

BLAIR

BULLETIN



**LEGACY OF
MENTORSHIP:
THE INFLUENCE
OF ADVISORS**

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OF WOMEN'S
WRESTLING**

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On Exhibit



Student artist **Oscar Wan '24** was featured in "Lens to the World: A Scholastic Awards Exhibition" at the Bronx Documentary Center in New York last winter. His award-winning photograph, titled "Responsibility," features fellow classmate **Josh Feng '26**. The exhibition displayed Oscar's work alongside other accomplished silver and

gold medalists of the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards' Journalism, Photography, and Film & Animation categories from the tri-state area and beyond. Last year, Oscar took home the gold medal for his photograph in the nation's longest-running, most prestigious recognition program for creative teens.

On the Cover:

The Head of School's office is a bustling hub for students throughout the day. Here, members of the Senior Class Council take a moment between classes and lavish attention on Bowdoin, the Curran family's yellow Labrador.

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A Legacy of Mentorship: The Influence of Advisors & the Power of Choice

At Blair, one of the biggest choices a student will make during their time on the hilltop is whom they want as an advisor. In and out of the classroom, on the fields and in the dorms, advisors are there for their students, offering advice and helping them grow into the next generation of leaders.



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For only the sixth time in the Kelley-Potter Cup's 35-year history, this year's Peddie Day competitions ended in a tie. Read about the day's highs and lows and the history of the coveted Kelley-Potter Cup.



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Explore the global phenomenon of women's wrestling and dive into Coach Gitomer's vision for its expansion at Blair, following trailblazers such as **Skylar Grote '16** and **Sarah Henckel '26** as they pave the way for the next generation and usher in new opportunities in the sport.



42 Blair Returns to Kenya



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Genesis Medina '25 Selected for Garden State Equality's Changemakers Youth Leadership Initiative

For almost two decades, the civil rights organization Garden State Equality (GSE) has been at the forefront of the fight for equality in New Jersey. The organization's latest endeavor, a youth

leadership initiative, emerged last year, aiming to empower high school students to be agents of change in their communities.

Among the participants invited to this initiative was Blair's **Genesis Medina '25**. Genesis joined two dozen peers from across the state at the inaugural program held last August in Newton, New Jersey. The weeklong camp provided participants with a variety of workshops focused on diversity, equity and inclusion, along with discussion groups aimed at challenging biases and equipping students with the tools to make change in their communities.

For Genesis, the opportunity was nothing short of inspiring. "The camp really motivated me to take action now," she recalls. "We want Blair to be well rounded, informed and for people to find connections to one another."

So when the fall semester began at Blair, Genesis jumped into action. In anticipation of National Hispanic

Heritage Month in October, Genesis decided to leverage the unifying power of food at Blair. She planned and hosted a Costa Rican cultural evening, offering her peers an opportunity to explore a different culture and find connections in cuisine, music and language. During the well-attended event, two dozen students learned to cook gallo pinto, a breakfast dish common in Costa Rica, while conversations hummed in Spanish and eager tasters relaxed to the strains of soca, salsa, merengue and cumbia.

As Genesis' vision materialized, she found that the impact of the Costa Rican cultural evening surpassed her expectations, uniting classmates from diverse backgrounds. She notes, "Many people who came were not from Latino origins, but it helped them to feel at home and gave them a connection to a different culture."

Now, several months after GSE's youth leadership camp, Genesis' confidence in the potential of the changemakers she met remains strong. The active social media group they created at the camp continues to thrive, with participants regularly talking with one another, sharing ideas for the initiatives they have brought to their schools and supporting one another. Together, these students are continuing the traditions of the camp, cultivating cultural and social awareness on their home campuses—one dance, one meal and one event at a time. Genesis looks forward to carrying this perspective with her at Blair and beyond.

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SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

What do you think about the stories in this issue of the *Blair Bulletin*? Let us know—your letter may be published in the next issue. Please send your comments to bulletin@blair.edu.



Blair faculty wear many hats across campus, and one of the most meaningful is that of advisor. Certainly for me, the relationships built with advisees over the years are incredibly special—truly, nothing makes my day more than connecting with a former advisee; these relationships only deepen and grow over time, and it has been wonderful to see advisees go on to build fulfilling careers, have families and stay actively engaged with their alma mater. As members of the extended Blair family know, your relationship with the School evolves as the years pass, and it is a testament to our advisor program that so many students remain close well beyond graduation. Just ask Dean of Campus Life **Carolyn Conforti-Browse '79**, who has flown around the world multiple times attending Blair weddings and visiting with former advisees.

I still fondly remember my own advisor, a Milton Academy legend named Frank Millet who introduced me to squash, taught me Latin, and offered incredible support and guidance outside of class. Ironically, Mr. Millet was also Director of Admission, and actually interviewed me during the application process, so the work he did definitely influenced my own personal

“Whether you picked your advisor as a ninth grader and stuck with them throughout your Blair career or changed advisors every year to get to know new faculty members, the advisor program is symbolic of how central relationships are at Blair.”

development and professional direction in more ways than one. We stayed close over the years, and it was a full-circle moment when I introduced him to my wife, Sarah, and later, my children. Mr. Millet was 77 years old when he became my advisor—he lived to be 100 (teaching at Milton for seven decades)—and he had a tremendous impact on me at a very formative time in my life. I am reminded of him daily by the chair in my office that bears his name and brings back memories of the many conversations we had and the wisdom he imparted during and after high school.

Whether you picked your advisor as a ninth grader and stuck with them throughout your Blair career or changed advisors every year to get to know new faculty members, the advisor program is symbolic of how central relationships are at Blair. While the role of advisor is not unique to our campus, what sets our program apart is the ability of students to choose the adult they feel will support them best, often leading to more authentic and lasting connections. At Blair, this relationship is layered alongside academic monitors, classroom teachers, coaches and dorm staff as we seek to best position students for success.

It is inspiring to see my colleagues embrace this role wholeheartedly. Whether they are hosting dinners at their homes, making local food runs, taking part in a Peddie Day pep rally skit, offering moral support during difficult times, or cheering the loudest at an athletic competition or performance, our faculty take seriously their job of knowing students well, applauding their accomplishments, redirecting them and being a supportive presence in their lives.

Former advisees can and do call on their Blair network for advice as they navigate college and life. It has also been incredibly rewarding to have the tables turned over the years as a number of my own advisees have taken on leadership roles at Blair through our domestic and international Board of Governors, as Society of Skeptics speakers and alumni roundtable presenters. The fact that they now offer me advice helps to move the School forward; I am also grateful to call so many Blair alums colleagues as they return to the hilltop as teachers, coaches and mentors to the next generation of Bucs.

Harkening back to your own Blair connections, I invite you to reach out to your advisor. Whether you have lost touch or a faculty member flew in to congratulate you at your wedding, it is never too late to share an update. I have no doubt that your advisor would love to hear from you, and, should you wish to write them a note about what they meant to you, we are happy to do our part to distribute them. You can submit your message at www.blair.edu/advisor, and we will do our best to deliver it.

Again, cheers to the many wonderful relationships built on our hilltop and sustained for many years to come. We wouldn't be the school we are today without them and, of course, your continued partnership and support.

Peter G. Curran, P'27 '27

Head of School



A LEGACY *of Mentorship*

The Influence of Advisors & the Power of Choice

Nestled safely in the shelves, the keepsakes live tucked among books and photos, reflective of a career spanning 30 years: save-the-dates, wedding invitations and heartfelt cards from student-advisees who grew over time into an extended family. They are sentimental reminders of the small, intimate moments that define the Blair experience far beyond the classroom.

"You might leave Blair, but Blair isn't going to leave you," Dean of Campus Life, English teacher and veteran advisor **Carolyn Conforti-Browse '79** shares from her corner office in Clinton Hall, nestling her mementos back in their rightful place. Over three decades, CCB, as she is affectionately known, has welcomed hundreds of advisees to her office. On this day, the conversation pauses for a welcomed interruption from **Melody Seghin '26**, an advisee who pops in between classes to relax on the couch for a quick break and chat about her weekend plans. She is headed to a baby shower, and CCB invites Melody to come by later and pick out a present for the mom-to-be from the gifts she keeps for just such an occasion.

"She's the best," Melody quips, before dashing off to her next class. CCB credits her advising ability to her own advisors when she was a student at Blair, former faculty members Charles and Lois Underwood.

"During my first year in college, I remember they drove up on a Sunday to meet me and help with my Russian literature class, and that really stuck with me," CCB explains. "They demonstrated that, as advisors, the work doesn't stop at graduation."

"You might leave Blair, but Blair isn't going to leave you."

—**Carolyn Conforti-Browse '79**, English teacher and Dean of Campus Life

While the nature of advising changes post-Blair, CCB enjoys remaining an important figure in her advisees' lives. Attending weddings and other milestone events around the world, she continues to lend a listening ear that her students have come to expect. While graduates aren't quickly popping in for a midday break like Melody when they are thousands of miles away, CCB is sure to reach out to students in the area when she is traveling to catch up for coffee or a meal.

"This community is unique in that after you leave campus, to be successful, you can't expect the world to be like Blair," CCB says, noting how much faculty are there to care for and support students. "You have to go out and make the world like Blair."



"Being an international student presented a unique set of challenges for me at Blair. Thankfully, Ms. Conforti was there. She started as my English 3H teacher, but between literary analysis of *Frankenstein* and lively debate about Lilliputians, she agreed to be my advisor.

There are far too many examples of Ms. Conforti's graciousness to count, but one that comes to mind was toward the end of my senior year. After SATs, college applications and the untimely passing of a classmate, it was a particularly trying year, and I knew Ms. Conforti was busy with another grueling softball season. So, for her to invite me to their home for my birthday, and to surprise me with a cake made of sushi (that I think she drove out to Denville for), was a great capper to a tough semester. It was an absurd, hilarious and delightful way to brighten up a day that had little to look forward to. Thanks, Ms. Conforti, for everything you've done for me and everything I've become."

—**Anthony Eu '06**

A LEGACY of Mentorship



"My relationship with Mr. Browse as his advisee was probably the most influential aspect of my time at Blair and helped shape the person I am today. The advisor system was a safety net for me; being able to have a trusting and caring relationship with another adult outside of my parents at a time when I was developing my sense of self and self-confidence was critical."

—**Brintha (Krishnamoorthy) Enestvedt '93**

THE POWER OF CHOICE

Having advisors is not unique to Blair, and neither is having advisors who truly want the best for their students in all aspects of life. But allowing students to choose their own advisor each year is rare. This unique approach takes far more effort to manage, but, according to Associate Head of School **Ryan M. Pagotto '97**, it truly makes a world of difference.

The dual-advisor system is a foundational element of relationship-based learning at Blair. Students are known and supported well by two faculty advisors: an assigned academic monitor who helps guide them on their academic path, and a faculty member of their own choosing who offers social and emotional support at every juncture of the Blair experience. The advisor-advisee relationship is often the most influential one a student develops at Blair, and monitors also play an essential role in Blair's feedback loop about students' accomplishments and challenges.

"The most powerful influence in the life of a young person is their connection to a trusted adult," Mr. Pagotto explains. "The student-choice element promotes autonomy and trust that are key to strong student-faculty relationships."

Students at Blair didn't always have the freedom to choose their advisor. It was a change initiated by former Head of School T. Chandler Hardwick III and his wife, Monie, in the early 1990s upon coming to the School.

"Advisor selection and the Hardwicks' decisions about the advisor role in students' lives cultivated the student-centered focus that remains today," CCB reflects. "It was the fulfillment of our mission to know our students, and it lifted all of the faculty's focus to have those mentorship relationships with all students."

Selecting an advisor is an incredibly important decision that students make independently, a process that teaches them to carefully consider and weigh their needs and options. Blair's graduates usually look to their advisors as mentors and friends long after graduation, and seniors regularly reflect on the depth of their relationship with their advisor as one of the most impactful elements of the Blair experience.

"It absolutely changed everything at Blair," math teacher and renowned advisor R. Latta Browse agreed, echoing his wife, CCB's, sentiments. "What separates us from other schools is that, in everything we do, all relationships are modeled by the advisor program and advisees choosing us."



"Asking Mrs. Shaw to be my advisor during my first year was the best decision I've ever made. At first, I felt homesick and out of place. I truly struck gold when I met my Spanish teacher, Mrs. Shaw—a woman from my hometown who had once been in my shoes. We cultivated a special bond where she was a mom, advisor, teacher and friend all in one. During a play my senior year, Mrs. Shaw invited my mom to opening night, and it brought me to tears when I saw my mom after the show. I was filled with so much gratitude because she went the extra mile to get my mom there. I can honestly say I am the woman I am today because of my advisor."

—Cheryl Lima '14

"I chose Mr. Pagotto because I felt he was the most invested in me. He knows when I'm not in the right mindset and will check in because we have that personal connection. He can tell when I'm having a bad day, and I don't even have to say it."

—Abdoulaye Sylla '24

There are several purposes behind the ability to choose an advisor that Mr. Pagotto shared. "It sends the message to new students that we trust you to make this decision," he says, "but it also shows them that faculty are here to support you."

In choosing an advisor, students take their first step on the path to self-advocacy and personal growth. They learn more about potential advisors and what they can bring to the table for each student and how they can meet their needs. At the end of each year, the advisor term ends, and students decide if they want to continue with their current advisor or explore a new mentoring relationship with another faculty member.

"The ability to choose your advisor enriches the Blair experience overall," Dean of Faculty Life Leucetia Shaw adds, "and there are no hard feelings at the end of each year if an advisee chooses someone else." Noting that she is here for every student, Mrs. Shaw stresses, "I tell them that if they ever need something to never hesitate to let me know. I'm always impressed by my advisees, and I love applauding their achievements and guiding them when they encounter challenges. Advising has certainly been a highlight of working at Blair."

A LEGACY of Mentorship

THE ADVISOR'S ROLE

At Blair, the advisor is not just an academic guide; they are a source of social and emotional support as students grow and learn across all areas of campus life. Having the option of selecting an advisor means students can choose what they are looking for in that relationship.

An active advisor during her time at Blair, Mrs. Hardwick took on various roles over her 24-year tenure, including Director of Advancement and Strategic Planning. Mrs. Hardwick cherishes her advisees and the time she spent at Blair helping them to learn and grow. Both she and Mr. Hardwick understood the importance of making students the focus of each and every faculty member, making their expertise not just their subject matter, but also knowing their students well.

"The advisor is somebody, besides your parents, who has confidence and believes in you," Mrs. Hardwick explains. "We all need that kind of support and encouragement; as a child or young adult, it resonates differently hearing it from a trusted adult besides your parents. It is someone else you know who really cares about you."

When the full faculty comes together four times a year to assess each student's progress—another practice instituted by

Mr. Hardwick as Head of School—advisors offer personal perspectives on their advisees, letting their colleagues know when they deserve a pat on the back or need help solving a problem. Advisors and advisees regularly connect at impromptu evening and weekend get-togethers and scheduled time during the academic day simply to catch up.

"Oftentimes, your role is to help kids navigate the other people and adults in their life," Mrs. Hardwick said. "You begin working with other people for the benefit of the student."



"Being a part of the Sykes advisory was a highlight of my Blair experience. I became close with Mr. Sykes my first year, when he did dorm duty in Locke Hall, and from there, he was a huge role model for me. From babysitting [the Sykes' children] Lyla and Ollie, to advisory dinners at their house—with their famous cookies, of course—the Sykes family was always so loving and welcoming to us all. I am so grateful for all they have done for me and cherish my time in the epic Sykes advisory."

—Annicka Haines '17

A Thank-You to My Advisor

Dear Mrs. Hardwick,

I don't think I could ever find the words to truly express how much I appreciate all you did for me as my advisor at Blair. I wanted to thank you for being there for me when I needed you and supporting me through it all. You helped me not just as a student, but also as the person I was becoming while growing up at Blair, and for that I will always be grateful.

Unlike many Bucs, I started at Blair as a junior. My two older brothers were already students on the wrestling team, so I figured the easiest person to ask to be my advisor was one of their wrestling coaches. After being turned down (multiple times) by every coach on the team, the head coach finally called me in his office and told me to go ask five other people, and if no one would do it, he would. Coming from Texas as a transfer student, this was particularly challenging for me—I didn't know anyone else at the School. So began my "advisor shopping."

Through this process, I figured out that I already had the support of the wrestling coaches. What I didn't realize was that the coaches knew this, too, which is why they pushed me to widen my search. I also already had the support of my teachers. So I looked to build a new relationship with someone I didn't know as well, and that's how I found you. Though not a teacher in the formal sense, you helped me navigate the hardest year of my life at Blair. After I became ill during my junior year, you made sure I had what I needed so I wouldn't fall behind, usually without me having to ask. This included bringing me supplies and checking on me in the Health Center when I was there overnight, and the occasional unannounced dorm stopover during study hall to make sure I was on top of my homework. This even meant putting me into Structured Study Hall my senior fall to make sure I stayed on track and made it to graduation.

Once senior year rolled around, I was going to you less often for my many present "crisis" moments and more for conversations about the future—including picking a university. You came with me to the college counseling office and helped me advocate for myself, which ultimately led me to Santa Clara University—a school, like Blair, that I never considered before, but now I can't imagine my life without.

We stayed in touch in the years after I left Blair and then less often after you and Mr. Hardwick left, but the impact that you had on me, as well as the impact everyone had in me finding you as an advisor, served me into my college years and long after. You continued to push me and encouraged me to advocate for myself until the day I walked through the Arch as a student for the last time. For that—and for everything you did for me—I thank you.

Best,

Emily Collins '11



A LEGACY of Mentorship



ONE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

As a former Buccaneer himself and the School's current Dean of Enrollment, **Teddy Wenner '96** knows better than most that, on the hilltop, advisors are not the only adults looking out for students' best interests. "A successful mentor relationship is one tailored to what the individual student needs," he says. "The challenge is figuring out what that perfect recipe for success is for each student, and the advisor is one of many adults shepherding the students along the way."

In their roles as teachers, coaches, dorm heads, academic monitors, club advisors and so much more, every faculty member is focused on helping students succeed. Each adult in a student's life at Blair understands a different facet of that young person, presenting themselves differently in various environments. It becomes the responsibility of faculty members, and especially advisors and academic monitors working in tandem, to collaborate and gain a comprehensive



"Picking Mr. Wenner as my advisor my first year was one of my most impactful life choices. He welcomed me into his family, gave his advisees our best high school memories and made Blair feel like home. I am incredibly grateful to have the Wenners as my forever second family."

—Chesney Boag '17



understanding of the whole student, as well as to forge meaningful bonds. The result is a deeper understanding of and an ability to appropriately support and challenge students as they work to earn their Blair diplomas.

“Mentorship is key to the success of the relationship,” Mr. Wenner explains. “As an advisor, my goal is to always give the advice that I think they need to hear, which may not necessarily be what they want to hear. But, because of the close relationship, they are more willing to listen to that advice and guidance because they know it comes from a place of care and concern.”

