Countryside Trees

NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE SCHOOL ALUMNI

Spring 2024

Letter from the Head



Krystal Young

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Countryside! We've arrived at the end of another successful year with so much to be proud of and so much to share with all of you in this edition of *Trees* ☺

For a school that is thirty-two years old, we had several 'firsts' this year. Our **first** school counselor who is also our **first** alumni student to be employed by Countryside full-time, Ms. Leslie (Cooper) Gascoigne (2000), joined us. Having a dedicated school counselor has been such a gift to our students, families, and staff.

Other **firsts** include our inaugural FIRST Lego League team. This mighty team of six worked hard all year to make it to the sectional competition. We were able to repurpose the MPR into Countryside's **first** dedicated art space, our **first** library was dedicated to Mary Breault, and for the **first** time this summer, we'll be welcoming campers all day. It is important that even though our school remains the same size we continue to grow and expand our programs. To all the dedicated individuals who work with me to make these dreams come true – THANK YOU!



8th graders with Mrs. Young at Boston Common

As we wrap up these next few weeks, I'm left with a feeling of awe over the wonderful things we've done this year. Most significantly we made the announcement that we will be realigning our elementary classes in the fall of 2024. This has been an administrative and elementary team effort covering curriculum, building layout, and designing new schedules and new partnerships between co-teachers. The way that everyone has worked to make this transition successful gives me such a sense of pride in the work we do each day.

Even though there was a lot of work to be done, we had plenty of joy throughout our year. As I reflect, I realize a lot of those silly moments came with being dressed up. We had Spirit Week (Mrs. Incredible, anyone?), Fall Day (the eighth-grade class and middle school team embraced the Year of the Barbie), Living History and Decade Days in the four/five classroom, and everything from zookeepers to pajama celebrations for our littlest learners. Oh, and let's not forget the one cold winter day where the middle school team and I dressed and spoke like middle school students (just so you know, we ate, no cap).

The eighth-grade class chose to visit Boston for their class trip, and we had a wonderful time exploring the city and surrounding areas. It is a privilege to get to experience all the memories made as our students navigate this level of independence.

Returning brings the emotions of leaving Countryside for busy high school lives front and center. I remind them that they are ready, and we will miss them. I invite all of you to join us for the graduation parade and graduation ceremony on Thursday, May 23.

Wishing you a summer of unforgettable moments!

Krystal Young
Head of School

Big News

- We Established a FIRST LEGO League Challenge Team
- Our international trip explored Germany
- We are restructuring our classrooms next year

Inside this issue:

Alumni Reunion - Treats & Trivia	2
What's New at School?	3
International Trip - Germany	5
Alumni Updates	8
Susan Richardson Reception	15
If You Could See Me Now and Then	17
College Bound	19

Winter Alumni Reunion - Treats and Trivia

TRIVIA:
HOW MANY ALUMNI DO WE HAVE CURRENTLY AT **YALE**?

Our Winter Alumni Reunion, Treats & Trivia, in December featured seven teams, including one of our MS faculty & staff, fighting in a battle with Scholastic Bowl-style questions while enjoying a nacho bar and mini Bundt cakes.

Congrats to the team that reigned supreme: Landon, Will, Marco, and Henry! (Admittedly, Marco was AMAZINGLY fast with the math questions!)

New this year: *If you were not here for 8th grade and attend an alumni event at the school, you may put your thumbprint on our Alumni Wall! (See photo below)*

See additional event photos here:

www.countrysideschool.org/alumni



Above: Minna Adoni, Juli Balogh, Shreya Haran, and Sophia Kalantzis-Cope want to buzz in but their buzzer is not working

Below left: The victorious team: Landon West, Marco Lu, Henry Carpenter, Will Miller

Below right: Mattox Pugh initials next to his thumbprint on the Alumni Wall







Back row: Gabe Bielenberg (MS social science), Chris Antonsen (MS literature & writing), Stacy Kirby (Associate Head), Shane Woodcock (PE), Lucas Braun, Lucas Tosi, Mattox Pugh, Nate Sharpe, Oren Akresh, Landon West, Will Miller, Marco Lu

