technology

start-up, Health Care Data Services. After the company was acquired by AthenaHealth, Porter moved to Austin, Texas, to grow AthenaHealth's newest research and development office.

The Austin office initially had the small, start-up feel Porter enjoys. But by 2016, it had grown to some 150 employees, big enough that Porter felt ready for something new. He quit without firm plans.

"I don't do well sitting around, so I started volunteering at the local animal shelter," Porter says. "And that's how I got into animal welfare."



Above: Steve Porter '97 holding a puppy being treated at the Austin Pets Alive parvovirus clinic.

Left: Porter during his three-week, 270-mile hike of Vermont's Long Trail at the Skyline Shelter between Middlebury Gap and Lincoln Gap.

A self-described dog person, Porter signed up to walk dogs and clean bowls at Austin Pets Alive, a local shelter that strives to avoid euthanizing animals. He then started volunteering at the shelter's medical clinic "and absolutely fell in love," he says.

Austin Pets Alive treats dogs ill with canine parvovirus, a contagious, deadly disease that most often strikes puppies too young to be vaccinated against it. Shelter volunteers help rehydrate sick animals and treat them with antibiotics and anti-nausea medication.

Porter ended up taking a job managing the parvovirus program, which required learning veterinary skills. "The first time I placed an IV catheter in a two-pound puppy was a



Porter with Queenie, a puppy that had canine parvovirus and was saved by the Austin Pets Alive shelter. The shelter's original Airstream shelter is in the background.

really exciting day for me because it's really hard to do," Porter says. Two years later, he became the shelter's director of operations.

Now Porter has found a role that marries his tech background with his animal welfare work. He's chief product officer for Pet Loyalty, a 50-employee company that makes software for animal shelters. Pet Loyalty's digital tools help shelters manage fundraising, intake, adoptions, volunteers, and foster programs.

Porter, who now works from home, said the best part of his job is working with colleagues on three continents. Pet Loyalty was formed by the merger of an Australia-based company and a Brazil-based company.

"This is the first time I've worked with people extensively in other countries," Porter says. "The mixing of cultures, and the diversity of it—it's my favorite thing about the job."

Right: Pet Loyalty, where Porter is chief product officer, makes software for animal shelters that provides digital tools to help shelters manage intake, adoptions, volunteers, foster programs, and fundraising.

Working remotely has its challenges, however.

"The thing I like most is organizing people and leading them through a project," Porter says. "And at least for me, I've really struggled with it, being totally remote. Periodically we get together, but it's really hard to get people on three different continents

together, especially as a small company."

Porter doesn't currently have a pet to keep him company in his home office, but he said he and his wife are talking about getting their next dog. He remains a dog person, although his shelter work has given him a new perspective. "I've grown to love cats," he says. ■

—Sophie Quinton '06



"I loved being the assistant director. I loved acting. I loved the entire process. I didn't know it then, but I had been bitten bad."



Top: Shivani Tibrewala '96 playing Z in her play *Whatever You Say* (written and directed by her), running since 2002. ANIL ABHIMANYU SHARMA, COURTESY NO LICENSE YET

Inset: Tibrewala is a playwright, screenwriter, lyricist, director, and producer. COURTESY NO LICENSE YET

as she adds, "approximately 17 other majors along the way"—she ultimately focused her studies on English literature. It was at Penn that she first encountered the work that changed her life: Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. "It was alchemy. I knew that I could never unread it," she says. The piece was such an inspiration that Tibrewala decided to write her own play for her senior thesis, adapting Tom Kromer's 1935 novel *Waiting for Nothing*. "My thesis advisor was

pretty worried since I hadn't studied playwriting," she admits, "but I told her that I would die if I had to write another analytical essay! I had watched and read a ton of plays. I felt like I understood the form, and I wanted to take the chance. She helped me stage a reading of the play in Philadelphia, the first public performance of my work."

Even after this watershed experience, after graduating and returning home to India, Tibrewala still wasn't ready to commit to a life as a playwright. It took the tragedy of September 11th to finally compel her to pursue her true dreams. Looking back, she says, "I had friends in New York, and I remember thinking that I hadn't written when I had the chance." That very day, she quit her public relations job, embarked on a self-imposed sabbatical, and wrote her first original play, *Whatever You Say*. Within weeks, she was approaching actors, and soon the cast—including Tibrewala's future collaborator and mentor and friend, celebrated Indian actor Tom Alter—was performing at the prestigious Prithvi Theatre Festival in Mumbai.

Tibrewala began producing work with her own theater company, No License Yet Productions. Initially wanting to focus on black comedy, she produced an original sociopolitical satire called *Helpdesk* and an adaptation of Italo Calvino's short stories that she titled *Raccontini*. Three years later, she mounted one of her largest-scale undertakings, the genre-defying dance drama *Staying Alive*, about young people grappling with suicide, and it was this production that led the Indian Council of Cultural Relations to designate her as an official Empaneled Artist.

Around the same time, Tibrewala made her first foray into screenwriting, penning the script for the short horror film *Sex on the Beach* that was released in theaters worldwide. In the years since, she has explored a wide variety of genres and formats, from documentaries to television series to feature films. She has also worked as content head for Indya.com and at NDTV Lumiere—a world cinema television channel.

While she briefly stepped away from directing and producing to raise her son—a period during which she worked on writing and developing her own screenplays—she recently debuted as lyricist for the blockbuster movie musical *Music School*, which was released in theaters across India, the United States, Europe, and Australia earlier this year and is now available on streaming.



Above: Tibrewala playing the "Radio" in her play *Helpdesk*, running since 2003. COURTESY NO LICENSE YET

Left: Tibrewala playing Z in her play *Whatever You Say*. COURTESY NO LICENSE YET

For her, one of the greatest joys of writing is the opportunity to push boundaries and dive into a seemingly endless range of subjects—from feel-good romantic comedies to medical thrillers to existential meditations. And regardless of the story she's telling, Tibrewala hopes that an inherent truthfulness remains at the core of her work. "I write from my soul. My work comes from deep within. There is no artifice," she says. "The form is not as schooled because I'm unschooled, but in a way, I think that makes it resonate even more strongly with my audience—because it's raw, and it's honest." ■

—Christopher Browner '12

Star of Stage and Screen

"I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I CRASHED THE theater party! I never went to drama school, never assisted anyone, never studied playwriting—so how did I make it to the party?" asks Mumbai-based writer, director, lyricist, and producer Shivani Tibrewala '96. But even if she still can't fully wrap her head around her rise on the Indian theater and cinema scene, after more than 500 performances of her plays and a bevy of screenplays for film and television, the results speak for themselves.

The seeds for Tibrewala's future success were planted early when, to avoid venturing out into the harsh New England winter, she auditioned for Taft's production of Tina

Howe's *Museum*. Not only did she get a part in the play, but she was also brought on as assistant director. "We basically spent every evening in the Black Box for the next three months, and I just completely fell in love," she says. "I loved being the assistant director. I loved acting. I loved the entire process. I didn't know it then, but I had been bitten bad." Shivani acknowledges her debt to Barc Johnson '53, her creative writing teacher who was also her independent study project advisor and helped her put together her first book of poetry.

After Taft, she enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania, and though she tried her hand at biology and a premed track—and,

Language as Lifeline



“There’s something very invigorating about going to work when what you’re doing makes a real, concrete difference in people’s lives.”

Left: Jeanie Lundbom '88 working with economically disadvantaged teens (mostly internally displaced from the war-torn eastern region) in Cherkasy, Ukraine, through the U.S. Embassy-sponsored English Access Microscholarship Program, part of her work for the State Department as an English language fellow.

Below: Lundbom on the campus of Yaşar University, in Izmir, Turkey, where she was on the English faculty.



WORDS AND LANGUAGES FASCINATE

Jeanie Lundbom '88. The act of forming words and navigating the intricacies of the English language have been her life’s work. And she’s used her expertise to help immigrants become proficient speakers, holding out a helping hand to those seeking a new life in the United States.

“I have always loved language. It’s an incredibly complex skill that people have, that they develop, without realizing it,” she says. For the past 30 years, she’s used that fascination to help new immigrants learn English, a notoriously tricky language to learn, especially for those whose schooling in their homelands was lacking.

“I have taught for community programs, adult schools, refugee resettlement agencies, language institutes, junior colleges, and universities in Northern California, Chicago, Germany, Ukraine, Turkey, and now Maine.

I’ve taught everything from literacy to advanced levels, and especially enjoy teaching grammar. I even have a YouTube channel (youtube.com/jeanietheenglishteacher) with grammar videos I’ve made. The production quality is very low tech, but they get the job done,” she says.

Teaching English as a second language has its pluses and minuses, however. It is not lucrative, especially teaching adults, and it’s difficult to make a living doing it, Lundbom says. Her career of teaching in many different places has enabled her to learn about the world and other cultures. Lundbom says she once counted 17 different native languages in one of her adult English language classes. She spent several years working with Bosnian refugees in Chicago, an experience she cherishes.

“I got quite immersed in the lives and culture of my Bosnian refugee students

when I worked for World Relief [a refugee resettlement agency] for four years in Chicago. Every day of acclimating them to life in the U.S. and teaching them ‘survival English’ felt so vital,” she says. “There’s something very invigorating about going to work when what you’re doing makes a real, concrete difference in people’s lives.”

From Bosnia to Ukraine to Turkey, Lundbom has traveled to a variety of political hotspots teaching English. From 2015 to 2016, Lundbom was an English language fellow with the U.S. Department of State (a sister program to the Fulbright) and was placed in Cherkasy, Ukraine.

“The diplomatic and educational benefits of those exchange programs can’t be matched,” she says. “I was the first American many of those Ukrainians had met, and in fact the first native English speaker many of the English professors at my university had gotten to know. And on my end, I am without a doubt more educated and invested in what’s happening right now in Ukraine.”

In 2020, Lundbom came back from Turkey to live with her parents in Kennebunk, Maine. “My parents are both in their early 80s now and having health issues, and it was clear to me that this was where I needed to be. I’m extremely fortunate to have a full-time contracted position at Portland (Maine) Adult Education with really outstanding colleagues.”

She says Portland has had many asylum seekers from Central Africa for a number of years now, and despite a large English as a second language program, there is a very long waiting list for classes. Most of her students are from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola, and many of them are living at shelters or being put up in hotels.

In addition to English, Lundbom helps those learners who haven’t had the

“Western” style of schooling. “If this is one of their first classes they’ve taken, we teach study skills, [and help them] learn how to learn in our kind of academic system. That is absolutely huge,” she says.

“I have concluded that out of all of the factors a student brings—their age or how different their language is from English—the number one factor [in their ability to learn English] is their past education. It has driven home what

it means to get a good basic education. You’re working with people who have not ever learned how to learn in a school setting or study on their own,” she adds.