Over the years, the mentorship from advisors has become an integral part of the Blair experience, as evidenced by each advisor’s own personal collection of sentiment like CCB’s. Students have flourished under the guidance and care of faculty, and the influence of these relationships has lasted well beyond their time at Blair. The hilltop echoes with stories of mentorship, friendship and growth, all thanks to the profound influence of the advisors handpicked by the students themselves. And, so, the impact of Blair’s relationship-based learning continues, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of its students, fostering a supportive community, and inspiring generations to step outside their comfort zones and embrace new challenges with confidence. ■

“If I could give a new student any advice, it would be not to rush your selection of an advisor and take the time to list strong reasons for why you’ve made your choice. Doing so will ensure an informed decision regarding the start of a relationship that will be incredibly invaluable and enduring over the course of your Blair journey.”

—*Will Pemberton '16*



BLAIR **MOVES** FORWARD

ON NEW HEALTH & WELL-BEING FACILITY



12 WINTER-SPRING 2024



Building relationships and connection among community members is at the center of everything we do at Blair. As we work to develop in our students the skills and tools to live happy, successful and fulfilling lives at and beyond Blair, the health and well-being of our community is a top priority. This is why we have increased educational and programmatic offerings and begun a new building project: a Center for Health and Well-Being connected to Hardwick Hall. The new facility, which will allow our health services, counseling and athletic training teams to occupy the same space for the first time in School history, will include areas where students can access health resources, learn, study and socialize.

HEALTH CENTER

Staffed 24/7 by registered and licensed practical nurses while school is in session, the **J. Brooks Hoffman '36** Health Center currently provides emergency and ongoing care, health education, and counseling on a variety of health topics. The school physician holds clinics twice a week (though students can come at any time for evaluation by the nursing staff). In 2026, the health services team will move to the second floor of the Center for Health and Well-Being. Spaces for care of students include three exam rooms, six overnight accommodations, a triage area, self-care room, medication distribution room, lab, an observation zone with three beds and a nurses' station with line of sight to all these areas.

“It is essential that we give students the tools to cope in healthy ways with the stresses that life will inevitably bring. The combination of the quality and rigor of Blair’s academics, its student-centered environment, and the teaching and nurturing of health and well-being tools, will ensure that every Blair student reaches their full academic and life potential.”

—Maria Vinci Savettiere, Esq., P'17
Chair, Blair Academy Board of Trustees

As we bring this new Center to life and break ground for the new facility—with plans for 18 to 20 months of construction and a tentative building opening in January 2026—Blair continues to invest in developing its curriculum, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, preventive and mindfulness education, counseling resources, and religious and spiritual support for the entire community. “We are committed to developing caring, kind, good people, who leave Blair understanding the value of balance and well-being and how they impact academic and professional success,” said Head of School Peter G. Curran.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Blair’s counseling team comprises three full-time, licensed clinicians who prepare students for the challenges that life will inevitably throw at them. They provide individual, solutions-focused counseling, meeting students where they are and identifying goals in collaboration with them. In addition to offering on-the-spot and 24/7 emergency on-call support and coordinating services with outside partners, the counseling team is focused on ensuring all students have access to a trusted adult equipped to support them.

Counselors provide yearly training to faculty, nursing staff and student leaders related to teen mental health and well-being and consult as needed. Partnership with parents is also important, and Blair counselors work one-on-one with families, while also hosting regular student and parent educational seminars. They also work with several student-led groups that support the mental health and well-being of the community, including Project Ally, the Healthy Relationships Committee and the Student Athlete Mental Health Initiative.

Plans for the new Center for Health and Well-Being include counseling services on the third floor, equipped with counselor offices, two quiet rooms, a flex office, a meeting room, space for telehealth visits, a waiting area, and a break room for both counseling and Health Center staff.

CURRICULAR & COCURRICULAR PROGRAMS

Be Well @ Blair seminars are student-led programs about preventive health and well-being education for every grade level. Session topics include sleep, mental health, sexual health, substance use, social media, time management and nutrition.

All ninth and 10th graders enroll in **Foundations of Well-Being 1** and **2** (formerly Blair LEADS), a series of classes that provide comprehensive health and well-being education during the academic day.

BLAIR MOVES FORWARD

ON NEW HEALTH & WELL-BEING FACILITY

As part of the **Adolescent Health & Well-Being Series**, speakers visit the hilltop throughout the year for all-School presentations about topics related to adolescent health and well-being. These programs are paired with parent education sessions.

Blair's faculty-and-staff **Health & Wellness Committee** enhances community well-being by providing a variety of information and organizing a host of activities that support employees' physical, mental and emotional health. A quarterly newsletter offering educational materials and valuable resources encourages readers to prioritize self-care and well-being and model it for Blair students.

ATHLETICS

With 30 varsity and 21 JV and thirds teams and a wide range of recreational activities, Blair athletics promote health and well-being and cultivate skills that help student-athletes become community-minded leaders who embody integrity, humility, a strong work ethic and good sportsmanship.

Students participate in a team sport or activity each afternoon, a routine that underscores the importance of regular exercise and the value of working as a group to achieve individual and shared goals. Blair athletes learn how to deal with success, handle failure and contribute to a common cause. Other athletic initiatives focused on health and well-being include:

- Established by students, the Student Athlete Mental Health Initiative supports the mental health and well-being of Blair's athletes.
- During preseason, athletes rotate through sessions on teamwork, mindfulness and proper weight room use.
- Team captains work with campus leaders to strategically plan the best ways to support Blair athletes and become role models for the next generation of Bucs.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

Blair is committed to creating and sustaining an environment that promotes authentic self-expression, that is inclusive, fosters meaningful understanding and deep relationships, and ensures "all in" and "all together" are lived realities, rather than simply slogans. Toward that end, **The Five Fundamentals of Blair Academy** (www.blair.edu/five-fundamentals) express the School's values and hold community members to a standard for living and working together.



To support the health and well-being of the Blair community and ensure all feel welcomed and included, the School has established committees on the student, faculty and Board levels. Blair faculty members advise several student-led groups to further that mission, and the peer-to-peer learning that happens as a result of this work is powerful. A few such campus groups include:

- Student members of the **Belonging & Equity Committee** (better known as B & E) organize on-campus discussions, promote school programming and proactively seek opportunities for fellow students to offer feedback on their Blair experiences.
- The **Health & Well-Being Committee** comprises school administrators and faculty with varied roles and perspectives to support and advance the physical, emotional, social and mental well-being of individual students and the community as a whole.
- A welcoming community for all, the **Black & Latinx Student Union** (BaLSU) works to build strong ties with all Blair students, faculty and staff, and shares Black and Latinx traditions, music and culture with the entire School.
- The **Blair International Awareness Club** (BIAC) brings together international students and their classmates from the United States to learn about one another's cultures, promote inclusion and plan community-wide events that celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of Blair family members.
- The student-run **Gender & Sexuality Awareness** (GSA) group offers members a safe space to discuss issues related to gender identity and sexuality.

MINDFULNESS

Blair teaches students about mindfulness and introduces them to many practices that help cultivate the skill of more purposeful attention. Present-moment awareness benefits emotional and physical health by reducing stress and anxiety, and it also boosts joyfulness and productivity. At Blair, collective care, self-reflection, awareness and purposeful attention are also at the heart of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging work and community building. For these reasons and more, we have begun to offer mindfulness instruction to students in various forms.

- Blair offers a popular elective course on mindfulness.
- Through Foundations of Well-Being classes, all sophomores receive mindfulness lessons on the neuroscience behind meditation and learn several mindfulness practices.
- At the beginning of weekly Chapel, the entire School is guided through a short mindfulness practice.
- During Monday and Friday conference blocks, a Blair faculty member offers brief, guided meditations open to the entire community.
- All varsity teams receive yoga and mindfulness training throughout their seasons with a focus on managing stress and cultivating an awareness of body, mind and surroundings for peak performance.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Blair celebrates the diversity of the school community's religious and spiritual beliefs through a variety of faith-based programs and celebrations, creating time and space for Blair students to lead and share their lived experiences.

These efforts, supported by Blair's Chaplain and Dean of Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, B & E and other student-led groups, respect the Judeo-Christian values of Blair's founding while embracing a wider, inclusive view of religious life. The School promotes various avenues to instill a sense of common values in students, always underscoring the critical need for understanding and tolerating others' backgrounds, faiths and traditions.

The Jewish Student Union is an association of students and faculty of Jewish faith, as well as non-Jewish community members, who are interested in learning more about Judaism.

Wednesday Chapel brings together the entire Blair community to hear the Chaplain, as well as a student, faculty member or guest speaker, on a topic of moral importance or on an individual issue of faith. Chapel has become a time of sharing and learning with an emphasis on respect for the diverse cultures represented within the School.

The Christian Fellowship provides a supportive environment for examining questions of faith, meeting informally for a variety of activities ranging from social events to worship and study. ■



Want to learn more? Please visit www.blair.edu/health-well-being.

Blair's *Anastasiia Feskova '25* Wins International Children's Peace Prize



Anastasiia Feskova '25 (left) and her teammate, Sofia Tereshchenko, collected the International Children's Peace Prize at the ceremony in London.

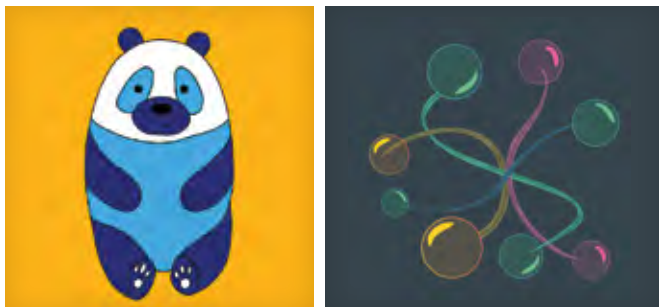
Anastasiia Feskova '25 first saw the story on the news. Riveted, she watched as a reporter recounted the journey of an 11-year-old Ukrainian boy who traveled to Slovakia by himself with a phone number written in purple pen on his hand. It was the outset of the Russia-Ukraine war, and the boy's mother was determined to send her child to safety while she stayed behind in Ukraine to care for her ailing mother. The phone number was intended to help the boy reach relatives across the border.

"I saw the story on the news," Anastasiia recalls, "and I thought, 'There should be a solution to make their way safer.'"

Anastasiia, then a 10th grader, wanted to do something. It was the spring of 2022, and she was acutely aware of the hardships faced by many of her friends and family in her hometown of Lviv, Ukraine. "Since the first days of the war,

I had been volunteering at my previous school, which hosted temporarily displaced people," she said. "Then, I understood that I wanted to expand my help."

So Anastasiia, who had always had a passion for tech, joined forces with two of her Ukrainian friends. The trio applied to a challenge competition sponsored by Technovation Girls, a nonprofit that empowers girls to solve global problems. Working alongside her teammates and a mentor from the organization, they soon created a business plan for a mobile app and a prototype. This app, once installed, would allow young users to detect their geolocation and connect with the local government refugee hotlines. The team quickly progressed to the competition's semifinals, and with the help of Technovation Girls, they engaged companies to secure funding and continued refining the app. "Refee," the app they developed, was released in



Download Anastasiia's apps, Refee and Svity, pictured above, from the Google Play store.

September 2023 and is now available for anyone around the world on Google Play.

Encouraged by their success, Anastasiia and her team wasted no time and jumped into a second project. "We realized that even when a person is physically safe, there can still be a war going on in their head," Anastasiia explains. "Our second application is for people who are already settled but feeling lost, isolated and misunderstood in their new environment." This time, the student entrepreneurs crafted "Svity," an app geared toward teenagers that allows users to respond to questions anonymously and easily form social media groups that foster understanding. Like Refee, the app continues to undergo testing and refinement and is available for international use on Google Play.

Recognizing Anastasiia's commitment and success, Technovation Girls nominated her and her team for this year's International Children's Peace Prize. The prestigious award, launched during the World Summit in 2005, is awarded annually by the KidsRights organization to "a child who fights courageously for children's rights." Each year, it is presented by a Nobel Peace Laureate.

Anastasiia is the winner of the 2023 International Children's Peace Prize. She was honored in London at the induction ceremony last November, where she received not only a statuette but also a study and care grant to support her ongoing efforts to address issues affecting children globally.

"Since the first days of the war, I had been volunteering at my previous school, which hosted temporarily displaced people. Then, I understood that I wanted to expand my help."

—Anastasiia Feskova '25

Anastasiia, it comes as no surprise, is brimming with ideas for what comes next. The industrious junior has set her sights on attending college in the United States to pursue a career in social entrepreneurship and is determined to continue using her passion for technology to solve social issues. When it is safe, she also hopes to return to Ukraine, where her family remains. "Our generation is responsible for rebuilding the country," she says. "There is so much work to be done." To those who know her, it's no surprise that Anastasiia is already planning to use her ingenuity and impressive skill to make a positive impact in the world once more. ■

Blair Alumni & Coach Mantegna Qualify for 2024 Olympics & Make History



Photos courtesy of Emmanuel Jambo

(From left to right) **Royal Ivey '00**, Joe Mantegna, **Marial Shayok '14** and Khaman Maluach huddle up during a game at the FIBA Basketball World Cup.

Last summer, the South Sudan men's basketball team finished the FIBA Basketball World Cup with a 3-2 record and qualified for the 2024 Olympics, which will be held in Paris this summer. The tournament marked the first appearance for South Sudan, the world's newest nation, and this will be the first time the team represents their country on the world's biggest stage. Recognized as the highest-finishing African nation in the tournament's history, South Sudan achieved this milestone with the help of three Blair alumni and head boys' basketball coach Joe Mantegna.

Leading this charge was former NBA All-Star **Luol Deng '03**, who began constructing this team three years ago and is the president of the South Sudan Basketball Federation. In this process, he named his former Blair teammate and former NBA player, **Royal Ivey '00**, as head coach, and his high school basketball mentor, Joe Mantegna, as one of the assistant coaches. Additionally, former Buccaneer and current professional basketball player, **Marial Shayok '14**,

“It's an underdog story, not just for the South Sudanese, not just for Africa, but for the rest of the world.”

—**Luol Deng '03**, president of the South Sudan Basketball Federation



The South Sudanese Bright Stars proudly stand for their national anthem at the FIBA Basketball World Cup.

was added to the roster. During the World Cup, Marial delivered outstanding performances, averaging 13.2 points, 3.6 rebounds and 2.2 assists per game.

“Walking out of the tunnel at opening ceremonies for the Paris Olympics with three of my former Blair basketball players under the flag of South Sudan figures to be a thrill of a lifetime for all of us,” said Coach Mantegna. “To have this moment be the culmination of Luol Deng’s dream as the president of the South Sudan Basketball Federation and to have our athletes be the first South Sudanese basketball players to ever compete at the Olympic Games under the South Sudan flag will only make the moment that much more meaningful. I am so proud to support and serve Royal Ivey, our head coach, and Luol and the incredibly inspirational young men who have gotten us this far.”

The Bright Stars, as the team is known, have received global recognition for their Olympic journey. Luol told the “Olympics.com Podcast” he believed they were the first team



Former NBA All-Star **Luol Deng '03** serves as president of the South Sudan Basketball Federation.

to qualify for the World Cup without an indoor court in their country. South Sudan President Salva Kiir vowed to remedy the situation, according to the Associated Press, with a new facility in Juba, the country’s capital, as a gift to the team.

In an interview earlier this year with ESPN, Luol underscored the remarkable nature of the team’s ascent. “It’s an unbelievable story. It’s an underdog story, not just for the South Sudanese, not just for Africa, but for the rest of the world,” Luol said. “It’s such a unique achievement because it’s beyond basketball.”

Look for South Sudan, with its contingent from Blair, to make history in Paris from July 26 to August 11. Before the Olympics commence, South Sudan will face off against a loaded U.S. team that may include LeBron James, Kevin Durant and Steph Curry in an exhibition game on July 20 at London’s O2 Arena. ■

More Olympics Appearances

Also keep an eye out for **André Matias '07**, who will set sail for Paris this summer rowing for Angola. André participated in the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics, rowing in the lightweight double sculls event. In addition, wrestlers **Skylar Grote '16** and **Joseph McKenna '14** will compete in April's Olympic trials with the goal of reaching Paris this summer.

The **RISE** *of* **WOMEN'S** **WRESTLING**





Sarah Henckel '26 poses with her brother and fellow Blair wrestler, **William Henckel '25**.

AS the approaching footsteps drew closer to her door, **Sarah Henckel '26** squeezed her eyes shut tighter. It was a sunny Saturday morning in December, and after a grueling year of slogging through wrestling practices with little to show for it, Sarah had decided she wasn't going to practice again. She was going to stay in bed.

Wrestling was practically in Sarah's DNA. Her older brother, **William Henckel '25**, started the sport when he was four, and her father wrestled all through high school. When her father first learned of a beginners' class, he encouraged Sarah to try it. Lacking the proper gear, she grabbed a pair of her brother's old wrestling shoes and decided to make the best of it. Looking back on that day, Sarah vividly remembers feeling awkward as the sole female participant. "I was also the oldest and heaviest student in the room," she recalls. "It was really embarrassing."

The RISE of WOMEN'S WRESTLING



The Blair wrestling room, where champions are forged, has become a second home to many members of the team.



Behind every wrestler, there is a team of invested coaches. Here, **Mike Carbonaro '00** (left), **Ross Gitomer '05** (center) and **Paul Clavel '88** (right) root for Blair.

In her second attempt, Sarah thought joining her brother's class might be a better fit. After all, she thought, the wrestlers there would likely be closer to her weight and age. "So I went to practice with my brother," she recalls. "It was more embarrassing than if I had just stayed in the beginners' class. Everyone was so much more technical than I was."

But, while Sarah lacked the finesse of technical skills, it turned out that she possessed the quality that is magic in wrestling: grit. Wrestling is a difficult discipline to master. To excel, athletes must embrace workouts that challenge them mentally as well as physically. The sport requires an intense commitment to strength conditioning and dietary discipline. Most of all, it demands perseverance because the techniques needed to pin an opponent often take time to master. "To compete at the highest level, it takes a lot of time," says Blair wrestling head coach and math teacher **Ross Gitomer '05**. "It takes years of consistent practice, and even the best competitors lose matches. To become proficient, you have to go through thousands of repetitions and learn how to grow." In short, wrestlers need grit. And as it turned out, Sarah's first two experiences with athletes more experienced than she was and who looked very different from her highlighted one fact: Sarah had grit in spades.

So Sarah did not stay in bed that morning in December. Instead, she greeted her dad when he opened the door and got ready for the two-hour drive from Connecticut. And, at her first girls' state tournament, after a year of practice, she pinned her opponent in less than a minute. Today, Sarah is wrestling at the national level at Blair and trying to make world teams.