Middle row: Krystal Young (Head of School), Brooke Kim (visual arts), Tara Santiago (MS math), Alleigha Nelson, Liona Pettijohn, Elliot Neault, Emily Dossey, Amanda Pate, Adelaide Kota, Henry Carpenter, Ian Yao

Front row: Madison Young, Mallory Young, Minna Adoni, Kaitlyn Young, Layla Zong, Juli Balogh, Shreya Haran, Sophia Kalantzis-Cope, JJ Lee, Amber Barker (MS science)

ANSWER: SIX

And four of them were in the 4/5 classroom together!

What's New at School?

Summer Camps - Our summer camps this year will be **all-day camps**! Campers can take a morning camp, stay for activities over lunchtime, and then take a different afternoon camp - complete with opening and closing ceremonies!

New Classroom Configuration - This fall we will introduce a stand-alone kindergarten classroom, a combined 1st and 2nd grade room, a combined 3rd and 4th grade room, and a stand-alone 5th grade classroom.

We have determined that socially, emotionally, and academically these updated pairings will lead to the most successful outcome for our students. Our youngest students can softly transition from preschool while our first graders return from summer break ready to hit the ground running, and our fifth graders will be able to focus on transitioning to middle school.



Dedicated Arts Space (above) - This past year we have enjoyed a dedicated arts space (in part of the multi-purpose room). This space has an art sink, storage for both art and shop class, and is also used for middle school study hall and afterschool art clubs. The coolest part? The stools magnetically stick to the underside of the tables for storage!

Alumni: Will you be visiting the area?

Let us know in advance. We would love to have you come speak to a class or to a group over lunch! Let Kristin Feddersen know:

feddersen@countrysideschool.org

Featured Service Projects



To give back to the community, our students spend time on service projects. Our middle schoolers also have a small service hour requirement and average over 600 hours of service each year! Where they volunteer is their choice. This year they packed food for the Feeding Our Kids program; picked up trash; assisted with the Illinois Marathon and a community Thanksgiving dinner. They also volunteer at Countryside working concessions for athletic events and handling door duty each morning opening car doors and greeting our arriving students.

Our Sociedad Hispánica de Amistad (Spanish Honor Society) held a fabulous tamale sale (above) and operated La Tiendita (little store) on Thursdays from October to April. They raised an amazing $945 to purchase items to donate to a program for residential youth at Cunningham Children's Home.

Our 5th grade students competed in the RISE Challenge, a competition to identify and mitigate potential environmental hazards in the community. For their efforts, they were awarded several compost bins, recycling bins, and self-latching dumpster mechanisms which they are donating to local organizations.

Our 2nd/3rd grade class raised money with their Invisible Zoo to bring attention to extinct animals. They then "adopted" three endangered animals at the Miller Park Zoo in Bloomington, IL. The 2nd grade class also collected food items to create food baskets for Thanksgiving that were donated to the YMCA's Y on the Fly after school program.

Thank you for all your community support!

WE ARE ON:

FACEBOOK

INSTAGRAM

LINKEDIN

YOUTUBE

WANT TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER DIRECT TO YOUR INBOX? SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Our Newest Team



We started our first-ever FIRST LEGO League Challenge team this year! The team, named C.O.M.E.T.S (Club Of Mechanical Extra Terrestrial Scientists), built and programmed a LEGO robot to navigate and complete assigned tasks. In addition to the robot challenges, FLL teams tackle real-world problems through designing a product design or innovation project.

Our team competed in qualifiers in December and advanced to regionals. They also won the Innovation Project Award for their Little Free Library project - creating an online searchable database for Little Free Libraries.