“Teaching English, or any language, without using translation is a real art form. There’s so much you have to teach that’s not concrete, like ‘What’s your name?’ You have to be able to make it so clear by demonstrating the ideal context for it that even if someone’s hearing gobbledygook, they



Above: Girls at a rural school in central Ukraine performing for Lundbom during her visit to meet with staff and students and present a workshop.



Left: One of Lundbom’s classes at Portland Adult Education in Portland, Maine, where she currently teaches. The majority of the students are asylum seekers from Central Africa, mainly Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with smaller populations from the Middle East and Central America.

practically have no choice but to understand. There’s a lot of acting involved.”

Lundbom’s years of experience have been fulfilling, and she sees a continued need for her services. “Every program I’ve worked for has had its own issues and challenges, and the challenges we’re facing with this community are especially large. But I wouldn’t think of doing anything else.” ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84

BY DEBRA MEYERS
For more information, visit www.taftschool.org/news

Summer Journeys

SUMMER IS A TIME FOR TAFT STUDENTS AND FACULTY TO REFRESH AND REGROUP. FOR MANY, IT IS ALSO A TIME TO EXPERIENCE AND EXPLORE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE AND LEARNING. SOME DO SO WITH FUNDING ASSISTANCE FROM ENDOWED FELLOWSHIPS. THIS IS A SAMPLING OF SOME OF THE WORK TAFTIES ENGAGED IN DURING THE SUMMER OF 2023. THE STORIES ARE PRESENTED IN EXCERPT. YOU CAN FIND THE FULL STORIES—AND THE FULL COLLECTION—BY SCANNING THE QR CODE.



RONALD CEESAY '23, JACK OLD '24, AND HARRY REVENAUGH '24

Botswanan Ties

FOR NEARLY TWO DECADES, Taft History and Global Studies and Service Teacher Andrew Taylor '70 served as a teacher, then principal of Maru-a-Pula School (MaP) in Gaborone, Botswana, one of Africa's premier secondary schools. And

while Taft and MaP are nearly 8,000 miles apart, they are, in many ways, philosophically close: both were founded with missions to “educate the whole person”; service to the community is central to



student life; and academic excellence is paramount. It seemed natural, then, that the connection between the two schools should not only continue but strengthen. Ronald Ceesay '23, Jack Old '24, and Harry Revenaugh '24 traveled to Botswana last summer to help advance that process.

With encouragement from Taylor, the three spent five weeks working at Maru-a-Pula School and serving the local community. Mornings were spent



in the classroom with students close in age to the Taft volunteers. Afternoons in Gaborone were dedicated to service. “Most days after school we went to a church in Old Naledi, a much poorer part of the city,” Jack explains. “The church runs a program called Happy Homes, which provides after-school programming for local children. Our role was to help students with their homework, and to practice math, science, geography, and English.” The children at Happy Homes ranged in age from 5 to 13; most were in the equivalent of grades three through five. And while the work Ronald, Jack, and Harry did at Happy Homes was perhaps the most important and rewarding of their time in Botswana, it also proved to be the most challenging: unlike the MaP students, many of the children at Happy Homes spoke little or no English. The trio found creative ways to engage with the children despite the language barrier; student translators also helped during academic lessons. “Despite the challenges, we felt the children benefited greatly from the

daily practices, as we were able to see measurable individual improvement in our five weeks there,” Jack notes. When Ronald, Jack, and Harry returned to the MaP campus after their time in the community, life felt a bit like life at Taft. There were sports practices, rugby games, and just relaxing in common spaces, where they compared notes with the students about life in the U.S. and Botswana. And, like Taft, there were even “long weekends” on the calendar. The three spent a long weekend with a boarding student and his family on their farm outside of the city. “Seeing how close the host student was with his two younger brothers reminded me of my brothers,” Jack says. “While we live more than 8,000 miles apart, our family mannerisms largely match, which gave me a feeling of being at home. I won’t forget the time I spent sitting around a fire on a cool night, sharing my experiences as an American, while living the experience of Botswana.” The name “Maru-a-Pula” means “clouds of rain” or “promises of blessings” in



Setswana. For Ronald, Jack, and Harry the promise they imagined Botswana might hold was more than fulfilled. “I would love to return to work at Maru-a-Pula,” says Ronald. “Everyone was extremely kind, and I think we can learn in our culture to emulate the relaxation and ease present within their society. Often in America today, it’s easy to get swept up in chaos, but my experience showed me the importance of appreciating the smaller things. It was hard to leave because it was such a joyful encounter.” Ronald, Jack, and Harry’s Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from the Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowships.



SARA TAKANABE '24

A Passion for Acting



AS A STUDENT IN CARNEGIE MELLON'S Pre-College Drama Program, Sara Takanabe '24 became accustomed to hearing a familiar refrain from her professors: Acting cannot be taught. And Sara agrees. It is, she says, an art you can continue to learn about and grow in; it is a craft to be honed. Sara spent six weeks last summer learning, growing, and honing her skills in a program designed to prepare high school theater students for the college audition and interview process, while introducing them to the creative demands and rigors facing students studying a Bachelor of Fine Arts Drama curriculum.

Sara took eight different, intensive courses at Carnegie Mellon: Movement, Acting, Acting on Camera, Audition,

Dramaturgy, Voice and Speech, Shakespeare, and Analyzing Text. She often supplemented her already full class days with optional evening programming.

"It was intense, but I got a sense of how college life in a theater major would be. I also wanted to be in an environment where I was surrounded by people with the same passion and dreams, and see how I would fit into that community and how I would be able to grow there," she says.

"Although the program reminded me how hard the craft is, it also strengthened my love and passion for it. I have more confidence in my theatrical skills now, and I'm so excited to bring that back to Taft Theater."

Sara's Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from Kilbourne Fund.



MOLLY WYNNE '24

Dedicated to Dreams

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, artists have flocked to Kaatsbaan Cultural Park, a 153-acre artist sanctuary on New York's Hudson River. Kaatsbaan offers programs in theater, music, film, spoken and written word, and culinary and visual arts. It was dance—the Kaatsbaan Ballet Intensive is a training program

for artists ages 13 to 19—that drew Molly Wynne '24 there last summer.

Each morning, Molly attended two classes: ballet technique and pointe. "In the afternoons, we learned a solo variation from *Le Corsaire* called *Medora*, which we danced in pointe shoes. We also learned a group variation from *La Bayadere*. Our last class of the day was contemporary, where we learned several pieces of choreography from Jessica Lang, a world-renowned choreographer. I enjoyed learning from her and hope to incorporate her teachings into my own choreography at Taft," she says.

Lang was not the only highly regarded faculty member there.

"The faculty was certainly a highlight of the program," Molly notes. "One of my favorite dancers, Gillian Murphy, a principal dancer with ABT, taught several classes. I was lucky to take classes from the director

of the program, Paloma Herrera, who was a legendary principal dancer with the ABT."

For Molly, learning the *Medora* variation from one of her favorite ballet dancers—Gillian Murphy—was truly an extraordinary experience. Though she found the variation challenging, Molly found Murphy's guidance incomparable.

"She always danced the choreography full-out, so we were able to see her artistry and impeccable technique up close. I learned so much from her corrections, and by the end of the program, I was able to dance the variation with more grace and fluidity," she says. "The entire The entire experience was invaluable and undoubtedly deepened my love for dance. It was incredible to be around people who shared my passion for dance and who are dedicated to achieving their dreams."

Molly's Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from Kilbourne Fund.



FIONA CHOU '25

A Deeper Dive into Medical Education



DURING THE SUMMER OF 2022, Fiona Chou '25 completed a basic surgical skills internship at UCLA. It represented the culmination of years of informal study and personal projects around public health and medicine. Inspired by the experience, Fiona returned to UCLA last summer, this time as a student in the Advanced Cardiothoracic Surgical Skills Program, an extension of the work Fiona did previously, which was a prerequisite for enrollment.

"While the focus last year was on learning motor skills for simple surgeries like coronary artery bypass grafts or aortic valve replacements, the focus this year was on mastering the physiology of the human heart to perform complex surgeries that require multiple steps, like the Ross, Norwood, and atrial septal defect repair procedures," Fiona explains. "The Ross procedure can take up to eight hours

because surgeons are working with newborn hearts. The procedure requires a lot of steps to ensure success. We were also able to perform an ultrasound and develop laparoscopic surgical skills, which turned out to be extremely hard. It is already hard to perform surgery with direct contact with a patient's fascia, but it was even harder when I had to use laparoscopic Debakey forceps to maneuver my sutures. Through a lot of practice with the kits, I was eventually able to maneuver the laparoscopic tools more smoothly. It was very rewarding to finally be able to do such a complicated procedure!"

The program included many opportunities for networking. During a conversation with a practicing surgeon, Fiona learned a bit about the connection between heart and kidney function, which piqued her interest. During her free time, Fiona began



participating in online education sessions about kidney physiology and health. She took her interest one step further when the program ended and she returned to Taiwan.

"I applied for an opportunity to shadow a nephrologist at the Jia-Kang Kidney Dialysis Center," Fiona says. "It was extremely



competitive, and I am extremely grateful to have been selected to shadow Dr. Li. Not only was I able to gain a deeper understanding of the kidney and the multiple diseases associated with it, but more importantly, I was able to engage in patient care. The interactions with the patients were an extremely eye-opening experience for me because I was finally able to meet the patients. Instead of looking at case studies, these real-life interactions gave me a further sense of responsibility to ensure they are healthy both mentally and physically."

Fiona's Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from the Meg Page '74 Fellowships.

MAGGIE ZENG '24

Research at the Highest Level

LAST YEAR, Maggie Zeng '24 became a published researcher when her independent work was featured in *The Journal of Student Research, High School Edition*. Last summer, she continued her passion for public health research at the University of California, Santa Barbara's Summer Research Academy in a program that explored the role of discrimination in disparities in health care.

"Our work in the program relied on a programming language for statistical analysis to conduct regression analysis on open databases. This was both new and exciting for me and allowed us to visualize real-life trends in specific topics relating to public health," she says.

Maggie worked with two other student researchers. Their research question married their collective interests and examined both the prevalence of physically punitive parenting practices in Asian households in the United States, and whether cultural and mental health influences can predict the prevalence and evolution of those practices.

"We were all really interested in the phenomenon best known in popular culture as 'tiger parenting,' which basically suggests that Asian parents tend to hold

their children to higher social and academic expectations and thus have stricter parenting styles," explains Maggie. "Our research suggests that older Asian generations in the U.S. would be more likely to use physical force on their children, while younger Asian adults are increasingly shifting away from physical punishment."

The group presented their findings during a capstone seminar.