THE GROWTH OF WOMEN'S WRESTLING AT BLAIR

In the realm of wrestling, Sarah's journey is just one of many success stories that have unfolded at Blair. Three years ago, when Coach Gitomer returned to his alma mater, he brought with him a wealth of experience. An Atlantic Coast Conference champion wrestler at the University of Virginia, he clinched a national prep championship for Blair



In June 2023, **Sarah Henckel '26** clinched gold at the U17 Pan American Championships in Mexico City, Mexico. Sarah's flawless 3-0 record in the 152-lb. category proved instrumental in the U.S. women freestyle team's victory in the tournament.

in 2005 and went on to serve as head wrestling coach at St. Christopher's School in Richmond, Virginia, for a decade. During an impressive tenure there, he led the team to their first-ever No. 1 ranking in the state of Virginia, and mentored 19 All-Americans, 29 state champions and three national champions.

Women's wrestling is now the fastest-growing sport in America.

—Blair wrestling head coach and math teacher **Ross Gitomer '05**

Fresh from his Virginia coaching experience, Coach Gitomer brought with him a vision for expanding the women's program at Blair. Back then, the school team featured just one female wrestler, a number that he proudly notes has now grown to eight. "Women's wrestling is now the fastest-growing sport in America," he emphasizes. "This year, Blair has eight girls on the team. We hope to grow it to a dozen."

The surge in popularity of women's wrestling is not confined to Blair—it's a global phenomenon. In 2004, women's wrestling made its debut at the Olympic Games in Athens. Since that milestone, girls' programs have taken off nationally, and statistics show a sport experiencing explosive growth. In the last five years, 25 states have added separate girls' wrestling championships. Today, more than 100 colleges and universities located in the United States offer women's wrestling programs, with institutions like the University of Iowa competing at the NCAA Division 1 level.

"This is pivotal—it means female wrestlers now get recruited to colleges," Coach Gitomer explains. While some of the most renowned schools have yet to fully embrace women's wrestling at the collegiate level, they are slowly progressing. "Right now many of the Big Ten and Ivy League schools offer club programs, and the goal is to have them advance to sanctioned NCAA sport programs, which is the equivalent to the men's wrestling programs."

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Coach Gitomer hopes that by hosting a wrestling training camp at Blair during the summer, the program will grow even further. Held last June, the first camp drew more than two dozen female athletes from around the country to

2023-2024 GIRLS' WRESTLING HIGHLIGHTS

The 2023-2024 season for Blair girls' wrestling shattered records and set new standards, with our female athletes not just excelling individually but also trailblazing as a team. In December's Beast of the East tournament, Blair produced four female finalists and crowned two champions, securing the team's first-place victory. The momentum continued into January with Blair's female wrestlers dominating the Dame of Thrones tournament. **Victoria Carbonaro '27**, **Corynne McNulty '27**, **Morgan Edwards '24** and **Sarah Henckel '26** each clinched gold medals, while **Jocelyn O'Keeffe '24** also displayed impressive skill, earning the runner-up title with a standout performance.

Director of Athletics **Paul Clavel '88** reflects on the program's remarkable growth—and achievements—with pride: "I am extremely excited to support the growth of women's wrestling both here at Blair and throughout the country. Women's wrestling is one of the fastest-growing high school sports. When Coach Gitomer took the head wrestling coach position, one of his goals was to increase the number of girls on the wrestling team and have them compete in their own tournaments. He's done a great job promoting and attracting very talented Blair female wrestlers."

intensively train and learn over five days. Guest clinicians, including Columbia University coach Emma Randall, guided participants through drills and matches. Also in attendance was a pioneer of female wrestling at Blair, **Skylar Grote '16**. When she joined the School's all-male wrestling team in 2012, Skylar was one of fewer than a dozen female wrestlers competing in New Jersey at the high school level.

As the ninth grader ventured into uncharted territory, Skylar remembers that the path forward in women's wrestling felt challenging. "I was only 14, and it was new for me, new for the boys on the team and new for the administration." In those days, female wrestlers competed against males in their divisions; while that option is still available today, many tournaments now offer dedicated women's competitions. Despite the physical and mental challenges, Skylar wouldn't change her experience. She felt supported at Blair and valued as a part of the team. "I had great leaders and great teammates supporting me. I was pushed hard. That's why I am where I am today."

Where Skylar is today is training for the 2024 Paris Olympic trials. Last year, the female wrestler ranked second in the United States and 11th internationally in the fiercely competitive 72 kg. weight class. Now living in Colorado, Skylar maintains a busy schedule, working out at the Colorado Springs Olympic and Paralympic Training Center several times a week, but she still makes time to come back to Blair to lend a hand to the next generation of athletes.

When Skylar joined Coach Gitomer's training camp last summer to share her technical expertise and support fellow athletes navigating the challenges of being female in a male-dominated sport, she notes that, despite the cultural progress in the United States since she began wrestling, many personal challenges remain the same. Skylar can relate to Sarah's moments of doubt and struggle.

She emphasized to the camp participants the importance of keeping a healthy mindset and body positivity, as she once grappled with crippling anxiety and judgment. As a young wrestler, she remembers, "It was really hard for me to understand that it's not negative to be big and strong. That's a positive." Today, the elite athlete encourages female wrestlers to focus on mental toughness and perseverance.

She recalls that as a young wrestler, she would often struggle for days after tough tournaments, letting her disappointment affect her entire week. She hopes that her protégés will learn from her experience. “Don’t let the wins and losses define you,” she recalls urging them. “Success will come.”

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

As for Coach Gitomer, he hopes that the doors opened by Skylar will continue to widen for current female wrestlers like Sarah and her teammate **Morgan Edwards '24**, who



Fresh from winning bronze in January’s Grand Prix Henri DeGlane in Nice, France, Olympic hopeful **Skylar Grote '16** gears up for her next challenge: Paris 2024.

has also won a national prep championship. While he is certainly proud of the two female national prep title holders on the team, Coach Gitomer hopes to build a solid foundation for personal development in every athlete. He aims to instill good, fundamental habits that will not only propel them in wrestling but also guide them through life. “Have they instilled a system of training and thought and a team mentality? Are they gaining in discipline and realizing that they are part of something greater than themselves?” he asks.

**It was really hard
for me to understand
that it’s not a
negative to be big
and strong.**

—Skylar Grote '16

Sarah, who knows the answers to those questions well, has the perspective to see that she plays a pivotal role in paving the way for upcoming female wrestlers. Now, when she returns to the club where her wrestling journey began, she can see firsthand the amazing growth of girls’ wrestling. “I love to see the girls who are starting now,” she says with enthusiasm. “I want to give back and help them. If I had quit when times were hard, I would never be where I am today.”

To do just that, Sarah is now the one setting the example. When her younger sister, Ella, turned 12 last year, Sarah made sure that Ella’s first foray into wrestling was Blair’s training camp. There, Ella stepped onto the mat surrounded by girls just like her. So, today, after Sarah laces up her shoes for her next match, she takes a short walk down the hall. This time, it is her standing at the door of her little sister’s bedroom. It’s time to show the next generation the meaning of grit. ■



From Garbage to Garden **Composting** Comes to Blair

Avery Andrasek '24 thinks of herself as a leader, and it is with good reason. From the time she was small, Avery has been active in soccer and lacrosse, and she has enjoyed marshaling her teammates to march down any number of athletic fields in search of a win. As she has gotten older, she has gradually taken on more leadership roles, serving as a prefect at Blair and as ambassador for the admission and athletic programs. Now Avery has turned her attention to the classroom. From an idea born in LEADS class, Avery has led her classmates in initiating the School's inaugural composting program, marking another significant step forward in sustainable practices for Blair.

An Idea Takes Root

It all started two years ago, when Avery's sophomore LEADS class began collecting data during a yearlong environmental project that asked students to consider how they can reduce their carbon footprint and rethink how they dispose of unused food.

Language and LEADS teacher Alex Cullen, who oversaw the project, explained to her class, "New Jersey alone produces 1.3 million tons of food waste every year. This is like going to the store and buying five bags of groceries just to leave two of them behind." All of that waste, Ms. Cullen informed students, goes directly to local landfills, where it contributes to levels of

methane and CO₂, greenhouse gasses responsible for global warming. "Instead of delivering those scraps directly to the landfill, I asked if the extra food produced by schools can be used in a different way."

After the class explored several options to combat food waste, it became clear that a waste audit was needed to provide data about how much waste was produced on campus, how many composting bins would be needed and how much the process might cost. Ms. Cullen's LEADS class jumped in, conducting online research and in-person interviews while partnering with Blair's dining team to measure the waste produced by Blair. They then analyzed the data collected as a class.

For Avery, the conclusions of the waste audit were eye-opening. "After we did the waste audit, we realized how much food waste there is and how much it really does add up." At Avery's elementary school, she had seen that composting programs can take root and become second nature to students. "I had seen that composting is such an easy thing to do," Avery recalled. "It was important for me to follow through because this could make a big difference in the community."

Community Support Grows

The following year, Avery and Ms. Cullen continued to move the project



forward and, together, they met with environmental experts and local composting companies, as well as sustainability directors from other independent schools. They gathered best practices and cost estimates, and they also collaborated with Blair's Sustainability Club to survey the School's faculty, staff and students to gauge interest in participation. When an impressive 85.7 percent of respondents expressed support for campus composting, Avery and Ms. Cullen recognized that the elements needed to make the program a success were falling into place.

Avery and Ms. Cullen then met with Head of School Peter G. Curran and Chief Operating Officer Jim Frick, presented several options for Blair and secured the final support needed to make the plan a reality.

A Green Light Begins a Greener Future

At the first School Meeting last September, Avery shared the good news with the entire community: Composting at Blair had officially begun. Thanks to the newly installed bins in the Romano Dining Hall, students can now dispose of their food

scraps after each meal. One Compost Can, a locally owned business that recycles organic matter, picks up the material on a weekly basis and deposits it at a farm in Hopewell, New Jersey, where it plays a crucial role in enriching soil quality and building healthy local food systems.

Avery, for one, is delighted to witness the program take off, and she reflects on the long journey that brought them to this point: "I think students have been surprised that we were able to make it happen. When we started two years ago, I don't think anyone thought this would come to fruition." She credits Ms. Cullen with making the critical difference. "Having a teacher like Ms. Cullen to champion this was super helpful. Together, we reached out to companies and met with them. We wrote and then edited each other's writing to create a final proposal backed by data....This project would not have gotten this far without her support."

As for Mr. Frick, who is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations at Blair, he wholeheartedly supports the project. "This is an easy way for other students to see that they can contribute, and we can collectively do small things that add up to make a big difference." ■

Meet Blair's **Dean of Teaching & Learning Joe Wagner**



After a decade of teaching at Blair Academy, Joe Wagner has evolved into a leader in all aspects of campus life. In the classroom teaching biology, coaching on the baseball diamond or guiding students as dorm head, he has

modeled learning as a lifelong pursuit in search of one's best self, and his students are all the better for it. This year, Mr. Wagner embarked on his newest educational journey when he was appointed Blair's Dean of Teaching and Learning.

Mr. Wagner joined Blair's science faculty in 2014. During the school year, he teaches AP Biology and serves as assistant baseball coach and dorm head of Freeman Hall, a junior boys' dormitory. Mr. Wagner is a graduate of Hamilton College with a BA in biology and a minor in religious studies. He earned an EdM in the mind, brain and education program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2020.

We sat down with Mr. Wagner to discuss his tenure at Blair and learn more about his new role, including his research in generative artificial intelligence (AI). Dive into the Q&A that follows to get to know more about one of the newest members of the academic office.

"Joe's tireless pursuit of the best possible learning outcomes for students makes him an invaluable resource to us all in his new role."

—Assistant Head of School for Academics
Nathan Molteni

Q&A



You are nearing a decade of teaching at Blair. What has been your favorite part thus far?



It is difficult to name just one component—I find the work that we do here deeply fulfilling and incredibly important. That said, teaching Honors Biology with first-year students will always have a special place in my heart. Both the course and my pedagogy have co-evolved over time. I was lucky enough to formulate much of it while I was in grad school as a project for a course called Applying Cognitive Science to Teaching and Learning. Our first-year students enter our classroom as young, curious scientists, and experiencing the awe and wonder that are part of the natural world energizes and inspires me.



Students in Intro to Film Production are immersed in all aspects of digital film production, from script to screen.

“Our most powerful instructional moments occur when we transcend sense-making and begin to enter a space of meaning-making.”

—Dean of Teaching and Learning
Joe Wagner



What interested you the most about this position?



I have become someone who often contemplates the “why” questions of education. I have also become someone who wants to remain in constant cycles of growth and change in pursuit of the best version of myself as a classroom educator and beyond. To me, the Dean of Teaching and Learning ought to be the quintessence of reflective practice at Blair, and I have been interested in this line of work since my second year here, when this position was first created. After a continued series of transformative professional development experiences (for example, graduate school and the Klingenstein Summer Institute), my desire to do this work persisted and grew.



In your new role as Dean of Teaching and Learning, how are you supporting students at Blair?



There are two ways of thinking about this for me: first, in the ways that I collaborate with the faculty on their continued growth will positively impact the work they do with students and second, in overseeing projects that directly interface with students.

On the faculty side, I am committed to sustaining the practice of instructional coaching at Blair. Part of this emerges from the strategies of my predecessor, Amanda Lucas, who developed an observation system from Craig Randall’s *Trust-Based Observations: Maximizing Teaching and Learning Growth*. This semester, I plan to observe all of our teaching faculty to gain a global perspective on what constitutes a Blair education, holistically.

With students, I both oversee the aspects of the ninth-grade experience and have been working to integrate an understanding of AI into our teaching and learning. For the ninth-grade experience, our vision is to develop their self-awareness, agency, resourcefulness and metacognition as they enter Blair. We do this by encouraging reflection in our study hall spaces and through teaching them effective study strategies, which is supplemented by their experience with Neuroteach Global Student, a gamified program that teaches them best practices for learning.



You have shared that ideally, all Blair courses are based on concepts, themes and processes—our curriculum is not about covering content but uncovering ideas. Diving into the importance of relational learning and meaning-making in Blair classes, how do you hope to further develop a communal vision of teaching and learning at Blair?



Our most powerful instructional moments occur when we transcend sense-making and begin to enter a space of meaning-making, which I view as the North Star for all in-class experiences. To achieve this, we will need to shift our mindset and instruction from a deficit-thinking to assets-based perspective or funds of knowledge that students bring to bear. It will be important to balance student and teacher voices, and encourage our teachers to be content experts who coach and design, as opposed to disseminating information.



You are leading a faculty and staff book club at Blair, and the club's first pick is *The End of Average*—a book that revolutionizes how we think about using averages in education, employment, industry and just about everything. Why did you feel this read was important to share with the Blair community?



It is a provocative piece, and one I am familiar with from graduate school. It has impacted the way I approach work with students and how I think about the systems that exist in the world. I think it can be important for us to zoom out and examine critically the structures and institutions that have shaped the modern world. I think the author, Todd Rose, does a great job of interrogating the state of the individual in modern society and asks the reader to consider the ways in which we design structures that accommodate his three principles: jaggedness, contexts and pathways. An understanding of the multidimensional nature of constructs like talent and intelligence are necessary components of teaching and learning.



Joe Wagner teaches a biology course in one of the Bogle Science Center's state-of-the-art labs.



Generative AI is very likely a tool that will disrupt industries, and knowing how to strategically leverage it will give students a competitive advantage in higher education, work and life. How is Blair working to ensure students understand the power of these tools and incorporate it consistently across the learning process in appropriate ways?



We have grown the capacity of our faculty and student body in several ways. This summer, all faculty received training on the capabilities of generative AI, and we also asked them to consider the ways in which it might disrupt our ability to assess authentic student learning. We have formed a committee to consider both the effective integration of AI into classroom spaces in addition to thinking about what will be necessary for our students to understand. Several teachers are already using AI tools to empower learning. Personally, I have allowed my students to generate feedback on their writing to better develop in them skills for which they are being assessed. In addition, my J-term course asked an important question: What is the ceiling for the quality of student work when they are given full access to the latest AI models and dedicated time to work together on a shared product or business idea?

“At Blair, we position students at the center of the learning experience, and we design courses, units and lessons with them in mind.”

—Dean of Teaching and Learning
Joe Wagner

Q

I have heard you have been intentional in becoming well-versed in the power of AI tools to ensure our employees are also early adopters of the technology. How have you done this and what has been the most interesting thing you've learned along the way?

A

I have become a voracious consumer of content related to AI. Over the summer, I took courses designed for educators on the topic, watched lectures, listened to podcasts, read from thought leaders, and, yes, talked extensively to AI myself. I use generative AI frequently, as I think of it like a coworker. I am not sure of the most interesting thing I have learned, but the most interesting things that I have done have arisen from moments in which I was not capable of producing something (for example, code), and suddenly it takes me 10 minutes if my input is strong enough. If one can speak conversationally with these tools, then they can access the potential of them. The natural language processing component of generative AI (particularly ChatGPT-4) is its greatest feature.

Q

What do you feel are the main benefits of learning in an environment such as Blair?

A

Relationship-based learning is the most invaluable feature of a Blair education that we live each day here. At Blair, we position students at the center of the learning experience, and we design courses, units and lessons with them in mind. The identities and experiences of our students matter deeply to our teachers, and we give space to connect those components of students' lives to their learning. In turn, our students bring the authentic versions of themselves to the classroom, and we as a faculty learn together with them.

Q

Our transition to an advanced curriculum designed by Blair faculty, which will better prepare our students for success, will also amplify our ability to offer teachers autonomy and professional fulfillment. In what ways are you assisting that process?