Our Newest Alumni

Our graduating 8th graders plan to attend these high schools this fall:

Nyal Adoni	Centennial
Shivani Anand	Academy
Cole Dimpsey	Central
Aliyah Enoch-Wilmore	Academy
Briley Miller	Mahomet-Seymour
Lahori Mitra	Urbana
Harper Neault	St. Thomas More
Nicolle Scifres	Academy
Isaac Sulkin	Academy
Allison Williams	Centennial
Nicholas Woodward	St. Thomas More

Our students matriculating as sub-freshmen at University Laboratory High School:

Aiden Kim
Neil Roy Choudhury
Elliot White

Afrika Afeni Mills Inspires Professional Development

Countryside is working on culturally responsive teaching methods and practices. This winter the school had the opportunity to expand our professional development to bring in nationally known author and educator Afrika Afeni Mills as a guest speaker.

Mrs. Young met Ms. Mills at the ISACS conference in November where she heard her speak about her DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) work and her book, *Open Windows, Windows, Open Minds: Developing Antiracist, Pro-Human Students*.

In March Countryside hosted a Community Talk so parents and others could hear Ms. Mills discuss her book and her journey through helping educators talk about racial identity. In addition, Ms. Mills began work with our faculty and staff and will continue this collaboration throughout next year.



Afrika Afeni Mills, author and educator, during her Community Talk on her journey through helping educators talk about racial identity

To learn more about Afrika Afeni Mills, view her TED Talk:

tinyurl.com/AfrikaTEDtalk

International Trip - Summer 2023 - Germany

Every three years, Countryside embarks on a middle school international trip. Last summer, over 40 students, parents, siblings, and chaperones headed to Germany for "Castles and Fairy Tales". (Previous trips have been to Puerto Rico and England.)

The tour began in Kassel where Mr. A's mother grew up during WWII. The group toured the town, visited Wilhelmshöhe Park, and explored an amazing museum of the Brothers Grimm and their fairy tales.

The group headed south to Bavaria - to Nuremberg Castle, the capital of the Holy Roman Empire for over 500 years. In the medieval walled city of Rothenburg, they enjoyed a Night Watchman tour and shopped in the world-famous Christmas shops.

In the Schwangau region, they visited Wieskirche (Pilgrimage Church of Wies) with its rococo architecture and Neuschwanstein Castle built by King Ludwig II and inspiration for the original Disney castle.

The trip wrapped up in Munich with a BMW museum tour and wandering Viktualienmarkt (an enormous farmers market founded in 1807). Of course, dining at the Hofbräuhaus and touring Allianz Arena (home of FC Bayern Munich) capped off the fabulous trip.



Sunrise in the medieval city of Rothenberg with Kaitlyn Young, Alleigha Nelson, Mallory Young, and Ian Yao





Top: Neuschwanstein Castle viewed from Marienbrücke (Bridge of Our Lady)

Above: Adoni and Kota families at the UNESCO World Heritage Site - Pilgrimage Church of Wies

Below: Our students and families in the players seats at Allianz Arena in Munich - home of FC Bayern Munich



8th Grade Trip: Boston

This year's 8th grade trip was an adventure in Boston. Over the fast-paced four days, they lunched at Faneuil Hall, took a ghost tour of Boston Common, and had a private tour of both Fenway Park and the Paul Revere House.

They travelled to Lexington to see the battle site where the Revolutionary War began, and in Salem they visited the famous House of Seven Gables and the Salem Witch Museum.

They also wandered Revere Beach and the New England Aquarium. (And no rain - so quite different from last year's water-logged trip to New York City!)



Mrs. Young and 8th grader Nicolle model tricorn hats in Lexington, MA



8th graders with Mrs. Young and Mr. Antonsen at Fenway Park



8th graders Shivani, Lahori, Isaac, the Salem gold guy, Cole, and Nyal in Salem, MA

JOIN US!
ALUMNI & FORMER FACULTY:
GRADUATION
MAY 23
6:30 PM

Alumni Spotlight - Bliss Chapman

Bliss Chapman (2013) has been doing groundbreaking work at Neuralink to benefit patients who are paralyzed. As a brain interface software lead, Bliss and his team have developed an implantable device to allow patients to move a computer cursor using their thoughts.