"Our topic was definitely controversial, so our findings stirred up some interesting questions and post-presentation discussions. Listening to the other

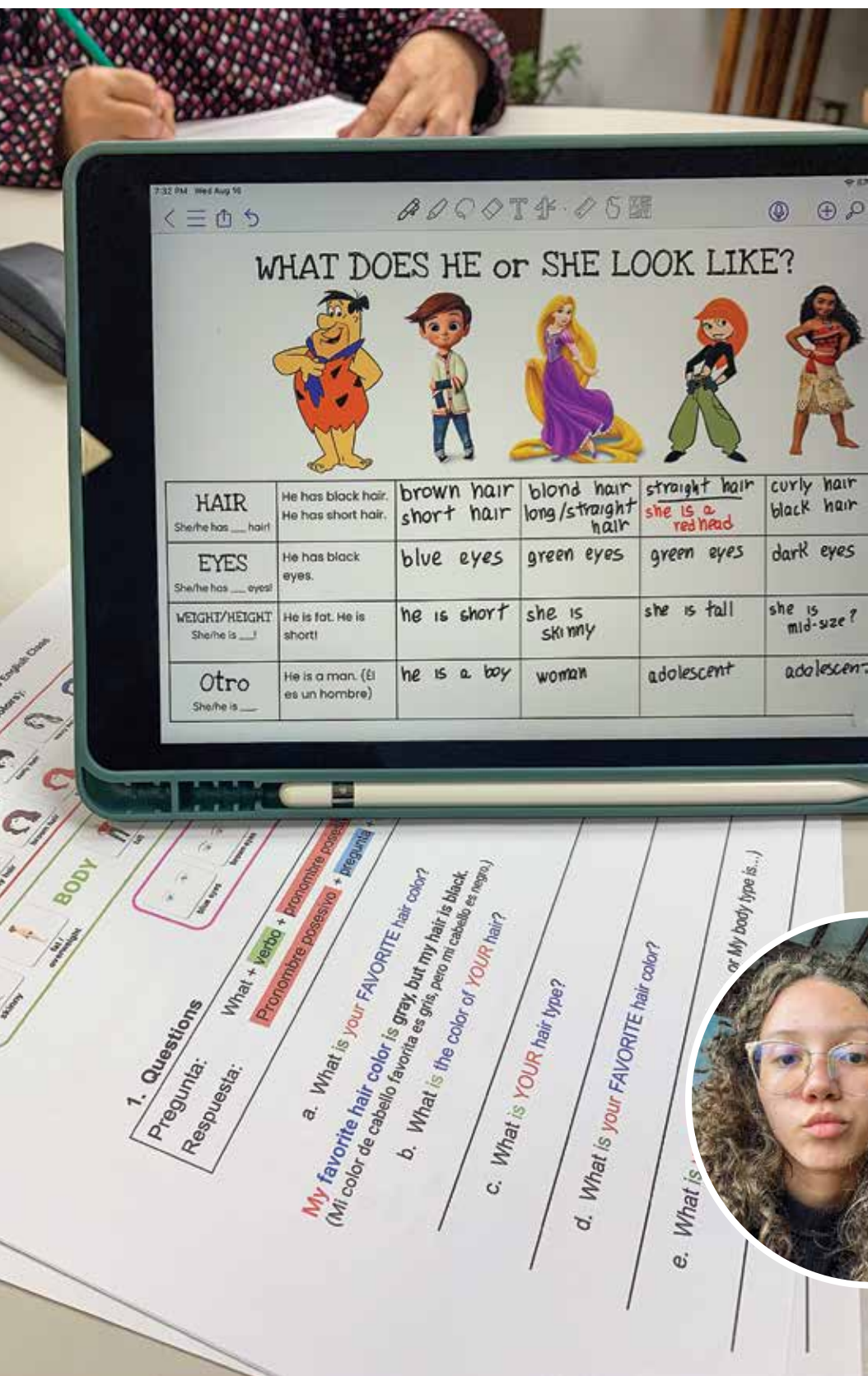
research presentations was also very eye-opening, especially as it revealed just how expansive the field of public health actually is. This program helped me realize that working in the public health field is something that I want to do with certainty. I cannot express how invaluable knowledge is to me," she says.

Maggie's Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from the Meg Page '74 Fellowships.



ISABELLA NASCIMENTO SILVA PINTO '25

The Value of Language



ISABELLA Nascimento Silva Pinto '25 is used to people asking her about famous footballers like Ronaldinho or Neymar. After all, she is from Brazil and grew up near Pelé's hometown. During her summer service trip to Costa Rica, those questions took on greater meaning: they were common ground, a connection to the local children that transcended any language barrier.

Isabella spent two weeks last summer teaching English at a no-cost day care and after-school program serving low-income families on the outskirts of San José.

"The aim of our work was to support people from low-income backgrounds with learning English," Isabella explains. "This is a fundamental skill to master in Costa Rica, where a large percentage of the national economy comes from the tourism industry. It was especially important to me because it gave me the chance to support kids based on my long-standing belief that learning English is a great tool for socioeconomic improvement and the democratization of international opportunities for children of developing countries."

Isabella also has some personal experience as an English language learner.

"I started learning English when I was 11 years old. Five years later, I got a Davis Scholarship to study at The Taft School as an international student. It made me realize that the mere ability to speak

English quite literally opens doors for youth from underprivileged backgrounds. I know the indescribable value it holds not only for personal development, but also for the ideal of economic and social empowerment

of newer generations," she says. Isabella taught three classes each morning and, after lunch and a walk around the community, taught three classes in the afternoon. After planning sessions, a one-hour trip back to her home base, and dinner, Isabella would walk to a local university to teach a small group of adult students.

While it may sound like a tremendous commitment and challenging work, for Isabella, volunteering to teach English—and taking on all that encompasses—seemed quite natural, and truly meaningful.

"I was embodying the Taft School motto of *Non ut sibi* by helping Latin American youth who found themselves in a similar position I was in five years ago, just learning the English language that can help open new doors," she says.

Isabella's Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from the Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowships.



FAITH GRAZIANO '24

Primate Rehabilitation

FAITH GRAZIANO '24 has always been fascinated by primates. Throughout her life, she spent hours watching primate documentaries and came to an important conclusion: conservation work would be central to her commitment to service. Last summer, Faith turned her passion into action by joining Proyecto Carayá, a primate rescue, rehabilitation, and conservation program outside La Cumbre, Argentina. For two weeks, she worked alongside the sanctuary's biologists and conservation

staff learning how to rehabilitate and socialize primates that had been hunted, trafficked, and ultimately rescued. "Some of the work was simple and straightforward, like preparing meals for the monkeys, feeding them, and bathing the babies," says Faith. "Other tasks were more demanding, like pickax-ing the brush

away from cages to help prevent the animals from being harmed in the event of a fire." Living 10 miles from the nearest town was not without its challenges: Faith had limited access to running water and modern facilities during her stay, and it could take up to two hours to build a fire and heat water for a shower.

"This way of living was a difficult adjustment, but I came to the significant realization that living conditions are not that important when it comes to doing something you love. The woman who founded and runs the project, Alejandra Juarez, has a true passion for conserving the environment and helping endangered species. She is living in less-than-ideal conditions and rarely leaves the project other than for necessity. I hope that one day I will be able to find fulfillment in my work the same way that she has," she says.

Faith's Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from the Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowships.





MAYA LEWIS '24

Where Service Meets Culture

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, the story of Asian elephants has been deeply intertwined with the history and culture of Thailand. Once abundant and revered, Asian elephants are now endangered. Across Thailand, elephant sanctuaries provide safe spaces for elephants threatened by poachers, displaced by development, or born in captivity and lacking the ability to survive on their own in the wild. Last summer, Maya Lewis '24 traveled to northern Thailand's Chiang Mai province to help care for these storied, majestic, and endangered creatures.

As a sanctuary volunteer, Maya was involved in the direct care of the elephants, which included feeding them and administering medications.

"The elephants of the sanctuary are required to take daily medications to maintain healthy immune systems. The sanctuary staff taught us how to assemble medicine balls made of rice, their medicine in pill form, bananas, bamboo, and a black, sticky fruit for them to enjoy," Maya explains. "We learned very quickly that the elephants absolutely love bananas and watermelon, which the Thai people also eat a lot of in their diets."

Maya chose Thailand for her summer journey not only to spend time in service at elephant sanctuary, but because of its rich culture and history. She was eager to explore the country and its many villages surrounding the sanctuary. Her

time in Thailand culminated in the largest city in northern Thailand, Chiang Mai.

"I deeply appreciated traveling throughout Thailand—not just as a tourist, but almost as a citizen. I was exposed to the lives of everyday people and did some of the things they do daily, such as harvesting and preparing rice, hand-sewing traditional clothing, and saying more words than 'hi' and 'thank you.' Also, indulging in street food, visiting temples, and having actual monks pray with and for us was especially meaningful to me," Maya says. "The opportunity to engage in service work while being fully immersed in their culture made for an incredible experience."

Maya's Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from the Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowships.