A

In addition to being involved in the proposal feedback process throughout this year, I ran our Sigety Faculty Summer Institute over the break, which centered around the design of our advanced curriculum. We had 34 faculty members participate in this summer's Institute, the largest turnout to date. It was dedicated time for faculty to leverage best practices in course design to shape their courses and for department chairs to shape the vision of advanced coursework in their disciplines. ■



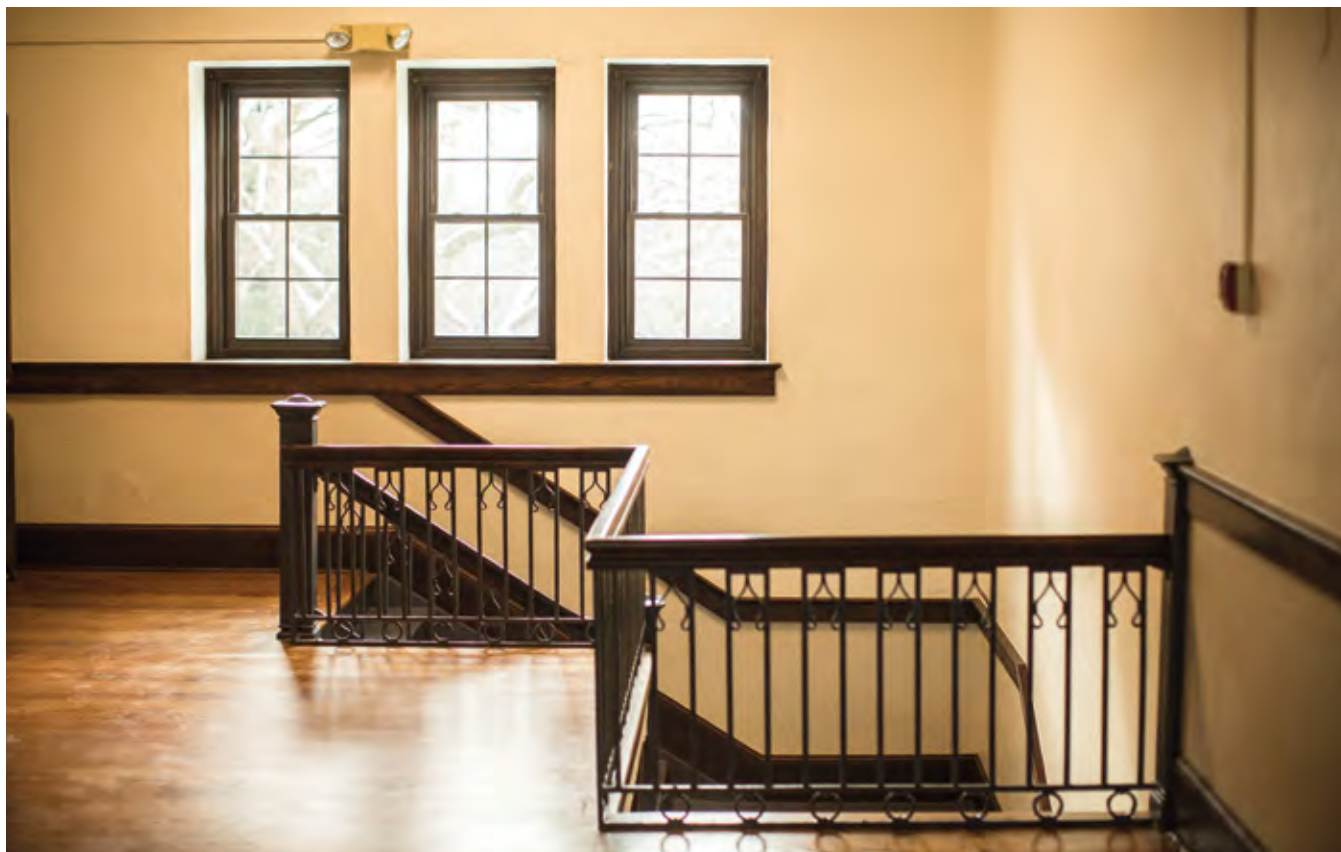
Lea Myers '27 answers a question in English class in Clinton Hall.



Oscar Wan '24 participates in a lively discussion around a Harkness table in history class.

Creating a Manuscript of Substance: Blair's New Advanced Seminar in Literary Writing

by English department chair **James Moore, Hon. '93**



Clinton Hall, where Blair students have explored literature for over a century, now hosts the new Advanced Seminar in Literary Writing, fostering the next generation of writers.

Four or five years back, a question started to rattle around in my brain as we began work on the schoolwide advanced curriculum initiative. What if, I kept asking, we designed a course for our most interested and ambitious writers, the ones who sat down in the quiet of Timken Library of an evening to write poems about the first snowfall of the year, or who shyly asked, as a student did of me late last fall, if I would take a look at the short story she had written over the weekend? I spoke with local literati, like *Arjun Chopra '21*, *Emily Wang '23* and *Fiona Han '23*, whose collective response was, effectively, “Dude, why didn’t you offer that class to us?” I consulted with science department member Nadia Abascal, PhD, whose

by-application three-semester Integrated Science Research program offered a model that already dovetailed nicely with our existing schedule. I don’t even remember my first conversation about this idea with Assistant Head of School for Academics Nathan Molteni; all I can recall is that the course has taken shape over our many discussions and is now in the catalog of Blair’s academic offerings. It is a real thing, and, as proof, the first cohort—five 10th graders and an equal number of 11th graders—began their work with the new year.

The final product of Advanced Seminar in Literary Writing will be a manuscript of substance: a collection of stories, a novel, a piece of literary criticism, a screenplay, a book of

poems or some other literary product of the student's design. Before the student commences that work, however, they must complete the Foundations of Literary Writing course, in which students experiment with writing fiction, poetry, scripts and criticism, guided by the instructor and such Blair-affiliated experts as former faculty member Pedro Hurtado Ortiz, who teaches Comparative Literature and English at the University of California at Berkeley, the poet *Dan Kraines '06* and novelist *Kelly Sokol '96*. The final assignment of the Foundations course is a proposal for that “manuscript of substance,” a stake in the ground, as it were, that asserts a student's literary intentions—including the prospect of publication—for the next two semesters.

While the year of writing in ALW will enable the members of the cohort to explore and develop their interest in the literary, it will also introduce and reinforce project management skills that they will be able to apply to any endeavor in the future: developing checkpoints, making progress in the context of incomplete information, tapping experts for advice and changing course while staying on track.

Ultimately, we'd like to create a designated space for the ALW, a slightly messy but well-lighted place with big windows, a desk for every writer, a coffee machine in the corner and plenty of electrical outlets. But while that's something to dream about, right now we've got what really counts: our first group of young writers, busily finding their voices. ■



120 FT PREP





& The Lasting Legacy of the Kelley-Potter Cup

FOR only the sixth time in the Kelley-Potter Cup's 35-year history, this year's Peddie Day competitions ended in a tie. With several all-star performances and a thunderous crowd of alums, students, families, faculty and staff cheering them on, the Buccaneers tied the ~~Chickens~~ Falcons with a 5-5-1 score on the 120th Peddie Day. The Kelley-Potter Cup will be shared throughout the next year, residing in Blairstown—this year's home team—for the first six months and Hightstown for the remainder.

It was a beautiful fall day filled with excitement for everyone who ventured to the hilltop to participate in Peddie Day. In the Blair hospitality tent, parents connected with one another as alums reunited with classmates and faculty-turned-friends over hot cocoa and firepits as the day commenced. The morning competitions began with a tough loss for the JV girls' tennis team. Lulu's Place (aka "the Bubble") was crowded with fans to cheer on the Bucs, who gave it their all on the court. From there, varsity field hockey and varsity boys' soccer clinched two shutout victories, but JV girls' soccer suffered a loss, bringing the Cup total to 2-2.

Despite **Isaac Greene '24** clinching first overall for cross country, both the girls' and boys' teams fell to Peddie. In the Bowl, JV field hockey dominated with a 6-0 victory, with goals from multiple Bucs, and ended their season on a high note. A loss from varsity girls' tennis, a tie from JV boys' soccer and a win from varsity girls' soccer brought the Cup total to 4-5-1. It all came down to the football game. Only a win would tie it; anything else would be a loss.

It was a scoreless game with less than six minutes remaining when captain **Yaneik Gallego '24** ran for a touchdown, and, with the extra point, the Bucs were up 7-0. **Luke Dale '24** recorded an interception for a touchdown with less than two minutes remaining in the game, securing a win for the varsity football game and an overall tie for the Cup.

"Wins and losses aside, all of us at Blair couldn't be prouder of our students for their enthusiasm, sportsmanship, perseverance and work ethic," Head of School Peter G. Curran said. "Peddie Day is truly one of my favorite Blair traditions, and it was terrific seeing our community in action on a beautiful fall day. Go Bucs!"



The Lasting Legacy of the Kelley-Potter Cup

Much has changed in the 120 years of the Blair-Peddie Rivalry, a quintessential part of the boarding school experience and highlight of the fall season for all of us. While the entire School, as well as many parents and alumni, have come out in force to cheer the Buccaneers to victory over the Falcons for decades, traditions surrounding the competition have come in and out of popularity through generations. What initially began in 1903 as New Jersey's oldest prep school football rivalry has evolved to encompass a wide range of sports, culminating in a full day of athletic competitions alternating between Blair's and Peddie's campuses in Blairstown and Hightstown. One change that has revolutionized the tradition of Peddie Day was introduced 35 years ago by the Class of 1989: the Kelley-Potter Cup.

"The Kelley-Potter Cup is a great example of the power of compounding," **Stirling Levy '89** explained. "From the stories I hear, over the past 35 years, the Kelley-Potter Cup has become more meaningful to both the Blair and Peddie communities as time goes on."

A gift from the Class of 1989, the Cup was Stirling's brainchild after he competed for something similar at his

former school, Rumsey Hall, in Washington, Connecticut. "We wanted something meaningful, that people would remember," Stirling said. With that, the Kelley-Potter Cup was born.

When it came to naming the Cup, Stirling shared that the class wanted to honor Blair's 14th Head of School, the Rev. James R. Kelley, Hon. '51 '89—who was retiring at the end of that school year—and Peddie's 13th Head of School, F. Edward Potter Jr., who passed away suddenly that year. The two campus leaders arrived at their respective schools within a year of each other and cultivated a friendship before assuming their roles. The Cup's namesake also held significance for Peddie's Class of 1989, who counted Mr. Potter's daughter, Tappen, in their ranks. Stirling remembers sharing the idea with Mr. Potter's wife, Hillary, who embraced the loving tribute.

During the inaugural competition featuring the Kelley-Potter Cup, Stirling is proud that Blair emerged victorious that fall and secured the trophy's residence on the hilltop after his class led a series of capers aimed at boosting school spirit. "Early in the week, my roommate **Nat Taylor Jr. '89** and I staged a false flag campaign," Stirling recalled. "Nat, who is a great artist, created a banner making fun of Blair, and in the middle of the night, we hung it outside the gymnasium building for the entire School to see, making it seem like Peddie students had snuck onto campus under the cover of



night. The next morning at School meeting, I did my best to feign outrage at Peddie and get my classmates fired up."

Hijinx aside, Stirling is appreciative of the Cup's lasting legacy and the evolution of Peddie Day through the years. "I am proud that we decided to make each sporting contest

worth one point to distribute school spirit equally among the games. I always enjoy meeting people in the Blair or Peddie communities and asking them about the Kelley-Potter Cup, and I am pleased that the Class of '89 was able to leave the Blair-Peddie rivalry a little better than we found it." ■

CODE AGREED UPON BY PEDDIE & BLAIR

The deep friendship and respect in which the Blair-Peddie rivalry is rooted today was not always the case throughout history. In the 1930s, it was commonplace at the end of the game for the victors to swarm the field, chasing away their opponents both verbally and physically and tearing down the goalposts. In 1936, Peddie Headmaster Dr. W. E. Saunders and Blair Headmaster Dr. Charles Breed met with faculty and coaches to formulate a plan to end unsportsmanlike behavior at their annual game. They came up with the simple set of rules, listed here, that was published in *The Blair Breeze*, and the "splendid sportsmanship" exhibited at the following game caught the attention of *The New York Times*, which published an article highlighting the events on and off the field. "Considerable interest was focused on this 34th annual

meeting, inasmuch as it was necessary for the officials of the two schools to declare an edict against rowdyism and violence, which during the past two years were so flagrant that the games terminated in wild disorders," the article read.

"Code Agreed Upon by Peddie and Blair" as printed in the November 6, 1936, issue of *The Blair Breeze*:

1. *The side defeated is to stay in the stands while and until the victorious school has marched around and off the field.*
2. *The victors are to have the football used in the game. In case of a tie, the visiting team is to receive it.*
3. *The goal posts are to be left [untouched].*

Shelly & Joe Mantegna



It's a hashtag thrown around with levity in the family group chat or at the breakfast bar in the early mornings before class. "Who is going to do the dishes? Remember, 'Cause over self!"

For 25 years, the Mantegna family has been a manifestation of their motto at Blair Academy, supporting generations of Bucs passing through the Arch as they navigate their learning and development.

As Associate Dean of College Counseling, Director of Testing and head coach of the varsity basketball team, Joe has mentored scores of students through their Blair experience and on to successful and fulfilling careers on and off the court. Shelly—who Joe credits with raising their three children, **Jake '19**, **Lula '20** and **Xavier '24**—has held multiple titles and responsibilities during her tenure, which have led to her newest role, Director of Advanced Curriculum.

While reflecting upon their successful careers at Blair for this interview, the Mantegnas humbly recognized the many veteran faculty members who served as role models and supported them when they first arrived on the hilltop. Shelly praised longtime Assistant Headmaster David T. Low for his ability to show care in all spaces and his emphasis on a student-centered school, while Joe commended Dean of Campus Life and head softball coach **Carolyn Conforti-Browse '79** for modeling mentorship roles with her student-athletes. Shelly and Joe laugh about the imposter syndrome they felt back in 1999 when they

arrived that still lingers today, but in the Blair community, they have become an institution of the School, joining the ranks of the faculty mentors they admire.



The Mantegna Family in 2005 celebrating the baptism of their youngest son, **Xavier '24**.



As a college counselor, Joe joins in on the celebration of Commencement.



Shelly finds the relationships she forms with students, such as those in her psychology class, to be the most rewarding part of her career at Blair.

QUESTIONS FOR JOE

Q: What does “Cause over self” mean to you?

A: It’s being part of something bigger than yourself; it’s a motto of service and selflessness. I speak to my team daily about fighting human nature, the natural inclination to be about ourselves, our own selfish wants and needs. It’s a hard fight—it’s a daily fight—but only good things can happen from it.

Q: How has coaching evolved over the last 25 years?

A: What I always tell players today is that everything here now is shiny and new: the weight room, new field house, new locker room. The bottom line to me: Coaching is still coaching. It’s still about building trust and working together. Even though everything is shiny and new, I don’t think a lot has changed about building a group of young players into a unified team. There’s a lot more distraction now with social media and the attention we garner, but at its core, what I’m doing now is the same thing I was doing 25 years ago.

Q: What lessons do you teach students on the court that translate into your college counseling?

A: Both [growing as a player and finding the right college fit] are very process-driven experiences. We talk a lot about incremental steps in the process. If the process is good, you can live with the outcomes. That’s the similar thread between the two.

Q: As the college admission process becomes increasingly competitive, how do you help students balance the stress of applications with their overall health and well-being?

A: The college process has always been about self-exploration. We try to get students to look at this process as an individual one. As my wife, the yoga teacher, would say, “Stay on your own mat; don’t look at what other people are doing.” It’s your own personal college process. As long as it’s your own process, you can do it in a healthy way. Comparison is the thief of joy.

QUESTIONS FOR SHELLY

Q: What are you most excited about in your new role as Director of Advanced Curriculum?

A: I’m excited to see this transition that we’ve been working toward come to fruition. We just finished our audit, and I’m really energized about all the proposals we’ve read. The courses sound remarkable for a high school student. I’ve been inspired by my colleagues’ proposals and the opportunity to collaborate with Dean of Teaching and Learning Joe Wagner and Assistant Head of School for Academics Nathan Molteni. Nathan literally makes everything run so smoothly, and Blair is fortunate to have his support and leadership throughout this process.

Q: You have had many different roles at Blair over the years. What has been the most rewarding?

A: Generally speaking, the relationships I have built with the students are the most rewarding. I love being someone the students trust, and they know they can come to me for anything. While most of my



Shelly (left) was awarded the Headmaster's Faculty Prize in 2022 by Head of School Peter G. Curran (right).

student relationships are formed in the classroom, I also love connecting with the young women during my spin classes in the fall. We literally become a family, and on those long fall days, when we are tired and we don't feel like working out, we push one another and have so much fun both on and off the bikes!

Q: As a psychology teacher, how do you feel about Blair's "disconnect to connect" approach to teens using cellphones and social media?

A: Ah! I have to be honest—my initial feelings on this were not "Oh, this will be amazing," but it really has been wonderful. When we constantly check our phones, we are reinforcing the dopamine hits they give us, and this could become a potentially vicious cycle. Our brains have the beautiful ability to rewire, and this is a great opportunity to do so! Personally, I enjoy that I'm taking more walks without checking my phone and realizing that a text can wait. I'm loving that separation.

QUESTIONS FOR SHELLY & JOE

Q: Your three children were born after you joined Blair Academy. What was it like raising them in this community?

Shelly: While we always missed our family back in Massachusetts, this community became our bonus family. The other faculty children felt more like Jake, Lula and Xavier's cousins than just their friends, making it a really fun place to grow up—and a wonderful place for Joe and me to raise them. I think another benefit is, our kids learned how to interact with other adults so easily, from such a young age, and we see the benefits of that now as they are older.

Joe: The only thing I'll add to that is, we both were raised in very nurturing neighborhoods that don't really exist anymore. Growing up in other peoples' homes and walking around campus safely gave our children that neighborhood feel that I think is missing in this world.

Q: How has Blair supported your professional career and development?

Shelly: I've come to where I am at Blair in a pretty nontraditional path. I worked a little bit when we moved here, but then I stepped away to raise our family, and to work at a place like Blair that supported that meant everything to me. I had the ability to come in and out of different roles here at Blair as our family evolved, and I could see all sides of the School before I committed to the place I'm in now.

It is also really motivating and refreshing to work at a place where we are all encouraged to try new things, go back to school and pursue our passions. I know as a teacher, I want my own students to chase their dreams, both in and out of the classroom, and it feels so validating that in a sense, faculty are also encouraged to do the same. [Head of School] Peter Curran has done a remarkable job with supporting all faculty in that sense. I truly feel lucky that I am excited to go to work every day.

Joe: [Former Head of School] Chan and Monie Hardwick changed the trajectory of our lives by hiring us and taking a chance on us here. We're very nontraditional hires. We were public school kids, and we are grateful for all they did for us.

Shelly: I can remember Monie pulling me aside in our Insley Hall apartment our first year here, sitting me down and having a heart-to-heart. She didn't even know me, and yet she cared so much about my well-being. It said so



The Mantegna Family (from left): Shelly, Lula '20, Xavier '24, Jake '19 and Joe.

much about the Hardwicks and how they led the School. That really has stayed with me; the kindness and compassion they showed throughout the community set the tone for the Blair we have today.

Q: In 2018, Mantegna Court was dedicated in your honor for the pivotal role you have played in so many young student-athletes' lives. Off the hardwood, how does your family support the students in your program?

Joe: You have a lot of students who are far away from home, and we try to be a home away from home for a lot of kids. I think—big picture—what you find is that you pour into people for decades and now, such great things come back. It comes back to you tenfold, and we never did anything to get something in return. The notes you get, the wedding invitations, the

lifelong friendships—it's pretty special, and they are the fruits of our labor. The court symbolizes that, but it's far more than a court.