In a livestream on X in March, Bliss and patient Norland Arbaugh discussed Norland's ability to play chess online now with this device in his brain and how it became intuitive to get the cursor to move. Check out this remarkable live stream:

tinyurl.com/BlissNeuralink



Bliss Chapman (left) with patient Noland Arbaugh in a livestream on X about Neuralink's new technology

Alumni Shout Outs

Congratulations to **Lin Gilbertz** (2020) and **Gavin Sheppard** (2020) on their fabulous roles in the quirky and delightful *Almost, Maine* at Centennial High School in April.

Congrats to **Ezra Bernhard**, **Wilson Tian**, **Charlotte Chesser**, and **Gavin Sheppard** (all CS class of 2020) on being named Illinois State Scholars.

Alumna **Olivia Dempsey** (2021) competed at IHSA State again in swimming! She swam for Champaign Central in both the 200 free & 400 free relays.

Congratulations to **Ezra Bernhard** (2020) on being named the 2023 *The News-Gazette* All-Area Tennis Player of the Year! Ezra took 1st at Sectionals last May in singles and then placed 5th at State. **Samu Balogh** (2020) placed 3rd at Sectionals in doubles and also made it to State! Both competed for Champaign Central.

Sophia Libman (2020), **Eleanor Laufenberg** (2020), and **Jack Braun** (2021) received ISHA's Scholastic Achievement Award. Sophia and Eleanor are 3-sport athletes at Academy High competing in girls' basketball, cross-country, and track & field. Sophia was also named Academy's Athlete of the Year!



Several Countryside alumni performed in CU Ballet's *The Nutcracker* at Krannert Center in December - above L to R: **Alexandra Warwick** (2006), **Taylor Feddersen** (2012), **Lorenzo Pantano** (2019), and **Janaki Raj-Underhill** (2022). We love that our alumni are involved in this Krannert Center tradition - some even returning from college and beyond to assist backstage and perform.

In Memoriam

Jerry Welch - former board president, parent of two Countryside alumni, and longtime Countryside supporter - passed away on January 6, 2024.

He was the father of Countryside alumni **Ruthie Welch** (2003) and **Robby Welch** (2010) and husband of Janet Welch. Jerry served seven years on Countryside's Board of Trustees from 1998-2005 and led the board through the planning for the construction of our middle school expansion. Our thoughts are with his family.

John Trach - former board member and parent of a Countryside alumna - passed away on December 9, 2023. John was the father of Countryside alumna **Juliana Trach** (2010) and husband of Lizanne DeStefano. John served on Countryside's Board of Trustees from 2003-2008 and handled strategic marketing.

John's memorial service will take place on June 1, 2024, in Monessen, PA. View his obituary here:

tinyurl.com/JohnTrach

Howard (Howie) Guenther - former board president and parent of a Countryside alumna - passed away on August 13, 2023. He served on the Countryside Board of Trustees for seven years from 2008-2015.

Howie led the school through the construction of the Gym & Performing Arts Center and the head search to replace the founding head, Cathie Webber, when she retired. Our thoughts are with his wife Lisa Treul and daughter **Elizabeth Guenther** (2014).

Constituent Survey

Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete our community survey last month. We have received an overview of the results and look forward to analyzing the trends as we plan for next year and beyond.

SEND US YOUR "SHOUTOUTS" FOR SPORTS, THEATRE & ACADEMICS

Alumni Updates

Please note: *Students are listed by "affiliated class year" - the year the students graduated 8th grade or would have graduated had they remained at Countryside.*

ALUMNI:
PLEASE SEND US YOUR UPDATES!

WE'D LOVE TO FEATURE YOU

Elise Lauterbur (1999) has accepted an Assistant Professor position in the Biology Department at the University of Vermont, where her lab will study adaptation to infectious disease, toxins, and other types of dangers life presents in bats, lemurs, rodents, and more. She will be moving to Burlington this fall with her partner of 20 years and their small menagerie.

Leslie (Cooper) Gascoigne (2000) works at Countryside now - her dream job!