CHARLOTTE HAY '24

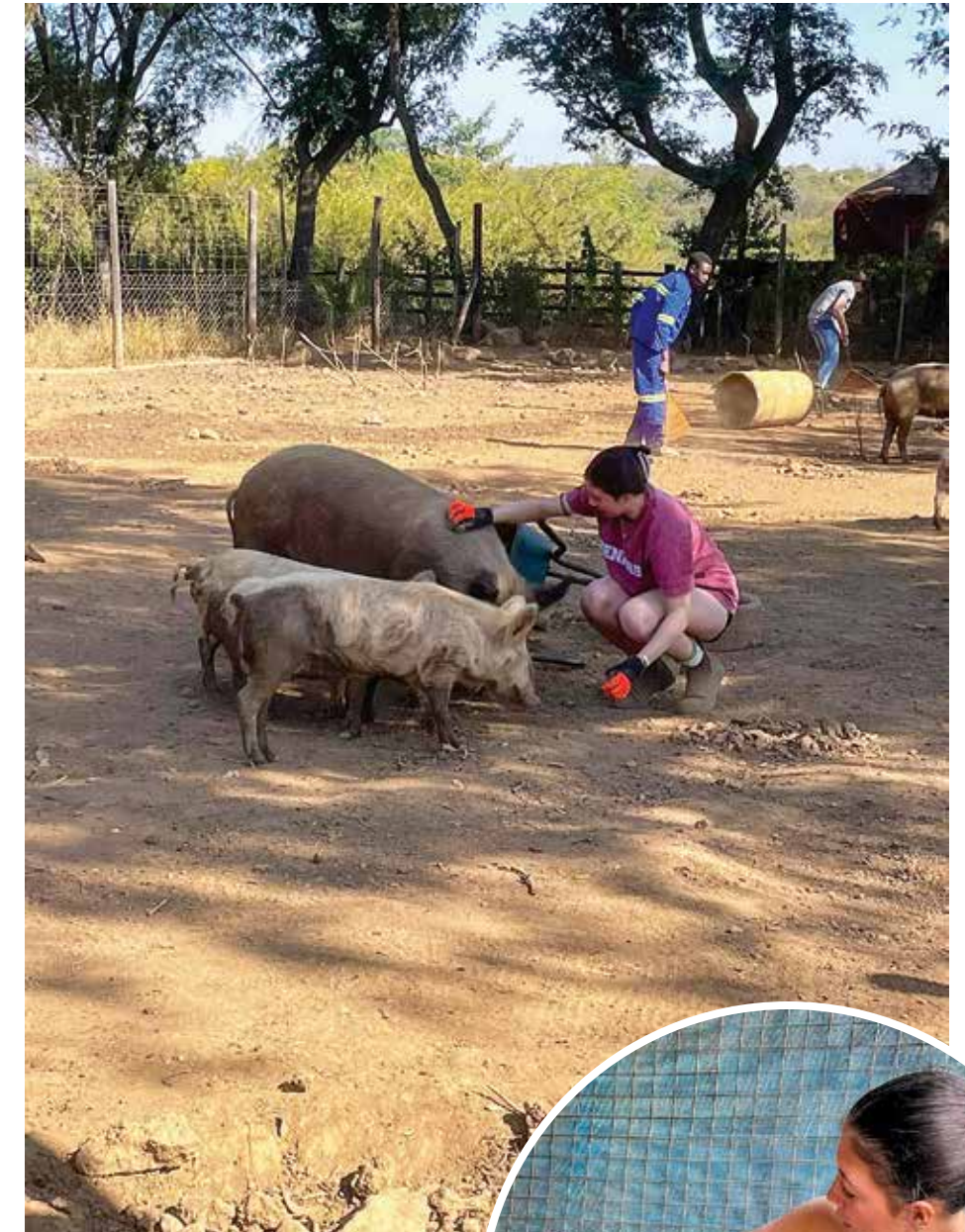
Building Bonds through Service

GROWING UP ON FARMS and taking care of horses has been a way of life for Charlotte Hay '24. Not only has it taught her the value of hard work, but it has instilled in her a love of animals.

"I knew I wanted to do volunteer work over the summer that pertained to environmental sustainability. When I found an opportunity at a wildlife orphanage, I knew that I would be familiar with the work I'd be doing, and it had a focus on something I was passionate about," says Charlotte.

Charlotte also wanted to do that work in a developing country, where she believed her work could have a greater impact. The Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage met all of her requirements. Established in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in 1973, Chipangali is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the rescue and care of orphaned, injured, abandoned, abused, or confiscated wild animals. There are currently more than 150 animals and birds in Chipangali's care.

"Our main objective was to clean habitats, feed and maintain the animals, nurture the babies back to health in the nursery, and to build habitats for new animals and repair them for others," Charlotte says. "For me, the biggest challenge was cleaning the lion cages. Oftentimes there would be dead animals that were fed to them earlier, with maggots and bugs, and we had to take them all out every day. With nine lions in our care, it came to be a lot of work. The work was a lot of heavy lifting, cutting down trees with machetes for the antelope, building habitats for monkeys,



carrying wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow to dump in the waste. It is definitely hard work, but the volunteers around you support you every step of the way.

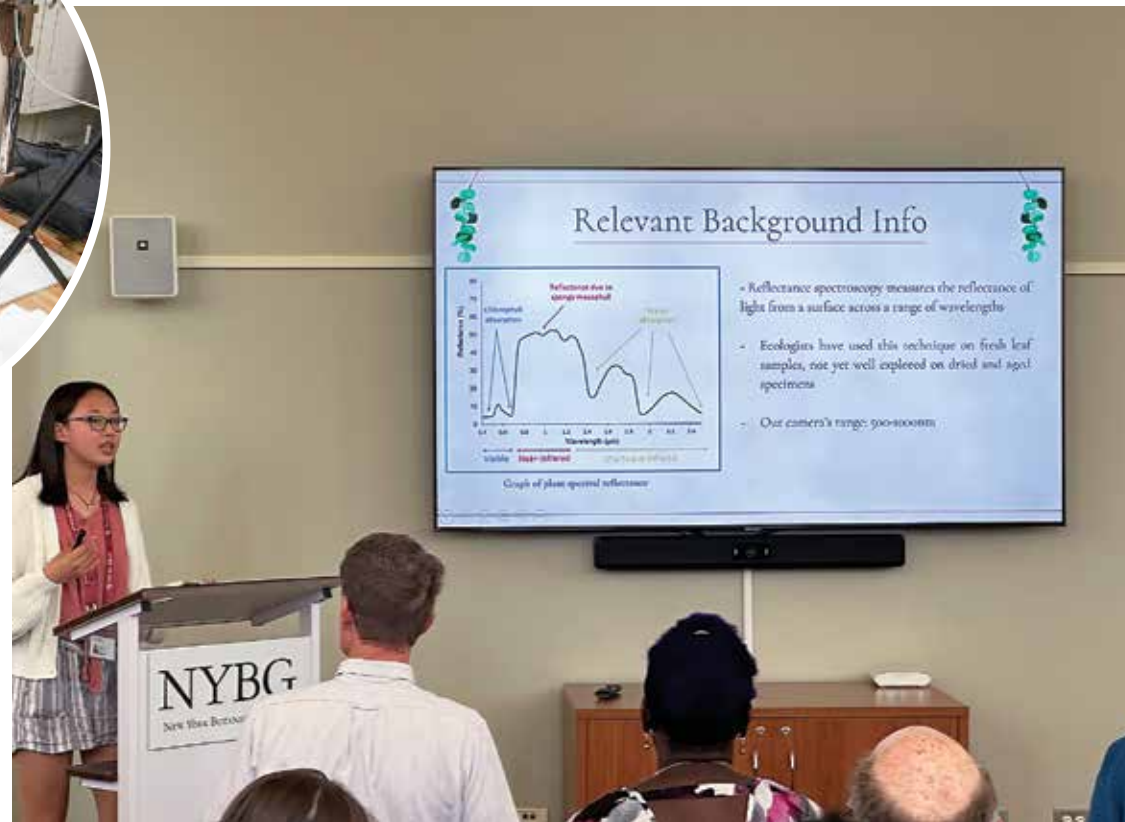
"Being at Chipangali was one of the best experiences of my life," says Charlotte. "The group of volunteers I worked with were all so kind and such amazing people."

Charlotte's Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from the Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowships.



ISABEL YANG '24 AND ISABELLA REYES-FAMOUS '24

New York Botanical Garden Interns



FOR NEARLY 10 YEARS, scientists at the New York Botanical Garden have welcomed summer interns from Taft to their research laboratories. Last summer, Isabel Yang '24 and Isabella Reyes-Famous '24 were awarded two of the coveted internships.

Isabel was mentored by Dr. Kate Armstrong and Dr. Damon Little. Both are engaged in a multitude of consequential research projects, from biodiversity informatics and artificial intelligence to the



study of floras across time. Isabel joined the team on a hyperspectral imaging project.

“Our goal was to test the utility of leaf spectral data for species identification,” Isabel explains. “We wanted to test whether the reflectance signature would hold up as a characteristic across specimen age and use that data to identify species from satellite images. My role in this project was to collect specimens and image them using a hyperspectral camera.”

During her eight-week internship, Isabel collected new specimens from more than 200 different species of plants growing on the New York Botanical Garden grounds.

“After collecting a batch, I’d image, press, and dry the fresh plants. In addition to the fresh samples, I spent time in the herbarium gathering 16 specimens

of each corresponding fresh plant before imaging them, too,” Isabel notes.

Isabella was mentored by Dr. Robert Naczi. Naczi is also one of the founding architects of the formal Taft-NYBG partnership; he has been a great champion of Taft’s summer interns.

“With Dr. Naczi, I studied the systematics of phytotelmata through their symbionts. In other words, we looked at the inhabitants of plants (with water-filled cavities) to discover the relationships between said plants,” Isabella explains. “Because DNA analysis has failed to show relationships between these plants, Dr. Naczi began this project by looking at the mites living in these plants to help explore these relationships.”

Isabella’s contribution to the research was focused on proving Dr. Naczi’s

hypothesis that mites are, in fact, appropriate tools for examining these relationships.

Both internships culminated in a formal presentation to fellow interns, (most of whom were college students, and doctoral and postdoc researchers), scientists, and Garden leadership.

“As a Bronx resident, the name ‘New York Botanical Garden’ has always had held a place in my life,” says Isabella. “In biology class I felt in touch with the material—that my questions about our ecosystems mattered and that science isn’t so linear. Through my internship at the Botanical Garden I was able to further my learning in the comfort and familiarity of my childhood surroundings.”

Isabel and Isabella’s Summer Journeys were made possible in part by grants from the New York Botanical Garden Internship Sponsors.

VINCENT CHEN '24

In the Field: Medical First Response

ON TOP OF HIS DEMANDING COURSE load, commitment to Taft’s arts programs, and music training and performances off campus, Vincent Chen '24 spent four months during his junior year chipping away at the 150 hours of mandatory class time and 28 hours of in-person skill training required for EMT licensure.

“The in-person skill training included learning how to insert oropharyngeal airways, conduct a medical assessment, apply a traction stint, and use a tourniquet. I also had to earn CPR certification,” Vincent notes. “At the course’s end, I had to take the Connecticut state psychomotor skills and national registry knowledge exams to get my license.”

License in hand, Vincent spent last summer on the job working 12-hour shifts as an EMT. A medical first-responder, Vincent cared for patients on-scene, and performed necessary medical interventions while transporting patients to the

hospital. His ambulance team typically included one EMT and one paramedic.

Vincent’s shifts began at 6:30 am with equipment checks—making sure the ambulance was tidy, the tire pressure was on point, and that the lights and sirens were in proper working order. Vincent typically responded to around seven emergency calls during each 12-hour shift. Each call presented a unique set of challenges, Vincent notes, much of it requiring not only the application of the knowledge and skills acquired during his training, but the ability to think clearly, remain calm, and effectively triage each situation.

“Through my work as an EMT, I’ve learned the importance of compassion—of always thinking of the patient, even under the stress of providing treatment,” Vincent notes. “Knowing that I have had a direct and positive impact on an individual and on community health is very, very rewarding.”



JASMINE PUN '25

Perspectives on Gratitude

"I OFTEN GRAVITATE TOWARD people and experiences that require me to exit my comfort zone and usual life," says Jasmine Pun '25.

And that, she says, is why she chose to participate in a service program last summer that took her to halfway across the globe.

For 18 days, Jasmine engaged in a range of service activities in Sumatra and Bali: she worked to preserve orangutan habitats, supported local nonprofit organizations by painting area schools, and did preservation work on coral reefs.

"Sumatra is one of only two countries



where orangutans can be found, and they are listed among the top 25 most endangered primates in the world," Jasmine explains. "During our six-hour jungle trek through the Bukuit Lawang Forest—an orangutan safety forest in Sumatra—we learned about how the orangutans live and thrive."

Jasmine put that knowledge to work through service projects that included planting trees in remote areas to support orangutan habitats. The work was physically demanding and arduous in

the heat and humidity of Indonesia.