Shelly: Blair does an amazing job of facilitating supportive relationships in this community through our advisor program. We have been further blessed with even more connections through the basketball program. I'll speak with a former student and player and he'll mention something that happened in our kitchen 20 years ago, and I'm like, "Wow! What I did two decades ago really mattered," and that keeps us going on days when we're tired. This still matters—it isn't just about making sure these students get into great colleges. It's about creating relationships and helping form these young people into young adults. After 25 years, we've made lifetime connections with people throughout the world, and we have Blair to thank for that. ■



Joe counsels the boys' basketball team on the sideline.

Blair Returns To Kenya





AS Blair graduates continue their journeys beyond the hilltop, they are encouraged to enter the world with curiosity, empathy, respect and humility. Ethical community and civic engagement are hallmarks of our transformative education, and the development of strong intercultural learning skills in our students is in alignment with our Five Fundamentals. That is why it is no surprise that *Quint Clarke '87* and *Kelvin Serem '13* have achieved remarkable feats worlds away from the Academy—and their work isn't done.

An Idea Takes Shape

This story unfolds in 2005, when Mr. Clarke founded the independent nonprofit Blair in Kenya to partner with local communities in rural Kenya to support the educational and medical needs of area children. Central to his vision was not merely providing aid but also fostering a collaboration between Americans and Kenyans. “Projects like this work best when there is a shared goal and shared responsibility,” he reflects. Back in those early days, in meetings with community leaders in a small village overlooking Lake Victoria, they identified the need for a school as a top priority. Soon, the team secured a land donation and ensured that construction and management of the school were organized locally. In January 2013, their efforts culminated in the opening of the Blair Educational Center, a private elementary school providing education as

well as an on-site health clinic and nursing care to children in Kisumu, Kenya. Mr. Clarke vividly recalls, “The school was run by volunteers who shared our goals. Because we had no overhead—everyone working on this project from both America and Kenya was a volunteer—we were able to provide the services at a greatly reduced cost.”

Despite more than 7,000 miles separating Blairstown from his hometown in the western highlands of Kenya, Blair student Kelvin Serem remained deeply committed to the needs of his community. One day early in 2013, Kelvin approached Mr. Clarke at lunch. He hoped to join his teacher's mission and bring Blair in Kenya to his own village to open a second school. With the help of Mr. Clarke and many others on a school committee that quickly formed at Blair, a five-room primary school emerged before long in Kelvin's village of Kibargoiyet, catering to grades one through eight. Equipped with a kitchen and well, the school would soon provide daily breakfast and lunch to its students. Like the Blair Educational Center, the local community spearheaded construction efforts and continues to oversee the school's day-to-day operations.

Today, the Blair Educational Center and Blair-Serem School educate more than 1,100 students from nursery school to ninth grade and sponsor 300 students' educational expenses, and a new generation of Buccaneers are experiencing Blair in Kenya's intercultural learning environment.

Blair Returns To Kenya

Returning with a New Generation

During this year's J-term, 15 students traveled to the two schools—accompanied by Mr. Clarke, fine arts department chair Kate Sykes and Spanish teacher Alex Cullen—for a cultural immersion in western Kenya with their host, Kelvin. While their school visits were punctuated by wildlife excursions to experience the beauty of Kenya firsthand, the group spent the majority of their time getting to know the children and adults of these communities and learning about the challenges and opportunities in their lives.

"This trip was an educational adventure, and the education we provide at Blair is not just in the classroom but in life," Mr. Clarke said. "It's understanding the planet we live on, human nature and social issues. I believe the students on this trip returned more worldly and educated than when they left."

Throughout the course, *Kyle Douglas '24* created a video blog of the group's daily activities that he shared with the world through social media. Putting in the effort to edit and upload his work on site gave the travelers the ability to enlighten the Blair community back home on their experiences. With the help of classmates *Carsten Viravec '24* and *John Izard '24*, Kyle composed a documentary-style video with interviews of Mr. Clarke, Kenyan students and school teachers during J-term. The interviewers asked the important questions of the village community: what were the needs and wants for the school to succeed? Blair in Kenya was able to utilize the video on their website and provide the nonprofit with an update they can share with their supporters.

"When you open the door and create these opportunities for our students, it's amazing what they can learn," Director of

Experiential and Intercultural Learning Joyce Lang commented. "We don't know what our partner communities aspire to. We can't imagine it, nor can we appreciate in advance the ways in which we will grow from the experience. We need to enter new places with humility and open ears. The first step of community and civic engagement is listening in order to partner in a way that is mutually beneficial."

Kyle described the trip as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. He went into the J-term with enthusiasm, eager to assist Mr. Clarke in updating media for Blair in Kenya. While Mr. Clarke travels to Kenya yearly, it has been several years since Blair students joined him on the trip. "My biggest takeaway was not to take anything for granted. It was incredible to see how people on a whole different continent live and how different their daily lives were from us," Kyle reflected.

Kyle's sentiments are echoed by Mr. Clarke, who underscores the significance of bridging communities and recognizing



"Quint Clarke founded Blair in Kenya decades ago. It exemplifies all of the qualities we want to see in our travel program. He listened to that community and provided support for what they wanted to do. It is very much a community-driven project."

—Director of Experiential and Intercultural Learning
Joyce Lang

shared human aspirations. “It always feels special to pull my two worlds together—Blair and Kenya. We bring our students, who are so talented and thoughtful, to another community full of talented and thoughtful students who come from a very different background,” Mr. Clarke explained. “What strikes most of us is, although there are many differences between us, our similarities are more important. At the end of the day, we all as humans want the same things and strive for the same goals.” ■

“**The goal here is to create a community that is self-sustaining and where the kids will be able to build this and carry this forward. I will feel like we’ve succeeded when we are no longer needed here.**”

—Blair in Kenya founder and history teacher
Quint Clarke '87



To view videos from the trip, visit [@blairinkenya](https://www.instagram.com/blairinkenya) on Instagram.



Celebrity Chef **JET TILA** Cooks Up Excitement & **DELICIOUS EATS**

“Interviewing Chef Tila was a wonderful experience. His answers showcased his passion for cooking and how much he enjoys sharing his recipes with others.”

—Gray Beall '26

AS acclaimed chef, entrepreneur and Food Network star Jet Tila prepared to arrive at Blair's campus in January, even Mother Nature seemed excited. An overnight dusting of snow frosted the trees and grounds, casting a beautiful display on to the hilltop for the chef's arrival. With a community of more than 500 hungry diners for lunch, beating Bobby Flay might seem less daunting than the pending lunch service, but with a bright and early start, the Los Angeles native got to work.

After meeting with Head of School Peter G. Curran and gearing up in his new Blair wear for a quintessential Arch picture, Chef Tila joined Blair Academy's dining team to tour the Romano Dining Hall's facilities and discuss the menu of some of his favorite recipes. Each station featured a special recipe—like Vietnamese banh

mi and Thai papaya salad—that can be found in Chef Tila's cookbooks, *101 Asian Dishes You Need to Cook Before You Die* and *101 Thai Dishes You Need to Cook Before You Die*. Before the doors opened for the lunch rush, Chef Tila gathered the dining hall employees for a team huddle and shared that, before he reached celebrity status, he was once in their shoes as a food service chef.

“I know what you do; I've done what you do, and I appreciate all the hard work,” Chef Tila said. “I'm here, but the hundreds of hours to get here were because of you. Know that it is very much appreciated.”

As lunch commenced, the dining hall filled with the smells of tang mein, Mongolian beef and sticky wings fresh out of the oven. Students lined up eagerly to sample it all and meet Chef Tila. He slipped effortlessly from the



role of celebrity—honoring every request for a photo in a sea of students, faculty and staff—to teacher, as he educated a crowd that gathered for a cooking demo on aromatics, cooking techniques and foundational flavors before serving up a sampling of his Thai pineapple fried rice.

After the Blair community got their fill of tantalizing cuisine, Chef Tila graciously devoted time to meeting with students one on one. *Oracle* writer **Gray Beall '26** and Blaircast podcast members **Gerald Negvesky '26** and **Gavin Santoro '24** had the opportunity to interview him for their respective publications about his career and passion for cooking. During these quiet conversations, Chef Tila candidly shared the story of his professional rise, recounting the challenges he faced in school and how the

time his grandmother spent imparting traditional Asian cooking techniques to him ultimately changed his life. He offered insights into how he manages the pressures of competition cooking, the challenges in the culinary industry, and his approach to infusing his tradition and culture into modern cooking.

Alongside collaborations with Blair's food service provider FLIK Independent School Dining to visit schools like Blair and partnering with Pei Wei Asian Kitchen to share his vision of cooking as storytelling, Chef Tila boasts an impressive career. His television appearances include *Iron Chef America*, *Chopped*, *Guy's Grocery Games* and many more. He is also the host of *Ready Jet Cook* and hosts his own radio show on KLAA in Los Angeles. ■

BOGLE SCIENCE CENTER'S J&G WING DEDICATED



Head of School Peter G. Curran and science department chair Kelly Hadden extend a warm welcome to brothers **Justin Jiang '22** (right) and **Max Gao '22** (left), who returned to Blair for the dedication of the J&G Science Wing.

The renovated Bogle Science Center stands as a spacious and cutting-edge home for Blair's learning in the sciences, offering students classrooms/labs, or CLABS, in which to study and experiment. Although the revitalized space was initially dedicated in October 2019, the School officially commemorated the opening of the building's J&G Science Wing last November. During a special ceremony to mark the occasion, Head of School Peter G. Curran extended a warm welcome to brothers **Max Gao '22** and **Justin Jiang '22** and expressed his gratitude for their family's generosity, emphasizing its role in supporting the School's continued academic success.

"Facilities like this one are state of the art and offer students incredible opportunities inside and outside of class," Mr. Curran told the assembled audience. "For this, we are immensely thankful."

Now studying at Columbia University, Max and Justin fondly reminisced about their years on the

hilltop, particularly their experiences with challenging courses in the Bogle Science Center like Integrated Science Research and AP Physics. Speaking at the dedication, Max expressed a desire to relive his time at Blair and reflected, "I spent so much of my time in these buildings....Blair gave me a strong foundation in academics and the opportunity for lifelong friendships." Justin echoed that sentiment, acknowledging the difficulty of his AP Physics Electricity and Magnetism class but highlighting how it provided him with the deep academic understanding that has set him up for success in his current physics course at Columbia.

Looking ahead, Justin expressed optimism for the building's continued impact on fellow Bucs, stating, "I hope this building in the future will help more students cultivate their scientific understanding and interest in science." ■

LAURIE LAMBERT LEADS AT THE STONELEIGH-BURNHAM SCHOOL



At Blair, Laurie (Johnson) Lambert (*left*) quickly became beloved as a theatre director whose productions, recalls her friend Rachel (Spierling) Stone, “celebrated the cast and crew rather than the director.”



Last fall, Laurie (Johnson) Lambert (*left*), a former Blair faculty member, took on the role of head at Stoneleigh-Burnham School. Joining her at the installation ceremony was her dear friend Rachel (Spierling) Stone (*right*), also a former Blair teacher and current head of Canterbury School.

The strength of Blair connections was on prominent display at the installation of former Blair faculty member Laurie (Johnson) Lambert as head of school at Stoneleigh-Burnham in Greenfield, Massachusetts, last fall. Mrs. Lambert’s transition from inspiring teacher to visionary leader comes as no surprise to those who had the privilege of working with her at Blair. In the 1990s, Ms. Johnson, as she was then known, quickly became beloved as a Blair English teacher and theatre director. Directing three productions per year, she formed close bonds with many students, so much so that students dedicated the 1992 yearbook to her “with great admiration and gratitude.” Recognized as a mentor with patience and perseverance, she brought theatre to life with her infectious spirit.

During her installation ceremony at Stoneleigh-Burnham, Mrs. Lambert was honored with an introduction from Rachel (Spierling) Stone, head of school at the Canterbury School in New Milford, Connecticut. The pair first crossed paths in 1994 when they were both young teachers at Blair, a period during which they met their husbands and formed the foundations of their careers alongside a dynamic group of fellow faculty. Since leaving the hilltop, the two have found ways to stay connected, and Mrs. Stone was especially pleased to offer her support as Mrs. Lambert assumed the role of head of school at an all-girls institution. “It is a powerful opportunity to inspire, support and advance the voices of these talented young women,” Mrs. Stone told those assembled at the ceremony. “Laurie’s career has been marked by her willingness to roll up her sleeves in order to tackle whatever and whenever the next challenge surfaces.... This is the perfect partnership.” All of us at Blair are excited to see Mrs. Lambert’s vision for the Stoneleigh-Burnham School come to life, and we look forward to cheering her on in her new role. ■

UNLEASHING THE POWER OF ENERGY, PHILANTHROPY & **THE BLAIR EXPERIENCE**



(From left) **Liza Kulka '25**, **Ann-Sophie Trinler '25**, **Jonathan Wong '21** and **Casey Gottlieb '25** network at The Power of Energy & Philanthropy event.



Josie Tetteh '26 (left) and **Genesis Medina '25** (middle) speak with former Board Chair Doug Kimmelman P'12 '13 '15 '22.

For the fortunate students attending this year's *All In & Finance Event: The Power of Energy & Philanthropy*, the evening at the Yale Club of New York City was a rare opportunity to experience the true magnitude of the Blair community. Hosted by former Head of School and current Trustee T. Chandler Hardwick III and his wife, Monie Hardwick, former Director of Advancement and Strategic Planning, the evening brought together current students with an interest in finance, energy or philanthropy and Trustees, alums, parents and friends of Blair for a lively discussion about the happenings on campus and around the world.

Casey Gottlieb '25 came away from the event reflecting upon Blair's remarkable ability to connect students with alumni and foster learning. "Through these events I have formed friendships, networked and been given internship opportunities. I am super grateful for the advancement office and all of their efforts to make Blair a better place."

After *All In* campaign events around the world, the New York City launch in January was combined with the fifth annual finance summit to bring together the power of energy and philanthropy. The evening opened with a warm welcome from Mr. Hardwick before Head of School Peter G. Curran shared the current state of affairs at the School with attendees, surrounded by the students who were there to share in the memorable moments.

Mr. Curran then introduced the evening's keynote speaker, former Board Chair Doug Kimmelman P'12 '13 '15 '22. **Josie Tetteh '26**, who is undecided about her future pursuits, found inspiration in Mr. Kimmelman's insights into the energy industry. "As someone who is not completely sure what field I want to pursue after Blair, it was an amazing opportunity to hear Mr. Kimmelman speak about his career path and the many avenues that exist in the energy field," Josie explained. "All students should take advantage of events like this to meet the extended Blair community; there is no other opportunity like it where you'll be more comfortable networking."

During his speech, Mr. Kimmelman shared his knowledge and perspective on energy as senior partner of Energy Capital Partners, a



Alumni spanning two decades came together to connect at the event. From left: **Chris Strickland '98**, **Atlas Akinyemiju '25**, **Nii-Otu Ankrah '25**, **Kaleb Nelson '25** and **Andrew Pearce '02**.



(From left) Head of School Peter G. Curran, former Board Chair Doug Kimmelman P'12 '13 '15 '22, Board Chair Maria Vinci Savettiere P'17 and former Head of School and current Trustee T. Chandler Hardwick III are "all in" for Blair.

private equity firm dedicated to investing in North America's energy infrastructure, with over \$20 billion of assets under management. Prior to founding Energy Capital in 2005, he was a partner with Goldman Sachs, where he spent 22 years in the firm's investment banking and J. Aron commodities divisions. Mr. Kimmelman spoke of the importance of reliability, affordability and security in the world of energy, and he stressed the importance of education

and energy literacy when it comes to powering our country and our world.

"Between our alumni, parents and Trustees, we have an incredibly deep bench of resources at your disposal," Board Chair Maria Vinci Savettiere P'17 advised the students in attendance at the conclusion of the presentations. "No question is too small, and no problem is too great to tap into those resources." ■

LEARNING LESSONS IN ST. LOUIS



Heading to the Convention Center from the St. Louis Arch.

The close of 2023 proved enlightening for many of Blair's faculty, staff and students dedicated to issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. In late November, a team of 10 from Blair, comprising six students and four faculty members, departed campus for two conferences in St. Louis, Missouri: the National Association of Independent School's People of Color Conference (POCC) and the Student Diversity and Leadership Conference (SDLC). The annual conferences serve as meeting places for stakeholders in independent schools, offering seminars, classes and workshops aimed at exploring equity and justice in teaching and equipping educators and students with the tools to foster healthy intercultural climates in their communities.

This year's conferences witnessed an impressive turnout with over 8,000 attendees. Distinguished speakers included the likes of filmmaker and producer Lacey Schwartz Delgado, who spoke to student attendees about using storytelling to bridge societal divides, and Simon Tam, an author, musician and activist well known for winning the landmark Supreme Court case *Matal v. Tam* in 2017.

Each day, the SDLC's student participants broke out into groups to develop cross-cultural communication skills, design effective strategies for social justice practice and learn the foundations of allyship and networking. For Blair's **Genesis Medina '25**, who studied the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brandenburg v. Ohio* with her peers, the



Student leaders (left to right) **Cheyenne Joachim '25**, **Luis Jimenez '24**, **Atlas Akinyemiju '25**, **Kady Seck '24**, **Genesis Medina '25** and **Minh Anh Vo '25** after a memorable keynote address from activist Rodney Glasgow.

exercise proved eye-opening. "There are limits to the First Amendment's protections of free speech," Genesis learned, "and they are when that speech threatens 'imminent lawless action.'" Genesis recognizes the real-world applications of these lessons, especially in the largely wild world of social media frequented by many of her peers. "It's really important to understand those boundaries."

Beyond just studying legal precedents and their impact on social justice over time, Genesis and her fellow participants found great value in the conference's ability to connect students from all over the nation on a deeper level and learn from one another. "It was a wonderful experience," she recalls. "I came away feeling empowered to break barriers in my own educational journey and to raise awareness."

Dean of Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Evan Thomas, who organized and led the Blair delegation, also emphasized the impact of making connections with fellow educators on the trip. "There's a real power in the personal connection of being with other educators who are going through a similar experience," he says. "We came away with a great deal of affirmation of what we're doing well at Blair and what is working well in other independent schools."

The conferences not only provided valuable insight into social justice practice and effective teaching strategies but also helped fulfill part of Blair's mission—to prepare our students to thrive in a diverse and complex world, one they are poised to make better. ■

BUCCANEERS



01



02



03



04

01 Kennedy Henry '25 leads the fast break for the girls' varsity basketball team against Hun. Kennedy surpassed 1,000 career points for Blair last winter.

02 Billy Dekraker '25 looks to win his wrestling match against Wyoming Seminary.

03 Swimmer **Hannah Wilson '26** set new records for Blair last season in the 100-yard backstroke and the 100-, 200- and 500-yard freestyle. The relay team of **Riley Bacinski '25, Piper Summers '24, Allie Wolff '24** and Hannah set a new record in the 200-yard freestyle at Easterns and Riley broke the School record in the 100-yard butterfly.