Arthur Baker (2002) is the managing attorney of Concord Advantage Legal PLLC, a law office dedicated to helping Florida business and property owners. Recently, he was nominated as a WHO'S WHO in Tampa Style Magazine for being a professional who exhibits excellence, integrity, and high standards. He is also an adjunct professor at the University of Miami School of Law. To give back to the community, he serves on several charitable boards.

Michael Belmont (2003) is an attending physician at Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital.

Anne R. Kramer (2004) is an employment attorney at Chicago law firm: https://flsalaw.com/anne-kramer/

Daniel Borup (2005) and his wife Hannah are expecting their first child on June 1. He also started his own engineering services company (Borup Solutions LLC) last April and has just passed the one-year milestone!

Emily Chu (2005) is a Director - Labor & Employee Relations at City Colleges of Chicago.

Erika Belmont (2006) will finish up residency at University of Chicago and move to St. Louis this summer to start her oncology fellowship at Barnes Jewish Hospital.

Gordon Ruan (2006) was named the Outstanding Hematology-Oncology Trainee for 2024 for his dedication to his patients and his colleagues by the Hematology/ Medical Oncology Fellowship Program at Mayo Clinic. In addition, he was chosen as a recipient for the Fellow Educator Golden Stethoscope Award - recognizing one fellow who medical students felt demonstrates a significant commitment to medical student education.

Jannika Newen (2007) has realized her dream of becoming a writer and is excited to contribute to the success story of Anno 1800, a city-building real-time strategy video game. "*I am forever grateful to Mary Breault for encouraging me to pursue a writing career.*"

Chelsea Edwards (2009) finished her PhD in chemical engineering (polyelectrolyte phase separations, emulsion processing, hydrogels) at UC Santa Barbara this past winter. She spent 3.5 months as a digital nomad in Argentina, Chile, and Southern Brazil. She starts an NRC Postdoctoral Fellowship at NIST this month in Gaithersburg, MD!

Madelyn Gunn (2009) is living in St. Louis, MO and working at Saint Louis University. She will be starting law school there in the fall and is marrying TJ Sapp on May 26.

Aileen Chu (2010) is a Senior Research Associate at Evozyne in Chicago, IL.

Jordan Gunn (2011) is living in Syracuse, NY and working as a professional cellist.

Maddie (Brown) Carlson (2012) got married this year! She and her husband, Brady, love living in Chicago, where she works for Kimberly-Clark in Marketing & Events.

Carolyn Cai (2012) is graduating with a Master of Human Resources and Industrial Relations (MHRIR) from the University of Illinois! After graduating, she will be moving to Fort Worth, TX to work at Alcon.

Mac Dressman (2012) is pursuing a master's degree in environmental policy at Science Po in Paris, France.

Alumni Updates

Ailín Valdivia-McCarthy (2012) changed jobs in October. She began as Associate Renewables Asset Manager at Invernergy Inc and is in charge of a wind farm in Oklahoma.

Isaac Freund (2013) has finished his BA in computer science and continues to live in Aachen, Germany, where he is most likely to be found playing bass guitar, bouldering, or doing open source projects.

James Vaughen (2013) will be joining the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in the fall as assistant principal trumpet and will continue to serve as assistant principal trumpet of the Chicago Grant Park Music Festival Orchestra over the summer.

Emma Berry (2014) is completing a second year as a Fulbright Teaching Fellow in Taiwan and is planning to pursue her MFA at Rutgers University in art in the fall.

Dylan Gunn (2014) is married and living in New York City. He is teaching 5th grade at Success Academy and will start graduate studies in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures this fall or the next.

Sam Hotchkiss (2014) is currently an Associate at Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and is based in New York City.

Delaney Vallese (2014) has appeared in multiple TV shows in Chicago and will open in professional theatre next season!

Raine Bernhard (2015) will be starting her master's degrees in history and archives management from Simmons University in Boston in the fall!

Megan Bostaph (2015) graduated from Ithaca College in 2022 and relocated to Manhattan in New York City. She now works at Stephen Gaynor School as the Communications Associate and is planning to visit Italy for the first time in the fall!