To prepare for her work on Bali's coral reefs, Jasmine had to earn her SCUBA certification; part done online before she left, the rest in Bali.

"We dove into the reefs of the Bali islands and spent a week cleaning trash and overgrown algae under the water," Jasmine says. "We also worked to create artificial reef systems to encourage new reef growth."

"From reaching new physical heights to connecting with the children in Sumatra, this experience was truly life-changing. Learning about the ways people in those

countries live is something that will always stay with me. People often talk about tourism in Bali without regard for the real state of the country, without understanding the conditions that much of the population lives under. Having access to clean water, proper refrigeration, or adequate sewage systems are things that I have taken for granted, but having experienced not having that access has left a lasting impression on me. I wake up every day with so much gratitude in my heart."

Jasmine's Summer Journey was made possible in part by a grant from the Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowships.

JULIAN PRENTICE '24

Building National Pride

LA TURBALLE IS A SMALL TOWN IN the Loire-Atlantique region of France. Known for its historic harbor and sandy beaches, La Turballe is also an outpost for the *Service National Universel* (SNU)—the French civil corps. It is where Julian Prentice '24 was assigned during his two-week volunteer corps service last summer.

"The objectives of SNU are to help promote unity and fraternity among French youth," explains Julian, who is a citizen of both the United States and France. "It is an exciting social

experiment aimed at generating pride in French history and culture."

While each day started early with lineup, flag raising, and singing the national anthem, the skill-building and programming changed each day.

"We learned how to save people who are drowning, how to assist emergency services in the event of a car crash and various other incidents, and had general first aid training," he says.

There were also wilderness navigation and other military-style events and exercises.

"Learning to orient ourselves in the woods was as intense as it was fulfilling," says Julian. "We learned how military parades worked, and we played a strategy game where we worked through the French government's decision making in terms of military intervention."

In signing on as an SNU volunteer, Julian hoped to connect more deeply with his heritage—with French language, history, and culture. The lessons he brought home were much more profound.

"My deepest takeaway was that the foundational elements of success in communities of any culture are kindness and respect. Creating these two is critical for any community," he says.



Many student experiences were funded in part by grants from the following endowed funds:

William W. Hatfield '32 Grant

Established in 2010, this endowed fund was made possible through the generosity of Guy Hatfield '65, Ross Hatfield, and the ongoing support of William W. Hatfield's family. The grant celebrates the ideals of Horace Dutton Taft—service above self—and is given annually to one or more students whose commitment to volunteerism brings to life the message behind Taft's motto, *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*—Not to be served but to serve.

Kilbourne Summer Enrichment Fund

Established by John Kilbourne, Class of 1958, in memory of his parents, Samuel W. and Evelyn S. Kilbourne, the Kilbourne Summer Enrichment Fund provides students with opportunities in the summer to participate in enriching programs in the arts.

Meg Page '74 Fellowships

To honor her commitment to compassionate health care, this fellowship is awarded annually to students who wish to explore an experience or course of study devoted to the provision of better health care in areas such as public health, family planning, medical research, mental health, and non-Western practices of healing.

New York Botanical Garden Internship Sponsors

The 2023 internships at the New York Botanical Garden were made possible in part through the generosity of program patrons Dwight (Trip) Stocker '74 and Donald B. Stott '56.

Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowships

Established in memory of Robert Keyes Poole '50, Taft teacher from 1956 to 1962, Poole Fellowships are awarded each year to enable Taft students to engage in travel or in projects consistent with Mr. Poole's lifetime interest in wildlife and the environment.

Into the Amazon

WITH SCIENCE TEACHERS MICHAEL MCALOON AND MADDIE BEITLER



IT HAS BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE Science Teacher Michael McAloon first traveled to the Peruvian Amazon as part of a pilot program for science educators, where he worked with and learned from the Maijuna people, a group indigenous to Peru's forest region. Last summer, McAloon returned to the area with fellow Taft Science Teacher Maddie Beitler. McAloon and Beitler participated in two of the primary research projects led by the Amazon Research Initiative for Educators program. They also collaborated Dr. Robert Naczi, a longtime Taft education partner from the New York Botanical Garden, in monitoring the diversity of orchid bees and patterns of beetle herbivory on *Heliconia* plants.

"These projects, along with my work with stingless bee pollen, have already led to discoveries important to the conservation of the rainforest in the region, including undescribed insect species," notes McAloon, who served as the primary investigator for a molecular study on pollen collected by native stingless bees.

McAloon's work on the identification of pollen collected by the bees using molecular techniques is part of an ongoing, novel study that will be continued by Taft students in the Honors Field Ecology course this spring. The work that Taft students completed in

Faculty members also engaged in summer work designed to advance their knowledge and skills, and benefit Taft students in the classroom during the coming school years:



previous years and will do this coming year directly impacts the conservation of the Napo-Sucusari Biological Reserve and the Maijuna-Kichwa Regional Conservation Area, and is conducted in partnership with members of the indigenous Maijuna community.

This year, McAloon's students will also learn to use sound recognition software to analyze terabytes of sound data collected from the Terrestrial Passive Acoustic Recording Unit from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. McAloon installed the recorder in the Peruvian rainforest, where it ran continuously for two weeks, picking up sounds from birds, insects, and amphibian species. ■



Sierra Berkel
Mid English curriculum design

Eileen Bouffard '98
Mid English curriculum design;
doctoral degree studies

Corey Chandler
Voces Conference

Kevin Conroy
Master's degree studies

Gabby Dorval '99
Doctoral degree studies

Baba Frew
Spanish curriculum design

Matthew Mullane
Spanish curriculum design

Roddy Pratt
Master's degree studies

Ryan Previti
Master's degree studies

Zana Previti
Mid English curriculum design

Ryan Shannon '01
Master's degree studies

Justin Torre
Master's degree studies

Edie Traina
Doctoral degree studies

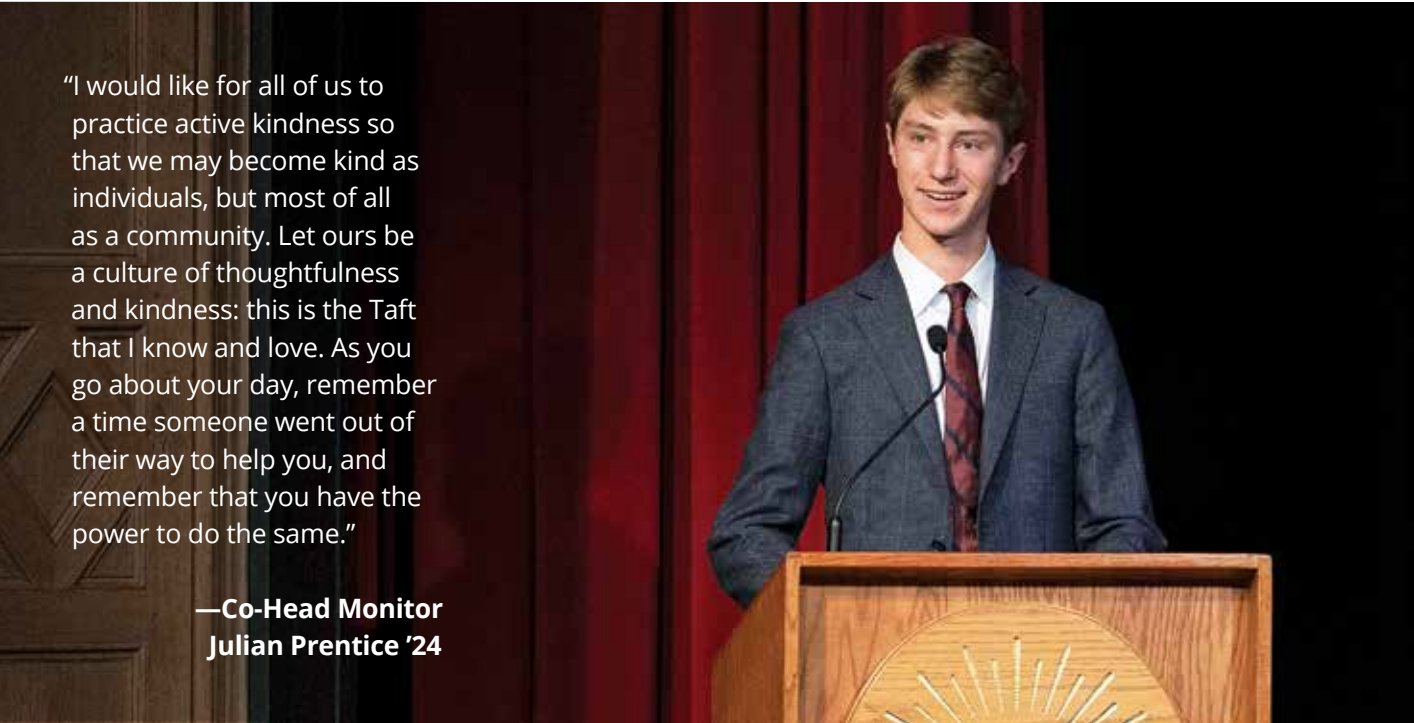
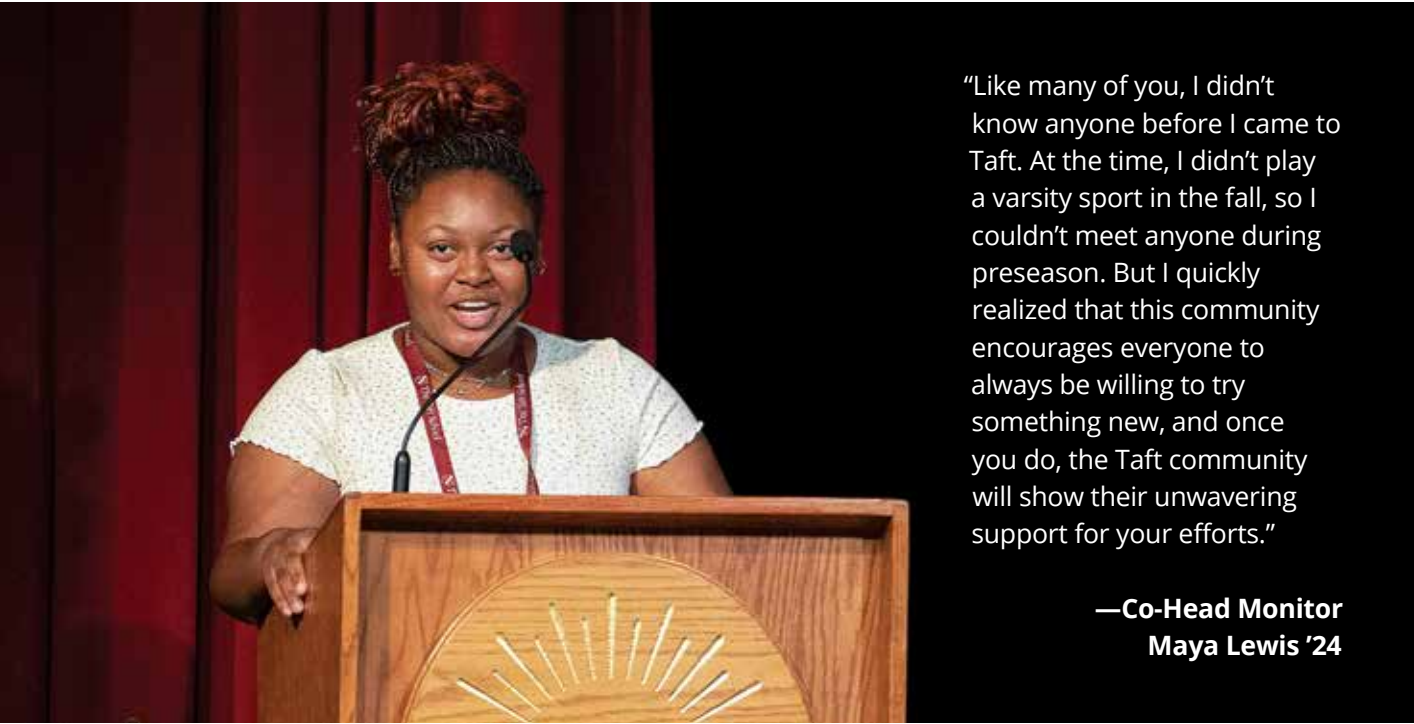
Jingci Wei
Chinese curriculum development