04 The girls' wrestling team welcomed several members of the Mongolian National Team to campus for a tour and discussion on empowering women through sports.

05 The girls' varsity squash team huddles up before their 5-2 win against Princeton Day.

06 The Blair ski team ventured to Gore Mountain in New York for an exciting preseason trip.

07 Asser Eldemerdash '26 continues to be the top player for Blair's varsity boys' squash team. The sophomore scores a point against Princeton Day.

08 LJ Saunders '25 scores a layup against St. Benedict's Prep for the boys' varsity basketball team.



05



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07



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Bucs Commit to Play Collegiate Sports

In November and February, Blair Academy celebrated senior student-athletes who made commitments to continue their athletic careers at the collegiate level next year. Look for photos from a third signing in April at www.blair.edu/sportsphotos.

“These student-athletes are leaving the Blair athletic program better than they’ve found it,” said **Paul Clavel ’88**, Blair’s Director of Athletics. “That is what we hope for among all our student-athletes who compete for the School. We wish them the best in their futures.” ■

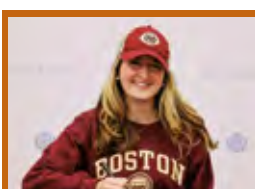
Congratulations to the following student-athletes who made commitments during the first two signing events:



Josh Anthony '24:
United States Naval Academy, Wrestling



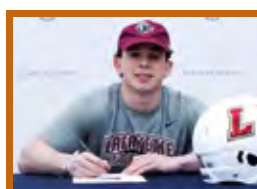
Demi Atere '24:
Stonehill College, Football



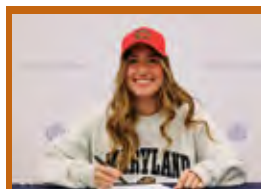
Aleksa Bazylevsky '24:
Boston College, Girls' Crew



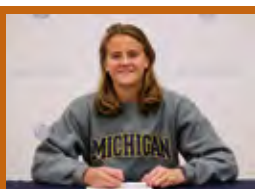
Milaw Clause '24:
University of Connecticut, Field Hockey



Luke Dale '24:
Lafayette College, Football



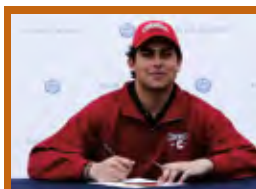
Ella Gaitan '24:
University of Maryland, Field Hockey



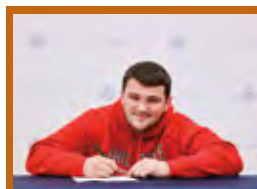
Brynne Grant '24:
University of Michigan, Girls' Lacrosse



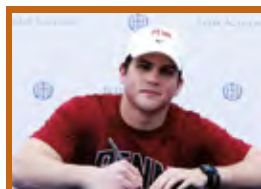
Sydney Incarnato '24:
William & Mary, Girls' Soccer



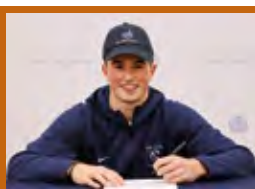
Raunak Janhal '24:
Cornell University, Football



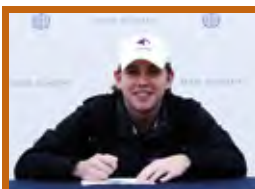
Carter Neves '24:
Ohio State University, Wrestling



Brayden Phinney '24:
University of Pennsylvania, Football



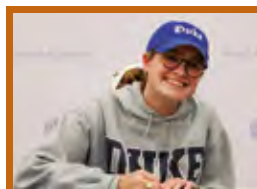
Lukas Schmid '24:
Tufts University, Boys' Basketball



Carsten Viravec '24:
Kenyon College, Boys' Lacrosse



Jayden Williams '24:
Bucknell University, Boys' Basketball



Allie Wolff '24:
Duke University, Girls' Crew

April's signing ceremony will celebrate commitments for basketball stars **Elizabeth Archer '24** and **Zeynep Ozel '24**, wrestlers **Matt Lopes '24**, **Paul Ognissanti '24** and **Logan Rozynski '24**, cross country runner **Isaac Greene '24**, and track and field standout **Ivy Gore '24**.

Winter Championship Teams

This winter brought shorter days, frosty temperatures and plenty of hardware to add to the Buccaneers' trophy case this year. Throughout the season, Blair's athletes shattered records while carrying on a tradition of success, hard work and camaraderie. Below are some of the highlights of both individual and team successes on the hilltop.

Basketball

The girls' varsity basketball team competed for another shot to become the Mid-Atlantic Prep League (MAPL) champions. During the championship match, **Kennedy Henry '25** totaled 35 points, 12 rebounds and six steals, while **Zeynep Ozel '24** and **Elizabeth Archer '24** both had double-digit performances. After the final buzzer, the team claimed their 13th consecutive MAPL championship, outscoring Mercersburg Academy 95-63.

In a head-to-head battle against Hill, the boys' basketball team also clinched the MAPL championship title, with a final score of 49-33, bringing the trophy back home to the hilltop for the sixth straight year. In an impressive performance in front of a packed home gym, the team beat St. Benedict's with a score of 53-51 to end their season as the New Jersey prep "A" state champions. Their victory, which marks the team's fifth state title, was earned with the help of a stellar 20-point game from **Deron Rippey '26**.

Wrestling

The wrestling team's dedication paid off in several big wins this year. The varsity wrestling team opened their 2023-2024 season in dominant fashion, winning the Battle of Germantown with nine individual champions. Additionally, two Bucs earned second place in their weight classes and two finished third. The team also secured the 2023 Beast of the East championship in both the girls' and boys' divisions, marking the 26th title of the event in program history and the first title for the girls' team. Their winning streak continued as they concluded 2023 as the Sam Cali Tournament champions, with four individual Bucs placing first in their weight classes. The wrestlers went 4-0 against Mercersburg, Hill, Peddie, and Lawrenceville to win another MAPL championship.



The varsity boys' basketball team ended their season with a state and MAPL championship and the girls' varsity basketball team clinched their 13th consecutive MAPL title.

At Nationals in February, Blair wrestlers brought home five individual National prep titles. **Billy Dekraker '25** won the 138 lb. weight class, **William Henckel '25** dominated at 175 lbs. and **Carter Neves '24** was the champion of the 285 lb. weight class. In the girls' division, **Corynne McNulty '27** won her first national title at 132 lbs. and **Sarah Henckel '26** won her second title at 152 lbs. Overall, the team had a strong showing against a difficult field of wrestlers.

Winter Track & Field

At MAPLs this year, several athletes displayed remarkable performances. **Isaac Greene '24** was named the MAPL Athlete of the Meet, claiming first place in both the 800-meter and 1600-meter race. **Petra Taylor '24** dominated the 200-meter event, bringing home gold, and secured second place in the 55-meter race. **Maia Frank '26** secured second in the 3200-meter race with a new personal record, breaking the school record in the process. ■



10 Things to Do in the **Blair Maker Space**

One of the missions of Blair Academy is to champion the next generation of changemakers. The School invites students to explore new, creative and entrepreneurial pathways, as well as apply in-class academic lessons to real-world experiences. On campus, such applied and interdisciplinary work often takes place in the Chiang-Elghanayan Center for Innovation and Collaboration (CECIC), which houses art studios, technology classrooms, a recording studio and a maker space. Located at the heart of campus, the center offers students state-of-the-art tools that include laser engraving, dye sublimation printers and even “cobots,” collaborative robots that students routinely use to solve problems in this space. Programs designed to encourage career exploration and extend independent research projects, set in campus locations such as the maker space, encourage students to make connections and approach learning as a lifelong process with no boundaries.

“This is a room where we foster innovation,” said Eliza Link, fine arts teacher and Director of the Romano Gallery.

Mrs. Link teaches ninth-grade seminar in the maker space, instructing new students on how to use each of the tools in the space. “The course is designed to scaffold students’ use of technology and creative problem-solving skills to help synthesize ideas in abundance.” ■

“I love the way the maker space invites you to think about your surroundings differently. The machines and tools in this place seem to ask you to consider how you can make your world a little more functional, interesting and beautiful.”

—Eliza Link, Director of Blair’s Romano Gallery

1. Brand Your Club

With more than 40 active student clubs on campus, there is a place for everyone at Blair. Students have ample opportunities to sample new interests and push their boundaries, thanks to a wide array of clubs, ranging from the academic and the artistic to the avant-garde. Interested in forming a club? Many at Blair were created by current students who found like-minded classmates and faculty members who shared their interests. What better way to promote a club on campus than custom vinyl stickers? In the maker space, students can design, print and cut vinyl for transfer to walls, windows, banners and fabric on the vinyl cutter using a computer-controlled plotter.



Atlas Akinyemiju '25 and **Kevin Shan '25** use the flat heat press in the Chiang-Elghanayan Center for Innovation and Collaboration.

2. Beat Peddie

Each November, Blair's fall sports teams face off against the Peddie School Falcons in one of the School's most beloved traditions: Peddie Day. What began in 1903 and is now New Jersey's oldest prep school football rivalry has evolved into a weeklong celebration of school spirit culminating in a "Peddie Eve" bonfire and pep rally. What better way to show Blair spirit than creating personalized swag for game day to cheer the Bucs on to victory? Using the flat heat press, students can create a design and transfer it onto a T-shirt or rally towel in the maker space, using the dye sublimation print system, which converts the ink to a gas when heated, making the design permanent and washable. Creativity and spirit will ensure the Bucs bring home the Kelley-Potter Cup next year.



Fine arts department chair **Kate Sykes** (left) guides **Liz McGinnis '20** on the laser engraving system.

3. Change the World

The potential of 3D printing is apparent in nearly every industry, from cars to fashion to healthcare. 3D printing has already been successfully used for cost-effective prosthetics, and last year, a Texas surgeon successfully implanted the first outer ear using the patient's own cartilage cells and a bioprinter, according to an article by *Fortune*. As Blair prepares students for the future in these ever-changing industries, it is vital that they have hands-on experience in the cutting-edge technology and equipment that will drive their work.

In the maker space, Mrs. Link provides instruction on three 3D printers that engineer 3D parts using ABS or PLA plastic. Ever mindful of the impact of unnecessary plastic production,

she encourages students to thoughtfully design and produce items with utility that can have a positive impact on the world. Knowledge and practice with 3D printers has real-world applications in countless industries Blair students will enter in their future education and careers.

4. Train a Robot

In the Real World Robotics class last year, students like maker space tech **Jack Gerdson '24** had the opportunity to work with a robotic arm. The experience went beyond the technical mechanics of robotics and allowed students to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios. During Jack's first year at Blair, he programmed the xArm to track his own hand movement using a motion controller while other classmates applied it to videography, using the arm to create smooth camera movements. "They have software that is designed to be very user friendly, but there's also more in-depth ways to program them," Jack explained. "It's great for precise, fast movements, repeated motions for an assembly line or a very slow but consistent pattern."



Jack Gerdson '24 makes adjustments to a robot designed by the Robotics Club at Blair.

5. Save a Species

According to the National Park Service, more than half of the 145 species of North American bats are in need of conservation efforts. That need was the theme for physics teacher Chris Thatcher's course during J-term, a 10-day immersive experience where students and teachers alike dove into a topic about which they were curious. In the maker space, students in the course "Bats & Their Homes: Why & How to Build an Effective Bat House" got to work, researching what makes a successful bat home and learning the tools available in the space to get it done, including power and hand tools as well as computer-aided design (CAD) programming with the laser cutter. As a result, the class designed and built a dozen houses that were donated to a local wildlife conservancy as well as hung around campus.

6. Study Hard

Blair Academy has begun a transition to broaden the college-level work our students have access to and move beyond traditional Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The move, carefully researched by our faculty and administrators and supported by the eight-member college board that advises Blair, will increase the number of courses that deserve the credentialing of "advanced curriculum," allowing students to increase their experiential learning and explore a depth of topics both in and outside of the classroom.

As students prepare to enroll in these advanced course offerings for fall 2024, they will need tools to keep them engaged, organized and focused in their academic pursuits. The laser engraving system in the maker space can engrave, cut and mark all types of materials, including wood, acrylic, magnets and glass. The next time students open the textbook for their advanced survey course in economics, their custom bookmark with the etched inscription "You can do it!" may very well be the extra push needed to crush the upcoming test, and the custom magnetic calendar on the dorm fridge will tell them exactly how many days left to study. Empowering students to create and design is one of the many distinct ways Blair prepares resilient, self-aware lifelong learners who go on to make meaningful contributions in their communities and the world.

"In this space, students do the really challenging work of owning their learning from start to finish. Thinking like a designer means going through the process of iteration and revision over and over until it's right."

—Eliza Link, Director of Blair's Romano Gallery

7. Build a Friendship

Living in a dorm among peers and teachers from more than 28 countries teaches students to connect and relate to others of diverse backgrounds, develop cultural awareness and resolve conflicts—all tools that will help them successfully navigate life in college and beyond. Most boarding students at Blair live with a roommate, and dorm heads ensure dorms are spirited communities conducive to study but also fun places where residents can relax and engage with their classmates and teachers. The result is a supportive environment where lifelong friendships are forged.

In the maker space, those friendships can be commemorated. Roommates in the ninth-grade seminar can design matching mugs for their room or pencil holders for their desks; friends can celebrate their connection with a keepsake ceramic mug created with the round heat press. Much like the flat press, this dye sublimation printer can apply photos or text, but the round press allows transfer onto a rounded surface, like a ceramic mug or glass.

8. Solve a Real-World Problem

Unlike the standard 3D printers in the maker space, the 3D resin printer creates pieces far more detailed, accurate down to the micrometer. The process is not as simple, Jack explains, but far more effective in cases where you need small, intricate parts with superbly high quality and detail, like robotics. “The process requires you to bathe the part in isopropyl alcohol and cure it by blasting the part with UV light in a special machine,” Jack said. Resin printers are a popular tool for game pieces, architectural designs, and dental and jewelry modeling.

9. Support a Hypothesis

Every spring, Blair’s student scientists share their research and projects at the School’s Science Poster Expo in the CECIC forum. The annual event mimics a professional scientific conference and showcases the work of all grade levels in a wide variety of science classes. Students work on their projects—some of which are signature assessments—for two to three weeks or longer before bringing them to life in the maker space with the use of the wide-format color printer. The technology allows students to create a visual representation of a year’s



Jackie Neary '24 constructs a home for local wildlife in the maker space during the J-term course “Bats & Their Homes: Why & How to Build an Effective Bat House.”

worth of research—up to 24 inches wide—to present their results to their teachers and classmates.

In classes like Foundations of Independent Science Research (ISR), student scientists use these posters to present their research proposals before the teachers and administrators on the ISR Committee, a process science department chair Kelly Hadden compares to a real-world research grant proposal. If selected, students will spend the next year in this one-and-a-half-year-long student-directed science research class conducting their independent research. The success of the ISR program at Blair became the basis for many of the advanced seminar courses faculty have developed in preparation for the transition to Blair’s advanced curriculum in fall 2024.

10. Preserve History

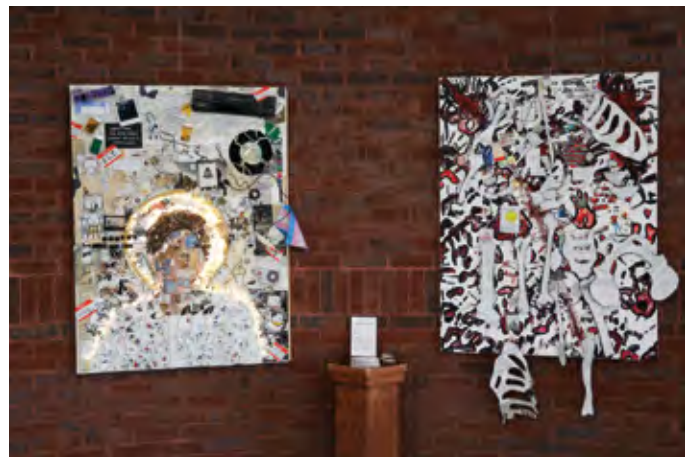
3D scanners have the ability to digitize a physical object to save, share and edit on a computer. They have real-world applications in a multitude of industries, creating prototypes and ensuring quality control and reverse engineering. Archaeologists use the technology to 3D scan artifacts and entire excavation sites, while museums can replicate and restore damaged items or recreate 3D art pieces for a more hands-on, immersive experience. Students at Blair can create a digital archive of their time on the hilltop or preserve pieces of Blair history since its founding in 1848 for the next generation of Bucs to enjoy. ■

Pictures Worth a **Thousand Words**

Blair's talented artists and musicians have delivered a season of unforgettable performances. Here, the cast of *They Promised Her the Moon* joins Blair's Singers, jazz band, and Symphony

Orchestra during the Fall Concert. Also pictured are snapshots from the fall student art exhibition, along with a glimpse of performances at Winter Gathering. ■







Blair on the Road: **Gatherings Around the Globe**

In recent months, Blair hosted a series of off-campus events, providing families and alumni with the perfect platform to rekindle connections with classmates, faculty and their alma mater. National highlights included a vibrant Oktoberfest celebration in New York City, focused group discussions tailored to young alumni in Boston, New York and Washington, D.C., and well-attended receptions in Dallas and Austin, Texas.

Across the globe, Blair's advancement and admission teams hosted events in Bermuda, China, South Korea and Hong Kong. In March, Blair's Women's Symposium successfully brought the extended community together virtually, delving into themes of health and well-being during a three-day event. Several gracious Trustees and members of the Blair family stepped forward to host receptions in support of the *All In* campaign, spanning locations that included Philadelphia, held by Susan Yee

P'23; Boston, by Thomas and **Molly (Bracken) Dunne '93**; Woodside, California, by Peter and **Victoria Bailey '97**; New York City, by former Head of School T. Chandler Hardwick III and his wife, former Director of Development and Strategic Planning Monie Hardwick; and two receptions in Florida, hosted by Nevitt and **Jim Jenkins '66** and Sarah and **Dan Smith '09** with Eileen and **Barry Smith '67**.

"The strength of the bonds made because of the School have been on display, and it is what makes Blair such a special place," noted Director of Advancement Cara Mohlmann. "We love watching members of the Blair family resume connections as if no time has passed."

Here, enjoy a few moments, captured from the many gatherings that marked the close of 2023 and the start of 2024, providing opportunities to proudly wave the Blair flag. ■



Olin & Rhoda Cramer P'72 '75 Leave a Lasting Legacy at Blair



Olin and Rhoda Cramer P'72 '75 were generous and loyal benefactors who supported Blair's mission to make a life-changing education accessible to students of varying backgrounds.