Sophie Brown (2015) is graduating from the University of Illinois with her Master of Social Work.

Lauren Feddersen (2015) is graduating from Illinois Wesleyan University with a bachelor's in biology and minor in graphic design. She will begin her master's in biology at Tufts University in Boston this fall. Lauren recently broke a pool record in the 400 IM that had stood for 24 years!

Dante Freund (2015) is in his first year of a MA in violin performance at the University of Illinois, much to his parents' delight, and also frequents the bouldering gym.

Alex Swanson-Linville (2015) is well and truly settled into big city life. He lives in Brooklyn, works in Manhattan as a software engineer, and is taking advantage of what the Big Apple has to offer.

Nicholas Gunn (2016) is graduating from the University of Illinois in May with a degree in international relations and economics. He will move to Columbus, OH over the summer.

Olivia Gunn (2016) is graduating from the University of Illinois in May with a degree in history. She works at the Child Development Lab on campus and will pursue a career in the non-profit sector after college.

Alumni Updates continued on page 10

RECENTLY GRADUATED COLLEGE?
LET US KNOW YOUR FUTURE PLANS

Director of Alumni Relations



Kristin Feddersen is our Director of Communications and Alumni Relations. She is also the parent of two alumnae - Taylor (2012) and Lauren (2015).

Please email her with updates about what you are doing. Often we hear where you are headed to college and what you *might* major in, but we rarely hear when those plans change.

Contact Kristin at feddersen@countrysideschool.org.

Alumni Updates

Alumni Updates continued from page 9

Ginny Kirby (2016) is graduating from Miami University (Ohio) with a degree in anthropology and a minor in archaeology. In addition, Ginny will graduate from Miami University's Honors College. While there are several paths that she is exploring, Ginny is most looking forward to coming home and spending some much-deserved rest time with family and a good book.

Esha Mehta (2016) is graduating in May from Loyola University Chicago with a Bachelor of Science in cognitive behavioral neuroscience and a minor in psychology.

Holden Siena (2017) is double majoring in psychology and biology at Augustana College. He has a summer internship in engineering and neuroscience at the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab in Chicago.

Joshua Stephens (2017) is attending Brigham Young University and studying political science. Joshua is part of BYU's ballroom dance company and is touring this spring with the International Folk Dance ensemble, Traditionz. Joshua still thinks that Countryside is an amazing school.

Colette Tichenor (2017) is finishing her junior year at Tulane University majoring in biochemistry with a minor in Mandarin. Currently, she is working in a microbiology & immunology lab at Tulane School of Medicine but is excited to begin a new role at E. & J. Gallo Winery as part of a 6-month chemistry and systems biology internship in California.

Yoon Freund (2018) is in their second year at Beloit majoring in anthropology and has become interested in mortuary studies. They have been volunteering at a funeral home that is a short walk from their dorm.

Andy Brown (2018) is completing his sophomore year at the University of Illinois studying industrial engineering and minoring in computer science.

Natalie Martinez (2018) After leaving Countryside when her dad was offered a job abroad, she continued her education in Guadalajara, Mexico. Now she is finishing her sophomore year at Reed College in Portland, OR. Someday she hopes to be a political psychologist. This summer she will be interning at a lobbying firm in Mexico City and working alongside companies and politicians to navigate election season and conduct research about the role of new government officials in relation to their individual success. *"Countryside definitely shaped the path of my education and drive for knowledge, and for that, I am eternally grateful."*

Sophie Zerrouki (2018) is a rising junior at Emory. This summer she will be an exchange student at Johannes Kepler Business School in Linz, Austria and doing an internship at Biz-Up, an economic development agency in Linz. She then tours Italy with the Emory volleyball team - even playing games in Venice!

Zachary Swanson-Linville (2018) is wrapping up year two at Lawrence University where he is majoring in Chinese language and literature and Russian studies. He is currently enjoying his spring trimester at Lawrence's London Centre and is looking forward to his upcoming fall term in Taipei.