Alex Werrell
Mid English curriculum design

Yee-Fun Yin
Maine Media
Photography Workshop

Maria Zamora Leyton
Voces Conference;
Spanish curriculum design

Co-Head Mons Kick Off the School Year



Convocation 2023

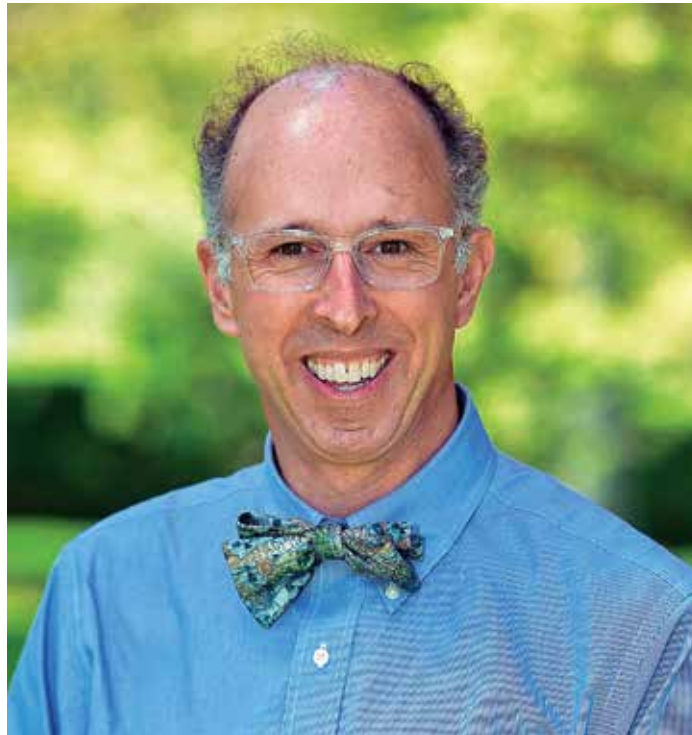
“We are an incredible school—an incredible learning community at a really remarkable time in world history. Let’s work hard together to make this a great year for each of you and for Taft.”

—Head of School
Peter Becker '95



To view the Convocation address video, scan the QR code below.





Congratulations

to Our Assistant Heads of School!

IN A CHANGE to Taft's administrative structure, Edie Traina has been named Assistant Head of School for Faculty and Academics, and Jeremy LaCasse has been named Assistant Head of School for Student Life.

"This change to Taft's organizational structure will help us continue to deliver on Taft's student-centered mission and to assist with strategic planning and execution," said Head of School Peter Becker '95. "This is a promotion for Edie Traina and also provides an opportunity to define and elevate Jeremy LaCasse's role more clearly."

Traina has served Taft for 17 years in various roles, most recently as Dean of Faculty.

"Edie is well respected at school and throughout New England boarding schools as an educator, colleague, and leader," said Becker. "As Assistant Head of School for Faculty and Academics, she will be responsible for integrating all aspects of the faculty's

professional life—from recruiting, hiring, and onboarding, to professional growth and evaluation, to compensation and housing—as well as for leading the next phases of the evolution of Taft's academic program and culture of teaching and learning."

Over time, she will be responsible for ensuring that Taft's culture of professional growth is fully aligned and integrated with the ideas that serve as Taft's guideposts—in particular, the school's mission and motto, the Portrait of a Graduate, and DEI statement.

LaCasse has taught history at Taft for nine years and served as Assistant Head since 2016. He is also the executive director at the Gardner Carney Leadership Institute at Fountain Valley School. As Assistant Head for Student Life, LaCasse will oversee all elements of a Taft student's life outside the classrooms, including residential life, co-curriculars, college counseling, service

activities, meals, school meetings and assemblies, clubs, student digital life, discipline systems, the advisor program, health services, and international students.

"Taft's students are our *raison d'être*, and Jeremy's experience as a boarding school educator and leader, his particular commitment to Taft and Taft's mission and culture, make him extremely well qualified to assume this significant responsibility," Becker said.

"Edie's and Jeremy's roles will overlap and reinforce one another in important ways," Becker continued. "I am very excited to work with both of them and the rest of the Senior Administrative Team and the Board of Trustees to begin to chart Taft's future and, closer at hand, to ensure that the 2023–2024 school year is an excellent one for our students, families, and employees. It is a great indication of Taft's strength that we have such accomplished leaders at our school." ■



Emily Israel Pluhar '96

Named to Board of Trustees

THE TAFT SCHOOL IS PLEASED TO announce the appointment of Emily Israel Pluhar '96 to the Board of Trustees.

Dr. Pluhar received her B.S. from Middlebury College and her Ph.D. from Albert Einstein College of Medicine. She is currently a member of the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital, and is the Director of the Postdoctoral Psychology Fellowship in Leadership in Education and Health (LEAH). She is also a member of the Division of Sports

Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital.

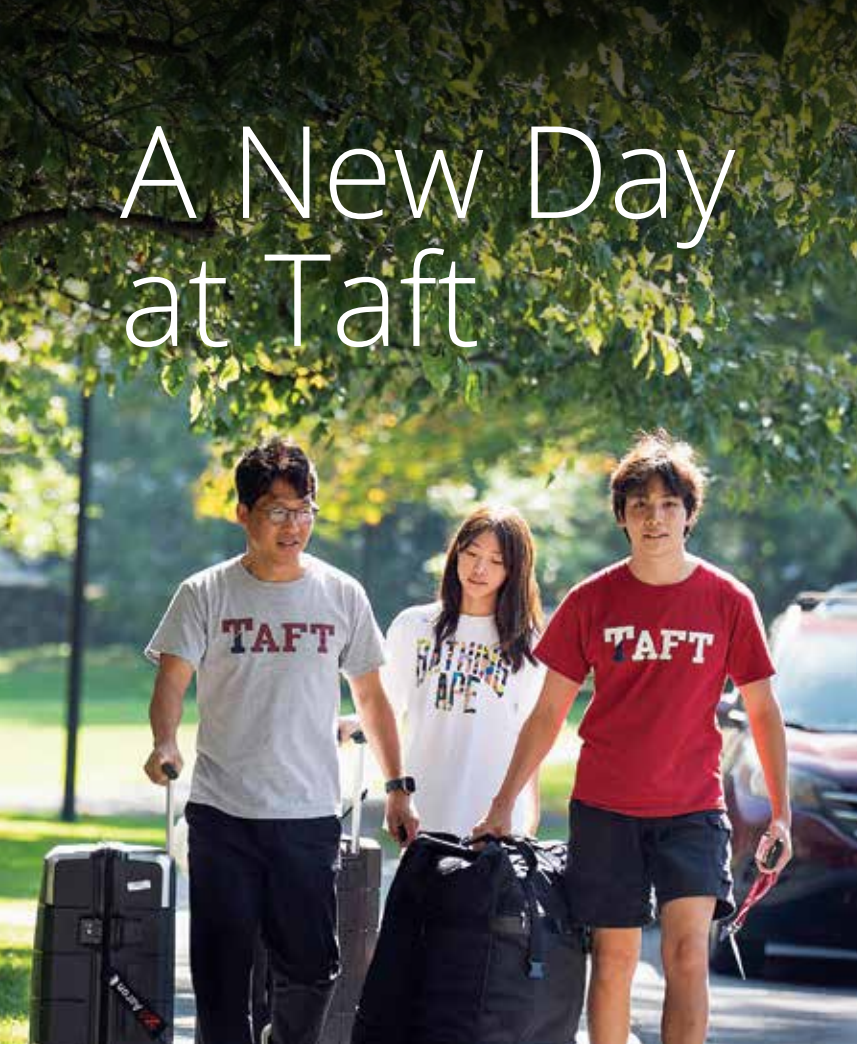
Dr. Pluhar's career has been dedicated to helping support the mental and physical health of adolescents and their families through direct patient care, education, research, and program development. In the Division of Adolescent Medicine, Dr. Pluhar sees patients with chronic medical illness, suicidal behavior, non-suicidal self-injurious behavior, and mood disorders, and treats them with empirically validated treatments. In the Division of Sports Medicine, she treats adolescent and young adult athletes who experience mental health issues as a result of

post-concussion syndrome, ACL injuries, and post-surgical rehabilitation complications. Dr. Pluhar's research interests include adolescent health, non-suicidal self-injury, suicidal behavior, and mental health issues related to sports injuries.

During her three years at Taft, she played on the lacrosse and JV soccer teams. She is an assistant class agent. Her Taft family connections include her cousins Thomas Rosen '85, Alicia Miller '01, and Chloe Frelinghuysen '17.

Dr. Pluhar lives in Brookline, Massachusetts, with her husband and three children. ■

A New Day at Taft



THE 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR BEGAN WITH NEW ENERGY, A NEW VIBE, AND PLENTY OF NEW FACES, INCLUDING THAT OF PETER BECKER '95, OUR NEW HEAD OF SCHOOL. STILL, IT WAS THE FAMILIAR EVENTS AND ROUTINES THAT HELPED TAFTIES FEEL AT HOME. FROM MOVE-IN DAY, CONVOCATION, AND THE START OF CLASSES, TO THE FIRST SIT-DOWN, THE START OF THE ATHLETICS SEASON, THE RETURN OF FEEDS, AND SUPER SUNDAY, OUR COMMUNITY CAME TOGETHER QUICKLY AND SETTLED INTO THE FAMILIAR AND COMFORTABLE ROUTINE THAT IS LIFE AT TAFT.