Olin and Rhoda Cramer P'72 '75 held a deep love for Blair Academy and were enormously proud to have their youngest children, **Carl '72** and **Anne '75**, receive their high school education at Blair. After their children graduated, Olin and Rhoda continued to be generous and loyal benefactors, supporting the School's mission to make a life-changing education accessible to a wide range of students from various backgrounds, regardless of their financial circumstances. When the family lost Rhoda in 1990, Olin maintained a strong connection to Blair, visiting campus for rounds of golf and remaining particularly knowledgeable of current events on the hilltop because of his children's continued service to the School—Carl as a former Board of Governors member and class representative and Anne as a current Board of Trustees member.

Sadly, Olin passed away at the age of 98, and to cement his and Rhoda's undying support to Blair, he left a bequest to the School in his will. With the generous gift of \$1 million, their children thought it would be most fitting to give a portion to the construction of the future Center for Health and Well-Being and the remainder to establish a scholarship in their parents' name.

This new facility connected to Hardwick Hall will allow our health services and counseling teams to occupy the same space for the first time in School history and will include areas where students can access health resources, study and socialize. Anne feels that this new project would have aligned with her mother's values. "Mom made everything happen for the family, and she was always alert to how her children were doing," Anne explained. "She saw us through a lot of challenges and would be there for us no matter what, and that really resonates with Blair's mission for the Center."

“Our father would want to see that the money is being well spent, but Mom would be ‘all in’ to the higher purpose of health and well-being,” Carl agreed. The Cramers’ gift, along with many others from loyal supporters, will ensure the success of Blair’s newest building project. In honor of their contribution, the second floor wellness area in the new building will be named after Olin and Rhoda Cramer.

To Anne and Carl, the choice to not only support the health and well-being of Blair’s community but also create a scholarship for students in financial need was important in honoring their parents’ legacy. Olin and Rhoda were both first-generation college attendees at a time when, post-Depression, the ability to go to college was remarkable. They both placed a high value on education, especially a Blair education, and instilled it in all of their children. For most of his life, Carl admitted he had believed that it was Olin who had arranged for him to attend Blair, to learn much later that his mother was the driving force behind the decision.

“They were quite impressed with the quality of education that Blair offered,” Carl said of his parents’ love for the School. “My father strongly believed an education was one of the few things that, once you have it, can’t be taken away from you. That was a recurring refrain from him in terms of encouraging me to ensure my own children are well educated.”

Anne shared how community-minded her parents were throughout their lives and how Blair became a part of their community. While her children were at Blair, Rhoda, in particular, became close with the faculty and appreciated the level of attention and quality of instruction she saw on campus. “My parents were gracious to all people,” Anne remembered fondly. “They shared the sense of community Blair has, and it was something they always wanted to support.”

Olin continued to hold the Blair community close to his heart in his later years. He was quick to check in with Anne as a member of the Board about financial aid and the opportunities offered to Blair students. In planning his gift, he was enthusiastic about supporting scholarship but didn’t want to restrict his gift, trusting the decision to his children and the Board.



The Cramer family celebrates **Carl ‘72**’s 2022 Alumnus of the Year award: (from left) Carl’s son-in-law and daughter, Michael Carlin and Christine Cramer, Carl, and **Anne ‘75**.

“Our parents were well off, but they lived modestly, saving their money and investing it wisely,” Carl explained, when asked what future scholarship recipients should know about Olin and Rhoda. “They invested wisely so recipients would be able to have the opportunity to receive a world-class education, understanding that it’s not what you have in life that matters, it’s how you live it.”

Anne and Carl hope that the recipients of their parents’ scholarship will take advantage of their Blair experience and one day share their family’s loyalty to the School. With Olin and Rhoda’s bequest, in conjunction with the family’s many other contributions to Blair, the Cramers’ impact continues to shape Blair’s history and future. ■

“My parents were gracious to all people. They shared the sense of community Blair has, and it was something they always wanted to support.”

—Board of Trustees Secretary
Anne Cramer ‘75

INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF GOVERNORS SPOTLIGHT

THEY say it takes a village. Beyond Blair's hilltop, the School is fortunate to have the support of an extended community—alumni, current and former parents, friends and former faculty—that stretches to all corners of the world. As today's fast-paced society grows exceedingly global, the important work of our International Board of Governors transcends borders to deliver on Blair's mission: to nurture engaged members of a diverse community into global citizens contributing to the greater good.

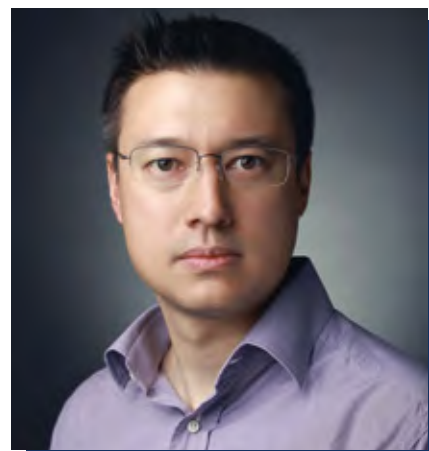
"School ties are strong across the United States, but I find it really interesting how much stronger those ties bind when students, alumni and parents are farther from campus," International Board of Governors co-chair and Blair Trustee **William Bao Bean '91, P'23 '25** shared. "In an increasingly fluid world, shared values, shared culture and shared community become all the more important."

William has been co-chair of the International Board of Governors since its inception in 2021. The group has met

with the purpose of building an even stronger Blair Academy brand across the globe, speaking firsthand with families about their international experiences with the School, attracting the best prospective students from around the world and increasing philanthropic support. Though William grew up in Blairstown and remembers carpooling to school with Blair faculty children like the Millers, the Underwoods and the Amermans, he spent most of his career in Asia.



Ahra Cho '03 and fellow alumni gather in South Korea for a meeting with Chief Advancement Officer Craig Hall, Head of School Peter G. Curran and Associate Director of Advancement Susan Long.



International Board of Governors co-chair and Blair Trustee **William Bao Bean '91, P'23 '25**.

In an increasingly fluid world, shared values, shared culture and shared community become all the more important.

—**William Bao Bean '91, P'23 P'25**, co-chair of the Blair International Board of Governors and Blair Trustee

“Internationally based alumni and their parents often find it hard to get back to campus,” William explained. “The IBOG seeks to help the Blair family across the world stay in touch. I recently caught up with **Chris Prince-Gunson '98**, and although we didn’t overlap in school, we shared experiences working in Asia and now the Middle East. It’s been great bringing the Blair community together from Shanghai to Singapore to Seoul.”

This year, the International Board of Governors welcomed **Ahra Cho '03** as co-chair alongside William. Ahra is chief operating officer of Ark & Partners and resides in South Korea. She holds a BS in finance and marketing from New York University’s Leonard N. Stern School of Business. Ahra credits her time at Blair with fostering crucial friendships in her life that continue to thrive and believes that her transformative experience at Blair laid the groundwork for the person she is today.

“I am excited that I can assist the School in building a stronger Blair Academy brand in my home country,” Ahra said. “While buildings and facilities have changed over the years—and the academic curriculum has become more diverse—Blair remains an institution that strives to move forward to become a better school.”

As the International Board of Governors propels Blair Academy into the future, the echoes of shared experiences reverberate across continents. The School’s commitment to fostering a diverse community of global citizens is evident in the broad network of alumni, parents and friends, united by the common thread of Blair. William and Ahra’s leadership exemplifies the strength of these connections, and we look forward to all the ways they will nurture the ties that bind the Blair family worldwide. ■



“I am excited that I can assist the School in building a stronger Blair Academy brand in my home country.”

—**Ahra Cho '03**, co-chair of the Blair International Board of Governors

DON FEDOR '69 HONORS HIS TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION WITH A PLANNED GIFT



Don Fedor '69 poses at Blair for his senior portrait.

"Although the need to change is often quite clear, what needs changing is often much less so, and how to create meaningful and lasting change is a totally different and more difficult matter," **Don Fedor '69** wrote in his first book, *Change the Way You Lead Change: Leadership Strategies That REALLY Work*, co-authored with his colleague, David Herold.

Forty-two years prior to his book's publication, Don began his journey at Blair Academy, driven by a desire for that clear change he wrote about and the hope that the Academy would enlighten him on the what and the how. Arriving at the hilltop, he brought with him an undiagnosed reading disability that caused him to struggle academically. After Don spent eighth and ninth grades in military school, former Headmaster Jim Howard

granted his request to enter Blair as a sophomore rather than repeating ninth grade in the fall of 1966. Don offered, "I asked for the chance to see if I could do it, and thankfully the Academy was willing to let me try."

Mr. Howard's belief in him encouraged Don to rise to the academic challenge, and he found inspiration from faculty like Larry Jolene and Foster Doan, who brought their subjects to life. "I hit the weight room, ran the golf course, grew out my hair and found genuine friends," Don recalled. "I transformed so much that my own mother didn't recognize me when she came to visit—in a good way!"

Don thrived with the opportunity the Blair faculty gave him to succeed after prior disappointments. "Initially I struggled, but the Blair community was supportive and exactly what I needed at the time," Don explained. "They challenged me, and Blair was ultimately the right fit for me." He learned that, "When you run into difficulty, focus on what you're really good at, just plow forward, and you will be okay!" Guided by his experience at the School and his natural determination, Don found his way to a fulfilling career and self-realization.

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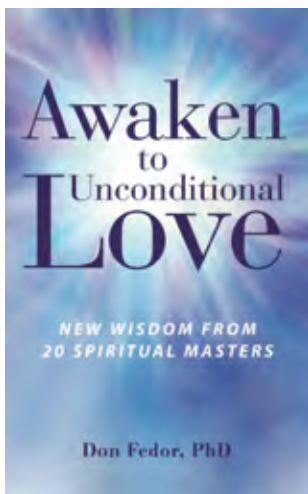
"I have immense gratitude for what Blair has given me. It was a major transition period, and I am appreciative of what the School did for me. I was happy to give back when the opportunity arose."

—**Don Fedor '69**

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Generously utilizing a charitable gift annuity, **Don Fedor '69** provided vital support to Blair while securing a stable source of income.



An accomplished author, Don's books delve into the transformative power of flashes of insight, encouraging readers to discover opportunities for peace and to approach life's challenges with openness.

In his senior year at Blair, Don was grateful to serve as a prefect in Locke Hall. He did his best to be a role model for younger students and tried to keep them out of trouble. Long after leaving Blair, as a professor at Georgia Tech in 2004, Don had dinner with **Dennis Peachey '62**, former assistant headmaster, along with some other Blair alums. He was heartened to hear from another alum that his efforts had made a student feel connected for the first time at the School.

Don was delighted to reconnect with the School and moved to give back to the institution that gave him such valuable life lessons. "I have immense gratitude for what Blair has given me," he said. "It was a major transition period, and I am appreciative of what the School did for me. I was happy to give back when the opportunity arose." At that time, Don was, coincidentally, in a position to invest some assets. After hearing about charitable gift annuities from *Consumer Reports*, he called Dennis to establish an annuity with Blair. "Charitable gift annuities can be a good option if you want a stable source of income and to make a charitable gift to Blair," Don shared.

Now retired in southwest Florida, Don is professor emeritus, Georgia Institute of Technology. He received his PhD in organizational behavior from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. Don has training in Theta Healing™, is a longtime member of Edgar Cayce's Association for Research and Enlightenment, and is a student of A Course in Miracles. Don also authored *Awaken to Unconditional Love: New Wisdom from 20 Spiritual Masters* and *The Ultimate Quest: Awakening to the Power of Love*, which are both available on Amazon, and has more books on his agenda. ■

Interested in learning more? To join Don and other members of the John C. Sharpe Society of planned givers, please contact Director of Advancement Cara Mohlmann to discuss including Blair in your estate plans. If you have already made a provision for the School, let us know by contacting Ms. Mohlmann at mohlmc@blair.edu.

1942	Robert M. Fuller December 12, 2023 Hilton Head Island, South Carolina	1956	Richard A. Young November 27, 2023 Greenwich, Connecticut	1965	Thomas M. Carhart July 14, 2023 East Longmeadow, Massachusetts
1945	James E. Roeber November 2, 2023 Spokane, Washington	1957	Harry Mason Fackert III August 27, 2023 Concord, Massachusetts	1967	Philip W. Salembier January 2024 Paonia, Colorado
1948	Wilfred M. Potter August 6, 2023 Scottsdale, Arizona		Richard D. Zipes November 23, 2023 Plantation, Florida	1968	Arnold M. Fertig September 4, 2023 Melrose, Massachusetts
1951	Juan E. Marchant June 10, 2023 Colombia	1958	Mahlon "Sandy" Apgar IV December 11, 2023 Boston, Massachusetts		Nigel J. Yorwerth March 2023 Bozeman, Montana
1954	John D. Transue 2022 Fairview, Texas		Fereydoun "Fred" Elghanayan September 23, 2023 Chardon, Ohio	1980	Michael R. Osborne December 24, 2023 Neptune, New Jersey
1955	Franklin A. Darius August 21, 2023 Kennesaw, Georgia	1959	Richard C. Clow October 20, 2023 Mount Pleasant, South Carolina	1992	Brian Hagen Greer December 6, 2023 New York, New York
			Todd K. Vaughan July 11, 2022 Boca Grande, Florida	Friend	Margery H. Thomas January 18, 2024 Kalamazoo, Michigan

1942

Robert M. Fuller. Arriving at Blair in the fall of 1940, Bob quickly made his mark. Known for his quiet demeanor and passion for photography, the "camera fiend" became vice president of the Camera Club. He also lent his talents to the choir and Glee Club and played varsity hockey his senior year. Upon graduation, Bob joined the U.S. Army and served for three-and-a-half years before enrolling at Lehigh University, where he graduated in 1949. During this time, Bob and his wife, Marian, were married, and they went on to spend 78 years together. Bob began his career as an insurance agent with Provident Mutual Life Insurance Company, and quickly became manager of the northeast Pennsylvania agency. After a number of years in the insurance field, he associated himself with Lincoln Investment Planning, working with his daughter, Debbie, and offering financial advice until his retirement at the age of 85. In retirement, Bob enjoyed hobbies including crafting wooden boats, furniture making, tending to his lawn and meeting

up with friends. Throughout his life he was a loyal supporter of Blair, served as class representative and faithfully attended class reunions. Bob and Marian were members of the First Presbyterian Church in Bethlehem and later Grace Church Bethlehem. They moved to Hilton Head in 2020 to be closer to family and enjoyed celebrating special events together. Bob will be remembered as a "shining example of the Greatest Generation." He was predeceased by his daughter, Debbie, and just before his passing, Marian. Bob is survived by his daughter, Wendy, and her husband, as well as his grandchildren, including grandson **R. Hunter Lippincott '99**, and great-grandchildren.

1945

James E. Roeber. On campus for three years, Jim was an integral part of the classroom, stage and athletic arenas at Blair. He managed the varsity wrestling team, wrote for *The Breeze*, was a member of the International Club,

performed with the choir and band, and played soccer. In the 1945 ACTA, classmates wrote, "Although one of the youngest members of the class, Jim can nevertheless hold his own in whatever he undertakes." Jim attended Cornell University, where he met his wife of 73 years, Jean, and earned his BA in 1949. After graduation, Jim embarked on a multi-career path, including teaching and managerial work at General Electric, the aerospace industry and General Steel & Wire. During this time, he earned his MBA at Xavier University in 1954 and raised five children with Jean. Eventually, he settled into the commercial real estate industry, obtained his broker's license, and worked as a commercial real estate broker in California and, finally, Spokane, Washington. He was active in the Catholic Church, serving as the music director as well as liturgical ministries and building committees. After their children became adults, Jim and Jean enjoyed traveling and exploring the world. Jim is survived by Jean and his large and loving family.

Friend of Blair

Margery H. Thomas. Mother of former director of development Monie Hardwick, mother-in-law of former Head of School T. Chandler Hardwick III and generous Blair benefactor, Margery Thomas was a lifelong supporter of education. After spending her younger years in Cincinnati, Ohio, Marge attended the Chatham Hall School in Virginia and graduated from The University of Cincinnati with a BA in economics. At that time, she was notably the only female student to major in economics. Post-graduation, Marge worked in advertising in New York City, where she met and married her husband of 55 years, Gerard Thomas. They settled in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1957, where they remained throughout their lives. Both Marge and Gerry cared deeply about the need for strong public education. Gerry served as president of the school board, and Marge volunteered as a reading tutor. They believed that learning to read was the single most important skill students needed to succeed in school and life, and in 2007 they founded The Thomas Family Early Literacy and Reading Recovery Fund for Kalamazoo Public

Schools. Over the years, that fund has provided teacher training and support, benefiting thousands of children and teachers.

During Monie's time at Blair, Marge and Gerry established two funds to support scholarship and faculty development in 2007. The Gerard and Margery Thomas Scholarship was created with the purpose of helping promising young people who would not otherwise have the means or opportunity to attend Blair. Their hope was that these deserving students would benefit from a Blair education and would ultimately go on to serve others and give back to their communities. The Hardwick Teaching Fellowship was established as an annual award for a promising new faculty member as a means of encouraging and supporting a lifelong career in teaching.

Marge will be remembered for her strong character and quiet generosity, her love of competitive athletics, and her love of family. She was predeceased by Gerry in 2010, and is survived by their three children and spouses, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

1948

Wilfred M. Potter. Dr. Wilfred "Bud" Potter attended Blair for his last two years of high school, coming from Washington, New Jersey. He served as his class vice president, as well as captain of the wrestling team his senior year. He was also the vice president of the International Society, ran for the track team, wrote in the *Stylus* and performed with the choir and Glee Club. His wrestling career continued at Johns Hopkins University, where he not only resumed his role as captain but also secured the title of Mason Dixon wrestling champion in both 1950 and 1952, all while pursuing his biology degree. Bud went on to Temple University School of Medicine where he received his MD. After interning for one year at St. Luke's Hospital in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Bud and his wife, Joan, moved to Rochester, Minnesota, where he completed his residency in urology at the Mayo Clinic. In 1963, the couple moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, where Bud lived for the rest of his life. In Scottsdale, he managed a

successful private practice for 34 years. Additionally, he served as chief of staff at Scottsdale Memorial Hospital in 1972 and 1986, and chairman of surgery in 1970, and gave his time on the Board of Directors from 1987 to 1996. Deeply involved in several committees and associations, Bud was recognized with awards for his volunteerism and service to public health. His passion for sports remained with him throughout his life, and the athlete was also active in tennis, golf, skiing, biking and pickleball. He completed 27 marathons, including one New York City and three Boston marathons. In 1980, he set an Arizona state record for his age group with a time of 2:49:24. He was also an active member of his church and enjoyed traveling with Joan, his children and grandchildren. He will be fondly remembered for his sense of humor and fashionable bow ties. Bud was predeceased by Joan and is survived by his four children and their spouses, four grandchildren and brother,

Charles Potter II '64.