Sierra Freund (2019) is in her first year at Boston Conservatory studying violin performance and enjoying city life.

CHECK US OUT ON INSTAGRAM
@COUNTRYSIDEK8

What can Countryside's Alumni Relations do for you?

Young Alumni: When you are applying to colleges, please contact us so we may connect you with our older alumni who can answer your questions about universities they attended!

Older Alumni: Let us know if you will be in town and come speak with our students! We will schedule a lunchtime/afternoon time slot for you to share what you do in your job. Also reach out if you are willing to be a resource for our young alumni to ask questions of you via email.

Email Kristin Feddersen to make this connection: feddersen@countrysideschool.org

Fall Picnic/Homecoming 2023

Our Homecoming/Fall Picnic attendees enjoyed inflatables, face painting, and balloon animals. In addition, our returning alumni were treated to pizza. So good to have so many of you return! **Mark your calendars: Saturday, August 23** 4:00 - 6:30 p.m. **Homecoming 2024!**







Top left: Hannah Libman (2023), Mallory Young (2022), August Lancaster (2023), Shinjian Song (2022)

Above: Chris Antonsen (literature and writing), Angela Xu (2016)

Left: Tabitha Dunn (4th grade), Leslie (Cooper) Gascoigne (school counselor & CS class of 2000), Gail McWilliams (former Spanish), Gloria Arizaga (Spanish)

HOMECOMING
FALL PICNIC
AUGUST 23
4 PM - 6:30
AT THE
SCHOOL

Eclipse 2024

Our students had the opportunity to view a "once in a lifetime" experience - the total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024. Countryside was at 98% totality

Well, maybe *twice* in a lifetime since many of our middle schoolers saw the one seven years ago from our backyard when they were in kindergarten-2nd grade.



Send Us a Sentence Winner

Thanks to all who sent us a sentence about themselves for *Trees* by the deadline. The winner of the "Send Us a Sentence" raffle is **Colette Tichenor** (2017). She is currently at Tulane University majoring in biochemistry and minoring in Mandarin.

Thanks, Colette! These tumblers are truly coveted. We will get yours delivered to you.



ALUMNI: WANT TO GIVE BACK? WE WOULD LOVE TO HAVE YOU SPEAK TO OUR STUDENTS

Alumna Gives Back to Countryside

Taylor Feddersen (2012) returned to chat with our middle schoolers over lunch about working for Microsoft. She is a software engineer for Minecraft Education in Seattle, WA. She spoke about majoring in computer science, working as a software engineer at Microsoft (both for Minecraft and Xbox), and even performing in ballets.

Interested in the paths that lead to a career in computer science or gaming? Have questions about college decisions regarding CS or EE or CE? Email Taylor and let her know you are Countryside alumni!

Taylor.Feddersen@microsoft.com



Taylor Feddersen talking to middle schoolers about working for Minecraft Education at Microsoft in Seattle

Alumna Gifts Artifact to Mr Antonsen

Ginny Kirby (2016) created a delightful artifact for a class at Miami University (Ohio) where she is majoring in anthropology and minoring in archeology. The assignment was to create a real version of a fictional object.

Ginny fabulously created a physical version of *The Princess Bride* by S. Morgenstern. (The actual book, turned into a movie, by William Goldman is a "story within a story" where a narrator reads an abridged version of a work by the *fictional* S. Morgenstern - including commentary and asides.

Ginny envisioned the complete "original" story, infilling all the missing dialog in the same style as the story. She then bound the book in leather and gifted it to Mr. Antonsen!



Ginny Kirby with Chris Antonsen holding the gift of the real *The Princess Bride* she created

Countryside has a long history with this story. Our middle schoolers read *The Princess Bride* and even performed it as a play in 2014.