Taft Students Attend The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals Action Weekend

AS COFOUNDERS OF TAFT'S MODEL United Nations (MUN) Club, Rina Kurihara '24 and Theresa Alves '24 have spent the past few years immersed in all things Model UN: They have given fellow Taft students hands-on opportunities to experience MUN through in-house Taft MUN conferences; hosted a multi-school conference, where they welcomed Hotchkiss and Loomis to the process; and cohosted the first New England-Tokyo Model United Nations conference with the Senzoku Gakuen Model United Nations Club. They have also competed in highly regarded international MUN events, including the annual Yale United Nations Conference, where four Taft students were among the 5 percent of the 1,000 attendees to earn accolades for their conference work last year, Theresa among them.

This year, Rina and Theresa had the opportunity to pursue their passion on an even bigger stage: they attended the United Nations' 2023 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Action Weekend in New York City.

"Rina works with an NGO, LearningPlanet Alliance (LPA), a platform for educational changemakers to come together, share experiences, and work toward common objectives," Theresa explains. "LPA nominated a few members to attend the UN SDG Action Weekend as delegates, including Rina."

Rina introduced Theresa to the LPA committee, which led to an opportunity for Theresa to represent Taft at the Action Weekend event.

In 2015, all UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Described as "a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future," the Agenda is built on 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), which include things like ending hunger and poverty, improving education, reducing inequalities, and ensuring economic growth through productive employment. In 2019, the UN held its first SDG Summit; the second was held September 18 and 19 of this year. Billed as "an opportunity for stakeholders from all sectors to convene

inside the United Nations Headquarters and mobilize towards an ambitious SDG Summit and UN General Assembly High-Level Week," the two-day Action Weekend preceded the 2023 SDG Summit.

Both days included multiple work sessions around the sustainable development goals; day one was a "mobilization" day, while day two was an "acceleration" day for high-impact initiatives. Rina attended work sessions on youth engagement, transforming education, economic development, and private sector financing, to name a few. Among the sessions Theresa attended were those focused on local and regional governments, building public sector capabilities, and moving toward a rights-centered, gender-transformative economy.

"Beyond the direct learning from the sessions, we both networked with people from all sectors," notes Rina, "including delegates from across the globe, delegates from other NGOs, ministers, and actual UN delegates." ■

Taft MUN Club is open to all Taft students. The club plans to attend the Yale MUN in January 2024, which is also the 50th anniversary of the event.

Let the Music Play!

TAFT'S MUSIC FOR A WHILE CONCERT SERIES RETURNS THIS YEAR WITH A FULL SCHEDULE OF PERFORMANCES RANGING FROM ROUSING STRIDE PIANO AND JAZZ CONCERTS TO A NIGHT AT THE OPERA AND TRADITIONAL CONCERTS BY COLLEGIUM MUSICUM. ALL CONCERTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC; TICKETS ARE NOT REQUIRED.

Tuesday, December 12

Taft's 87th Service of Lessons and Carols
Collegium Musicum,
Chamber Ensemble,
Woodward Brass Ensemble, organ and piano
Woodward Chapel, 6:00 pm & 8:00 pm

Friday, January 19

Pianist Andrew Armstrong and Friends
Woodward Chapel, 7:00 pm

Saturday, February 10

Jazz from the Undercroft with the
T.J. Thompson Trio
Woodward Chapel, 7:30 pm

Sunday, March 3

Concert of Remembrance: *Requiem* by Maurice Duruflé
with Collegium Musicum, Cantus Excelsis,
James Kennerley, organist, Bruce Fifer, conductor
Woodward Chapel, 5:00 pm

Friday, April 12

Turandot: Night at the Opera with
Christopher Browner '12
Main Campus Choral Room, 7:00 pm

Sunday, April 28

Taft on Tour with Collegium Musicum
And the Chamber Ensemble,
Woodward Chapel, 5:00 pm

Sunday, May 12

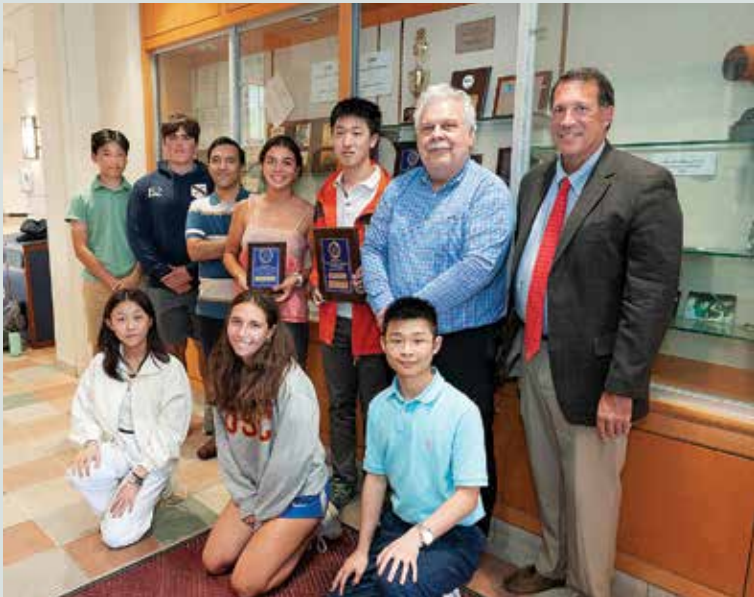
Organ Recital with Daniel Scifo
Woodward Chapel, 5:00 pm



Math Team members received hardware from the New England Mathematics League at the start of the school year for their exceptional performance during the 2022–23 competition.

Michael Ren '24, earned top honors in the competition. Of the nearly 800 students competing, Michael was one of only three to achieve a perfect score across each of the year's events. As a team, Taft topped the region—a competitive space that includes Hotchkiss and a Kent team that traditionally turns in stellar performances. Taft has earned this honor for almost as long as it has been competing in the event.

In photo, back row from left: Kevin Jin, Chris Josczyk, Coach Dr. Mostafa Mirabi, Sydney Grogan with the team award, Michael Ren with his individual award, Coach Kevin Coleman, and Math Department Head Al Reiff '80. Front row, from left: Yolanda Wei, Leah Wasserstein, and Jefferson Kao.



Dr. Benedict's Ethnobotany class traveled to a local natural foods store, New Morning Market & Vitality Center, to learn about plant-based medicines and products. They also visited local grower The Garden to explore their amazing collection of plants.



20 Taft students traveled to Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, New York, during the fall semester to attend the New York Black College Expo. Presented by the National College Resources Foundation, the Expo offered students the opportunity to meet with representatives of more than 50 colleges, including historically Black colleges and universities throughout the country. The day included a range of activities, networking events, and seminars, and included opportunities to gain immediate college acceptances and scholarships.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CATHERINE GANUNG



Director of Multicultural Recruitment Shanique Garcia traveled to New York City in the fall for the annual Ten Schools Diversity Roundtable. Garcia (right) was joined by Taft alumni (from left) Natalie Locarno '19, Emilly Gonzalez '23, and Dennis Franklin '19.



World Languages Teacher Corey Chandler combined a global celebration of music with the Taft School motto over the summer during worldwide Make Music Day. Chandler played his saxophone in front of LaBonne's Market in Watertown, with an appeal for donations to benefit the Watertown Food Bank. Launched in 1982 in France on the Summer Solstice as the Fête de la Musique, Make Music Day is now celebrated in more than 1,000 cities in 120 countries around the world. It is simply a celebration of music, open to anyone and everyone who would like to share their talent with the community and revel in the joy that music brings.

PHOTO COURTESY DANA BERTUGLIA



Taft's first outside Morning Meeting speaker of the school year was Marion Lyman-Mersereau, an author, teacher, and mindfulness practitioner. Lyman-Mersereau sailed on the original *Hōkūle'a*, a 62-foot, double-hull voyaging canoe, built to show Polynesians were master navigators. In 1976, the *Hōkūle'a* crew achieved their goal, sailing 2,500 miles from Hawai'i to Tahiti using only the stars, ocean swells, birds, and cloud formations to guide them. On *Hōkūle'a's* second attempt to sail to Tahiti—and with Lyman-Mersereau aboard—tragedy struck when the canoe capsized; famous Hawaiian surfer/North Shore lifeguard/peacemaker Eddie Aikau was lost at sea when he went for help on a surfboard. Lyman-Mersereau has written a children's book about her experience, *Eddie Wen' Go: The Story of the Upside Down Canoe*. She also adapted the story into a play.



It didn't take long for lower mids Zoe Chiweshe, Yat ka Luo, Jasset Millhiser, and Lauren Rawlins to learn and embrace the Taft School motto, Not to be served but to serve. The group traveled early in the school year to the St. Vincent dePaul Soup Kitchen, a longtime Taft service partner, to serve meals.



A Week in the Life

of Taft's New Head of School

Photographs by Robert Falcetti



This fall marked the beginning of an era as Peter Becker '95 began his tenure as Taft's sixth head of school. Though there is no typical week in the life of a head of school, the following pages give a glimpse of life for Becker as we entered the 2023-24 academic year.

SUNDAY

Sunday

NOON

Brunch in the dining hall

1-4 PM

Super Sunday

A community-building activity, Super Sunday is always a student favorite. Students enjoy the Crisco slide, tug-of-war, egg races, three-legged races, and more. It's a great way to make new friends at the start of the new school year.



Monday

8 AM

Breakfast in the dining hall

9-10 AM

Meeting with Edie Traina, Assistant Head of School for Faculty and Academics, and Jeremy LaCasse, Assistant Head of School for Student Life

10:15 AM

Phone call with alumnus

10:45 AM-NOON

Respond to emails
Work on ongoing projects



MONDAY

5-7 PM

Family time

7 PM

Review the week's schedule
Prepare for the week ahead



NOON

Lunch with colleagues

1:30-2:30 PM

Meeting with Thomas Allen, Dean for Community, Justice, and Belonging

2:45 PM

Deans Meeting

This weekly meeting brings all of the school's deans together to discuss ongoing issues and strategic planning for the year ahead.



4-5 PM

TABS Board Meeting via Zoom

Becker is a leader of national stature in the independent school landscape, attending and presenting at professional conferences, serving on the boards of The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) and the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools, and as a member of the Heads and Principals Association.

Tuesday

7:30 AM

Drive daughters Penny and Marilee to school

9:20-10 AM

Morning Meeting

Twice each week, Tafties gather in Bingham Auditorium for Morning Meeting, where speakers from across the aisle and across the globe grant exposure to new or unique perspectives and offer deeper, broader insights into the world.

10-10:30 AM

Weekly meeting with Kaitlin Orfitelli, Director of Marketing and Communications

11 AM

Meet with the Advancement Working Group

Members of the advancement, admissions, and communications offices meet regularly with Becker. This week, they discussed upcoming alumni and parent receptions and Fall Family Weekend.