1951

Juan E. Marchant. Juan was a five-year Buc when he graduated from Blair. During his senior year, Juan achieved honor roll while participating in Varsity "B," varsity soccer, varsity swimming and tennis. He was the president of the Spanish Club in both 1950 and 1951. Juan also shared his writing talent in *The Breeze* and penned his own column called "Latin American Laughs." After Blair, Juan returned to his home country of Colombia and began his studies in architecture. He moved to Lima, Peru, and graduated from the National University of Engineering in 1962. Following that, Juan received a fellowship and earned a master's degree in urban planning from Yale University in 1964. In 1972, he received a fellowship from the British Council to study urbanism in the United Kingdom. Juan returned to Colombia and worked in his private practice as an architect and as a professor of architecture at various universities in Cali, Colombia. Throughout the course

of his career, he received honors from the College of Architects of Peru and the Colombian Society of Architects. For his 50th Reunion, Juan wrote, "Since 1965 I had many professional and civic satisfactions," but went on to describe the civil and governmental unrest that plagued Colombia for 20 years and sadly prevented him from returning to campus as he had planned. Juan will be lovingly remembered by his family and is survived by his children and grandchildren.

1954

John D. Transue. During his one year at Blair, John left a lasting impression as an entertainer, particularly for playing a "bit of hot piano." He participated in the choir, Glee Club, Dance Band, Dramatics Club, and the football, wrestling and baseball teams. Despite his short time on campus, he remained a loyal supporter of the School throughout his life. After Blair, John went on to Penn State University for two years before joining the Army Security Agency and becoming a Russian language translator stationed in Germany. In 1961, John entered Muhlenberg College, majoring in mathematics, and after graduation he embarked upon a career with IBM in 1964. John worked at IBM for 30 years in several roles, including systems engineer, sales and marketing. He retired to Atlanta, Georgia, where he enjoyed life with his wife, Joan, gardening and landscaping, and cultivating a fishpond, which was a special source of pride. In 2005, they moved to a community near Plano, Texas, and, in 2009, John served as the secretary of his golf association. The couple enjoyed spending time and traveling together with their three children and grandchildren. John was predeceased by Joan, and is survived by his children and grandchildren.

1955

Franklin A. Darius. A local day student, Frank grew up in Blairstown on Hope Spring Farm and spent four years attending Blair while balancing life on the farm. The 1955 ACTA writes that Frank "kicked, wrestled, and ran his way through four years on the hill." His senior activities included singing in the Glee Club, choir and Quartet, participating in Dramatics Club, Varsity "B," varsity wrestling and spring track. In 1953, he earned fifth place in the Headmasters and Coaches Tournament for track and, in 1954, came in second place in the Headmasters and Coaches Tournament for wrestling. Frank continued wrestling at Mitchell College for a stint before attending the University of New Haven, where he earned a BS degree in industrial engineering. He served in the U.S. Army Reserve, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve and Civil Air Patrol and was an auxiliary police officer during his time in Guilford, Connecticut. He began his career with U.S. Motors before working in Connecticut for the Aerospace Division of Universal Oil Products and Smith-Gates Corporation/Adirondack Wire and Cable Company. In 1992, Frank acquired A Framing Place, an art gallery and custom-picture framing company, which he ran for 15 years. He also owned and managed four rental properties in Connecticut during this time. Frank's passion for flying began in the Civil Air Patrol, and he owned a couple of aircraft. He also continued singing actively in his church choir. Frank and his wife, Nancy, shared 65 years of marriage and raised five children together. Frank is survived by Nancy, his children, 15 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

1956

Richard A. Young. Spending two years at Blair, Richard quickly rose in the ranks and was the proud president of his class upon graduation. He enjoyed the council meetings and noted that his favorite

pastime was playing football and driving his Ford. His greatest dislike was losing an argument to faculty member Henry Cowan, a practice for his future career as a lawyer. Richard graduated from Brown University with his BA in 1960 and went on to earn his JD from the University of Virginia Law School in 1963. His time spent in the Army fostered a commitment to serving his country that continued throughout his life. After a stint with a larger law firm, Richard joined Martin Clearwater & Bell, specializing in malpractice cases, and retired there as a managing partner. Richard dedicated himself to his alma mater, supporting the Blair Fund, serving on his 50th and 60th Reunion committees, and serving as a member of the John C. Sharpe Society of planned givers. Post-retirement, Richard was active in his community and involved with various charities. He and his wife, Carol, enjoyed traveling and going on cruises, most notably a trip to the Galapagos Islands. He also enjoyed photography, tennis, cars and spending time with his family. Richard is survived by Carol, four children, eight grandchildren and his brother, **Vincent Young '65**.

1957

Harry Mason Fackert III. Mason attended Blair for one year and, before graduating, was part of the varsity football, swim and tennis teams. Throughout his life, Mason was a loyal Blair Fund supporter, frequently making generous gifts in honor of former faculty member Henry Cowan. In 1961, he joined the U.S. Army infantry and assumed the role of Army press liaison with the John F. Kennedy White House. He held the honor of being part of the Presidential Honor Guard, serving in this capacity at JFK's funeral. Following his Army service, Mason attended Drake University, where he earned his English degree. Fueled by a passion for publishing, he managed over 24

business publications. In 1987, he brought his goals to fruition, becoming founder and CEO of Concord Ventures, LLC, in Massachusetts. In Concord, Mason and his wife of 61 years, Lou, were active in the community's Concord Country Club and with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Concord Museum and the Thoreau Society. They were also faithful members of the First Parish Church of Concord. Mason is survived by Lou, five children and four grandchildren.

Richard D. Zipes. A discus-throwing varsity champion in track and field, Richard spent a full four years at Blair. His senior year, Richard served as president of the Camera Club, treasurer of the Varsity "B," sports editor of *The Breeze*, writer for the ACTA and co-captain of the varsity basketball team. Richard earned the Photography Prize in 1956, foreshadowing his impressive and visionary future in the world of architecture. After Blair, Richard graduated from Rutgers University, served in the Coast Guard from 1958 to 1959 and earned his BS from New York University in 1962. He began his career in real estate, managing multi-family apartments in the greater New York area. In 1977, Richard changed to commercial real estate and co-founded Omni Development. Under his leadership and thanks to his passion for architecture, the company received acclaim for revitalizing downtown Albany, New York, and redefining the skyline of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Notably, they introduced the city's first luxury high rise, The Las Olas River House. Richard was a resident of both New York and Florida, which began as a seasonal residency. In his downtime, he enjoyed playing tennis, gardening and spending time with his family and dog. Richard is survived by his wife of 30 years, Denise, his children and grandchildren.

1958

Mahlon "Sandy" Apgar IV. After attending Blair for two years, Sandy was a true lifelong Buc. While on campus he wrote for *The Breeze* and performed onstage with the choir, Glee Club and band. He was active in the International Society, Omicron Kappa Delta, Press Club and Bridge Club, and ran for winter and spring track. A natural student, Sandy established strong relationships with his teachers in the classroom and achieved the honor roll. He continued his education at Dartmouth College, earning his BA in 1962 before serving as a U.S. Army Intelligence Captain for three years. He then went on to attend Oxford University and graduate school at Harvard University, where he received his MBA in 1968. Throughout his career, Sandy consulted and penned many publications on real estate, housing and urban policies. In 1980, Sandy was appointed to the National Building Museum's Board of Trustees in Washington, D.C., and from 1998 to 2001, he worked as Assistant Secretary of the Army under President Clinton. He was later appointed to the U.S. Department of State's Advisory Committee on International Economic Policy. Sandy was honored several times in his life. In 1993, he was appointed a Fellow by His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and, in 2017, he was named a Life Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He was also awarded the 2018 James Felt Award for Creative Counseling from the Counselors of Real Estate in Chicago. Sandy was a supporter of the Blair Fund, scholarships, faculty housing, student housing and sponsoring two awards—The Robert F. Harris Memorial Trophy, established in 1958, and The Apgar Award for Teaching Excellence, established in 1993. The Harris Trophy is awarded annually to a graduating senior for special interest and outstanding achievement in the study of English literature, named after faculty member, Robert Harris, who

tragically passed away in the spring of 1958. Sandy and his wife, Anne, also gifted the common room furnishings in Annie Hall, a project that Anne was greatly involved in completing. Sandy continued to be engaged with Blair throughout his life, including speaking at Society of Skeptics lectures with his daughter, **Sarah Apgar '98**, and was particularly proud to have been able to attend his 65th Reunion this past June. Sandy will be remembered fondly by his classmates and is survived by Anne, his children and grandchildren.

Fereydoun Elghanayan. Fereydoun and his cousin, **Henry Elghanayan '58**, arrived at Blair together in 1955. Known as "Fred Elga" to his classmates, Fred dedicated himself to upholding the academic excellence characteristic of Blair and also enjoyed time in the choir, Webster Society, Bridge Club and running for winter track. Henry shared that they spent many years together at boarding schools and traveled back to his parents' house often. He described Fred as "a kind, gentle boy who adapted well to school despite the challenges of being in a foreign country, so far from his own family—a measure of his admirable resilience." After graduating from Blair, Fred studied business administration at Babson College, earning his BS in 1962. During his time in college, Fred met and married his wife of 63 years, Eliane, after a stop in Paris one summer on his way home to Iran. Fred and Eliane lived in Tehran, Iran, after he graduated from Babson, and he worked for the family business. They had three children there before leaving in 1979. After settling in Ohio, Fred then began a successful career in real estate, focusing on rural properties and developing a special expertise in horse properties. Fred's strong family connection to Blair includes many cousins: **Henry '58, Tom Elghanayan '62, Fred Elghanayan '66, Jeff Elghanayan '72, Philip Elghanian '79**, Steven

Elghanayan P'15 and Steven's daughter, **Sophia Elghanayan '15**. Fred is survived by Eliane, his children, grandchildren and extended family.

1959

Richard C. Clow. Dick spent three years at Blair, including one as a post-grad. During his time on the hilltop, he displayed versatile interests, serving as captain of the JV swimming team and in the Dramatics club, Varsity "B," cheerleading, and the JV soccer and JV tennis teams. After serving in the U.S. Army and attending Michigan State, Dick received his BS from Long Island University. He became an executive trainee at Macy's, where he met and married his wife, Susan. Dick started at Josiah Wedgwood and continued to work in the dinnerware industry for 20 years. Later, Dick moved onto the financial services industry, where he continued his education and then specialized in retirement advising. He remained a loyal supporter of Blair and an engaged alum throughout his life. He will be remembered for his optimistic energy, quick wit, generous laughter, and love of and skill for making and sharing a good cocktail with family and friends. Dick is survived by his three children, grandchildren, granddogs and former wife, Susan, who remained a lifelong friend and supporter.

1965

Thomas M. Carhart. Coming from South Africa and following in the footsteps of his uncle, **Laurence Carhart 1924**, Tom spent his upper two years at Blair. Outside the classroom, Tom would be seen on the varsity soccer field, singing in the Glee Club and participating in the Camera Club. Tom graduated from University of Connecticut with a bachelor of science degree in 1969. He worked as an accountant and consultant with Rauker, Scheinfeldt, Carhart, Malone and, in 2004, became owner and operator of Cahart

Associates, Inc., a tax preparation and accounting service. Many of Tom's clients became close friends through the years. In his free time, he enjoyed woodworking and traveling, especially voyaging on Viking Cruises. Tom was a supporter of the Blair Fund and his class scholarship. He is survived by his wife of 38 years, Frances, two children and their spouses, grandchildren and two brothers, including **James Carhart '71**.

1967

Philip W. Salembier. Phil spent four formative years on the hill, including one with his cousin, **David Salembier Jr. '64**. Outside the classroom, Phil immersed himself in various activities, serving on the Chapel Committee, Press Club and holding the title of the Secretary-Treasurer of the Varsity "B." On the Student Council, he served as a prefect and excelled as captain of both the varsity swimming and varsity tennis teams. He was an outstanding math scholar as well as a drummer for Blair's rock band. Phil attended the University of Virginia and graduated with a BA in anthropology in 1971. In 1976, Phil married his wife, Janice, with whom he would raise three children. He completed his education at the University of Utah, graduating in 1982 with an MS in architecture. For over 25 years, Phil worked in the architectural field, specializing in computer graphic programming, before pivoting to focus on volunteer work with The Nature Conservancy. Through this work, he and Janice spent seven years traveling around the United States volunteering and providing service on farms. Their experiences eventually led them to settle near the Rocky Mountains in Paonia, Colorado. Beyond his professional pursuits, Phil enjoyed playing tennis and music, bicycling, cooking and writing. He wrote at least eight novels, most recently *My Spaceship*, which was published in July 2023. Phil once said about his writing, "I do it for fun, not profit." Phil

is survived by Janice, his children and grandchildren and will be remembered by the many communities with which he connected.

1968

Arnold M. Fertig. Rabbi Arnold Fertig was known as "Arnie" for the two years he spent at Blair. Outside the classroom, Arnie would be found writing for the *Arch* and *Breeze* publications, in Camera Club, Chapel Committee, French Club, Glee Club and participating on the JV golf and winter track teams. After graduating, he pursued his education at the University of Vermont, where he studied philosophy, leading him to the path of becoming a rabbi. Arnie graduated from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he met his future wife, Judy. His first pastoral assignment was in Gadsden, Alabama. He subsequently served two more congregations in Concord, New Hampshire, and Binghamton, New York, and during this time he and Judy had two sons. Life brought the family to Newton, Massachusetts, where Arnie earned his master's in public administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Arnie worked at B'nai Brith as New England regional director and at the American Physicians Fellowship for Medicine in Israel as national director of development. He founded and successfully ran JobHunterCoach, a company dedicated to guiding individuals through their careers and job searches. Arnie served the Temple Beth Shalom as rabbi for 21 years in Melrose, Massachusetts, and actively volunteered in the Melrose community, serving on the Rotary, the Human Rights Commission and the Melrose Clergy Association. In recognition of his great service to Melrose, he was honored with a key to the city. Arnie will be remembered for his empathy and his selfless service to all through his counseling on spirituality,

family and life. He is survived by his second wife, Gail, three children and four grandchildren.

Nigel J. Yorwerth. Born in England, Nigel moved to New York with his family when he was 17 and attended Blair for his senior year. He was a notable part of the French Club and wrote for *The Breeze*. A classmate remembers him as having a special smile around campus, seemingly without a care in the world—bright eyed, curious, upbeat and engaging. Nigel graduated from Bucknell University and worked in sales, advertising and marketing. During this time, he found his love for book publishing. In the early 1980s, Nigel was the manager of the Spiral Staircase Bookstore in Topanga, California, and then vice president of sales for SBI Book Distributors and Bookworld. He went on to become director of sales and marketing for SBI and worked with Summit University Press and Power Press. In 2003, Nigel founded Yorwerth Associates publishing consultancy, where he guided many authors and publishers in the self-help and spiritual genres. In 2005, he became a literary and foreign rights agent, and, as time passed, he developed a uniquely profound relationship with many bookstore managers and distributors to the benefit of his clients. Nigel will be remembered fondly by all who worked with him, his classmates and his loving family.

1980

Michael R. Osborne. Mike enriched Blair for his final two years of high school, showcasing special talent in the arts, particularly ceramics and design. Recognized for his individualistic approach, he went on to become a craftsman, and what his loved ones described as an artist at work and at heart. An out-of-the-box thinker who solved complex problems with ease, Mike loved “puttering” around his farm in

Equinunk, Pennsylvania, fishing, golfing and spending time with his son. He was kind and generous, which he often hid behind the well-crafted appearance of a “curmudgeon.” Mike is survived by his son and will be missed by many friends.

1992

Brian Hagen Greer. Hagen spent four memorable years at Blair, two of which he shared with his brother, **P. Seth Greer '90**. During his time on the hilltop, he distinguished himself on the varsity lacrosse and weightlifting teams. Notably, he served as assistant director of the School's fall theatrical productions, wrote for the newspaper and submitted poems to Blair's literacy publication *Between the Lines*. After Blair, Hagen attended Denison University, where he earned his BA in history and English in 1996. Settling in Charleston, South Carolina, he found professional fulfillment in real estate investment and personal joy in landscaping. Always exploring, he maintained winter homes in both Playa Del Carmen and Merida, Mexico, where he often worked remotely. As director of digital marketing at Pfizer, he excelled with dedication, was proud of what he had built, and left a lasting impact on both colleagues and friends there. Known for his decisive approach to life and incredible sense of humor, Hagen is remembered fondly by classmates. He is survived by his wife, Laura, two daughters and loving family.

Blair Bulletin Reader Survey

To enhance our understanding of *Bulletin* readers' preferences, we invite you to participate in a brief survey. Please complete the survey below and return it using the envelope included in this issue or conveniently submit it online by scanning the QR code to the right. The survey should only take two minutes, and all responses will remain anonymous. We appreciate your time and willingness to share your insights and perspectives. Responses will be accepted until June 1, 2024. Thank you for being an integral part of our community and helping us cover the stories that matter most to you.



What is your primary relationship to the Blair community? Please check all that apply.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alumni | <input type="checkbox"/> Alumni parent or grandparent | <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty/staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Current parent or grandparent | <input type="checkbox"/> Trustee | <input type="checkbox"/> Former faculty/staff |

How long have you been a member of the Blair community?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-4 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 10-19 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5-9 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 20+ years |

How do you read the *Blair Bulletin*?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In print | <input type="checkbox"/> Digitally/Online | <input type="checkbox"/> Both |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|

How often do you read the printed *Blair Bulletin*?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Most issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> Every issue |

Which sections of the *Bulletin* appeal to you most? Check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Main/feature stories | <input type="checkbox"/> Outside the Classroom (an interview with a longtime member of the faculty/staff) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In the News (stories about members of the community in the radio, print or TV headlines) | <input type="checkbox"/> Advancement (stories covering fundraising, planned giving and gatherings of the extended Blair family throughout the year) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academics | <input type="checkbox"/> Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State of Admission (an update about the latest admission cycle) | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Around the Arch (stories about events here at Blair or meeting new teachers or employees) | <input type="checkbox"/> Class Notes (notes submitted by representatives from each graduating class) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> In Memoriam |

Continued on next page



What amount of time do you spend with each issue?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-60 minutes
- ☐ 1+ hour

Check all that apply. The *Blair Bulletin* is:

- ☐ Your primary source of news about what's happening at Blair
- ☐ One source, in addition to the School's website
- ☐ One source, in addition to the School's social media platforms
- ☐ One source, in addition to another source
- ☐ Other _____

Please rank the following sections of the *Bulletin*:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
Cover	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Main/feature stories	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graphics & design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What steps have you taken after reading the *Bulletin*? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Attended an event
- ☐ Visited the school website
- ☐ Volunteered
- ☐ Contacted the editor
- ☐ Made a gift
- ☐ Recommended Blair to other families
- ☐ Saved or shared an article

Please share any additional information to improve the *Bulletin*:





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Questions?

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