7:30-8:30 PM

Meet with Mons

Becker has weekly meetings with the School Monitors (also known as "the Mons"), who are the student leaders at Taft.



4 PM

Enterprise risk management meeting with CFO Jake Odden '86 and Chair of Audit & Risk Committee Jonathan Albert '79

6:30-7:30 PM

Sit-down dinner

A tradition at Taft, sit-down dinners bring students and faculty members together through assigned seating. The dinners are designed to allow students to meet Tafties who they might otherwise not get to know while engaging in meaningful conversation. Table assignments change with each meal to broaden each student's circle of connections.

NOON

Development phone call

Gifts to Taft are essential to the school. Becker spends a substantial amount of time working with the Advancement Office to cultivate gifts that help make Taft stronger.

1:15 PM

Network update with Tom Chestna, Director of Information Technology

2:30 PM

Meet and greet with Watertown Police Chief

As a new member of the Watertown community and head of school at Taft, Becker has been spending time introducing himself to town officials and learning more about Watertown. In the first months of school, he plans to meet with the fire chief, town manager, and superintendent of Watertown schools.

3:15-3:45 PM

Meet with Andy Dunn, Director of Athletics and Afternoon Program



Wednesday

8:45-9:15 AM

Meet with Alison Almasian '87, Director of College Counseling

9:20-9:50 AM

Assembly

10 AM

Meet with Executive Assistant Heidi Shemms

Becker and Shemms discuss upcoming travel to San Francisco and Los Angeles, as well as planning for the fall Board of Trustees meeting.

WEDNESDAY

10:30 AM-NOON

Prepare for the fall Board of Trustees meeting

12:15 PM

Department Heads meeting, led by Academic Dean Jennifer Kenerson

12:30-1:30 PM

Working Lunch with Peter Frew '75, Director of Admissions

2-5 PM

Watch games and play rehearsal

This fall, under the direction of longtime faculty member Helena Fifer, students mounted a production of Matilda the Musical.



7 PM

Date night with Amy Julia '94

The Beckers have a weekly date night, a tradition of theirs that dates back 20 years. They also have a weekly calendar meeting.



Thursday

7:30 AM

Drive daughters Penny and Marilee to school

8:45-9:15 AM

Student Health & Wellness meeting with Director of Counseling Rachel Jacobs

9:20-10 AM

Morning Meeting

10-11:30 AM

Zoom call with Board of Trustees Admissions Subcommittee

Board subcommittees typically meet the week before the full board meeting. In addition to the Admissions subcommittee, Becker met with the Finance Committee, School Life Committee, and College Counseling Committee prior to this fall's full Board of Trustees meeting.

1 PM

Phone call with Sarkis D. Izmirlian II '90, P'20,'22,'24, Chair of the Board of Trustees

2-3:30 PM

Senior Administrative Team Meeting

Taft's Senior Administrative Team (known as the SAT) meets every other week to discuss both immediate issues and long-term goals. This year, they are working on two high-level goals: student health and wellness and an institutional data project.

7:30 PM

Birthday party!

The Beckers started a new tradition of celebrating student birthdays monthly. All students who were born in July, August, and September were invited to this first monthly birthday party.

6:30-7:30 PM

Sit-down dinner



Watch
birthdays
celebration
video.



BIO

Peter Becker '95 began his tenure as Taft's sixth Head of School on July 1, 2023.

As a Taft graduate, Becker knows, loves, and values Taft's mission and culture: its insistence on excellence, passion for community and belonging, commitment to improvement and to service, and pride in school spirit. His career has always been about students. As a teacher, coach, advisor,

dorm head, department chair, and head of school, he has worked with empathy and caring to help students feel valued so they can grow and succeed. As a head, he has shown a tremendous ability to administer and lead, inspiring others with a strategic vision and working collaboratively to improve and transform the school.

Becker's educational career reflects a leader who has devoted his life to independent secondary education. He is a distinguished scholar, receiving a B.A. with

Distinction in Religious Studies from the University of Virginia and an M.A. in History from Yale University. He was awarded a Fulbright Grant to study classical history, architecture, and archeology at the American Academy in Rome, Italy. After working briefly as an investment banking analyst for Harris Williams & Co., Becker first worked with independent school students while on the staff of FOCUS (the Fellowship of Christians in Universities and Schools). He began his boarding school career in 2003

at The Lawrenceville School, where he taught history and interdisciplinary studies, served as department chair, lived in and led Kennedy House, served on and ran multiple committees, and coached squash and tennis. At Lawrenceville, he worked across the school's academic departments to lead the redesign of the Interdisciplinary Studies Department curriculum.

In 2012, Becker was appointed head of school at The Frederick Gunn School, where he left a legacy of school innovation,

improvement, and change. During his tenure, Becker worked with the board, faculty and staff, and the school's leadership teams to translate the life and model of the school's founder, Frederick Gunn, into core values and curriculum design pillars that leverage the inherent potential of boarding schools.

Becker committed The Frederick Gunn School to significant and sustained work in diversity, equity, and inclusion, creating new programs, positions, and practices, and led transformational fundraising initiatives.

With his team, he oversaw more than \$60 million in campus building and improvement projects; prioritized the hiring of a diverse and talented faculty; deepened and broadened the school's curricular offerings; and fostered a global community marked by caring and empathy. During Becker's tenure, Gunn created a new Center for Citizenship & Just Democracy; a soon-to-be launched Center for Entrepreneurship; and the school's IDEAS Program in engineering, robotics, and computer science.



Friday

8:30 AM

Meet with Heidi Shemms to review next week's schedule

On the agenda—scheduling visits to each dorm to meet on corridor and attend a dorm meeting or feed. They also talk about Becker meeting with academic departments as a group and scheduling visits with faculty to sit in and observe classes.

9:20 AM

Meet with Director of Community, Justice, and Belonging and Affinity Group Leaders

10 AM

Dean of Students Lindsay Leal, update on student life

11:15 AM

Development phone calls

12 PM

Lunch with students

1 PM

Meeting with CFO Jake Odden '86

1:45 PM

Video call with Isaacson, Miller to discuss the director of enrollment search

A major goal for this year is hiring a new director of enrollment in anticipation of the retirement of longtime faculty member and Director of Admissions Peter Frew '75 in June.

2-5 PM

Hold for Board of Trustees work

A
Week
in the
Life

Saturday

9:50-10:20 AM

Assembly

10:25 AM

Plan upcoming week

11:45 AM

Lunch

2 PM

Saturday afternoon athletics contests

Go Big Red! Go Rhinos!

7 PM

Boys' soccer home game



SATURDAY

- learn *how* to learn
- develop tools/skills to manage stress and pressure (not all stress is bad)
- unlock the wisdom of this community: ask adults and friends for advice and help
- use screens and tech well (in ways that make you *more* human, not less)
- take good risks

Taft

CONVOCATION

An excerpt from Peter Becker's Convocation Speech:

As we start the year I want to talk about three shifts that we hope every student at Taft will make during your time here. First, the shift from xenophobia to philoxenia. Second, the shift from serving ourselves to serving others. And third, the shift from drive to healthy drive. From xenophobia to philoxenia, serving self to serving others, and from drive to healthy drive.

This summer we all read Maria Hinojosa's memoir *Once I Was You*....It is the story of a woman who immigrated to the United States from Mexico with her family when she was young. You'll recall that her story is about perseverance and entrepreneurship in the face of constant challenges.

One of the book's main themes is xenophobia: the experience that countless immigrants to the U.S. have had—and continue to have—of bigotry in all its forms.

Xenophobia is comprised of two words: *xeno*, the word for "strange" or "foreign," and *phobia*, the word for "fear." So xenophobia is fear of the stranger....

In fact, at Taft we aspire to the opposite of xenophobia. A few years ago, Mrs. Becker introduced me to the word for this. The opposite of xenophobia is philoxenia: *philia*=friend + *xeno*=stranger. Our

aspiration at Taft is that we learn to respond to other humans who don't appear to be like us as friends rather than as enemies, despite the fact that our evolutionary wiring prompts us to do the opposite. So we want everyone in our community—adults and students—to make this shift from xenophobia to philoxenia despite the fact that that isn't necessarily our first human instinct....

How do we do this?...What can friendship to strangers look like? It can take the form of responding to a new person or situation with curiosity rather than with the fight/flight/freeze instinct. The differences we will encounter here are of every kind, not only geographic and linguistic—the difference could be racial, socioeconomic, gender or sexuality, religious, political, approaches to learning, or even just interests in music or sports. Regardless, asking a question about someone rather than operating on assumptions—where are you from? What is it like there? What do you do for fun? What are your favorite foods? Music? And go a bit deeper—not just what do you believe, but how did you come to enjoy that music or to take that position on an issue?

Bear in mind that you may be talking to someone who is one of the only people

at Taft from their country—and imagine what that would be like. You may be talking to someone whose country is at war or to someone who has not been able to go home since they got to Taft. (One of my favorite writers, C.S. Lewis, says that there are no ordinary humans—we are all these beautifully complex creatures, and there is power in treating each other with a certain degree of awe and wonder.) So we can practice curiosity toward one another and toward new ideas as one of the most powerful ways to overcome the fight/flight/freeze instinct, and to connect with the common humanity of the person we are speaking to.

So one shift we are committed to at Taft is the shift from xenophobia to philoxenia.

To listen to the full Convocation speech video, visit:

www.taftschoo.org/news/featured/~board/news/post/kicking-off-the-school-year-convocation-23-24





1

Meet me at the Jig!

For over 95 years, Taft students have been getting together for a soda or bite at the Jigger Shop. From the old Jigger Shop by the Boiler House, to the renovated, spacious Oscarson Jigger Shop in the Arts & Humanities Building today, it has always been a gathering place. Generations of students have enjoyed a bagel between classes or a milkshake in the evening at the Jig, making it as much a part of Taft as Main Hall or the Pond.

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



2



3



4



5

1. 1950s era—Standing room only in this photo during the class day.
2. 1963—A photo of the Jig with its fun wall posters when it was next to the Boiler House.
3. 2016—Students enjoy some downtime in the renovated Donald A. Oscarson '47 Jigger Shop.
4. 1950—A relaxing afternoon at the Jig.
5. 1978—Students grabbing a snack at the Jig's order window.

Where can a Taft education lead?

The paths Taft students and alumni
follow are almost unlimited.

By supporting the **Taft Fund**, you help generations of Tafties forge their own paths, create their own futures, and define their own successes.

Gifts of any amount make a difference.
Make your gift today at taftschoool.org/give.

Thank you!



Meet Peter Becker!

See where Head of School Peter Becker '95 is heading to meet alumni, families, and friends in 2024.

www.taftschoool.org/alumni/meet-peter-becker-95-tour