Multicultural All-School Lunch Celebrations

Thank so much to our generous families who hosted All School pizza lunches in honor of several cultural and ethnic occasions this year. We love that you explain to all our students the significance of these wonderful celebrations:

November - Diwali, Hindu Festival of Lights
February - Chinese Lunar New Year
February - Black History Month
April - Eid Al-Fitr, end of Ramadan



Our Muslim families and students hosting the Eid al-Fitr lunch celebration in April

Mary E Breault Memorial Library

Countryside established the Mary E Breault Memorial Library in memory of our beloved Literature and Writing Workship teacher who passed away in 2020 following a two-year battle with cancer.

Last summer Mary's husband, Mike Breault, visited Countryside to see her library in the room where Mary had originally taught. She also had the luxury of teaching in our current LWW room when the middle school addition was constructed in 2005. Mrs. Breault taught at Countryside from 1999-2008.

In addition to this space housing the Mary E Breault collection, a piece of the original built -in shelving unit was preserved. This piece has handprints and signatures of her students. This particular piece has an orange handprint and signature of their son Chris Breault (2001).



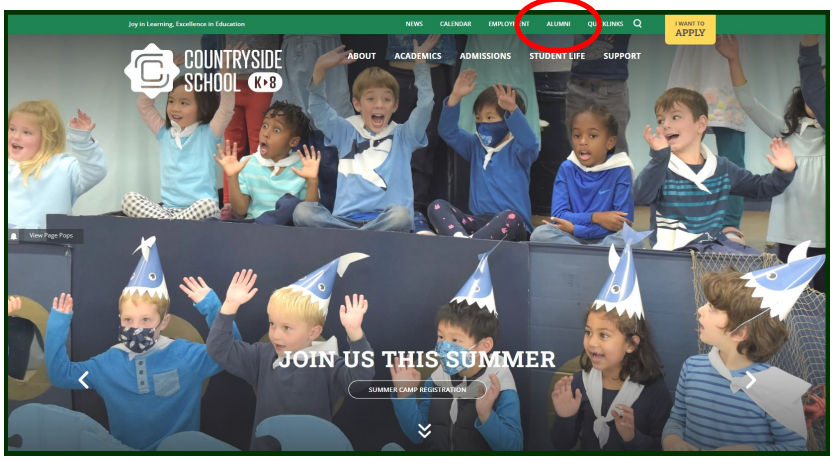
Mike Breault in the Mary E Breault Memorial Library. His son Chris' handprint (in orange) from 2000 is on the preserved piece of the original shelving unit from Mary's "old" room.

Help us add books in Mary's memory!

To donate: Send checks made out to Countryside School with "Mary Breault Memorial Fund" on the memo line.

IF YOU DID **NOT** RECEIVE *TREES* BY EMAIL, WE DO **NOT** HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Alumni Center on our Website



Although our website is designed with prospective families in mind, we hope you will check out our Alumni tab and maybe see some familiar faces in the photos.

Through the Alumni tab you can access our archive of *Trees* newsletters, see photos of alumni events, and update your contact information. Connect with us!

www.countrysideschool.org

Like us on Facebook for updates and event info **@CountrysideK8**

Follow us on Instagram **@CountrysideK8**

Connect with us on LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/company/countryside-school

YOU ASKED FOR IT:
THE RETURN OF LASER TAG!
ALUMNI REUNION 2024

Great News at School

Our MS science teacher, **Amber Barker,** is now a nationally certified STEM educator through The National Institute for STEM Education!

Congratulations to our mathletes (Neil, Shivani, Aiden, Sylvie) who took 2nd place in the team competition at the MATHCOUNTS chapter competition! Shout out to Aiden and Neil who were top 14 and competed in the Countdown Round. Congrats to Aiden who achieved one of the top scores and advanced to State!

Our 4th and 5th grade Rube Goldberg teams competed at the University of Illinois' Engineering Open House, and our middle schoolers rocked the popsicle stick bridge competition there.

Felicidades to our middle schoolers who took the National Spanish Exam. (Despite being in middle school, our students often do well beyond "8th grade level" Spanish.) In Level 1 (1st year high school), we received 3 gold, 5 silver, 2 bronze, and 4 honors. In Level 2 (2nd year high school), we received a silver medal and an honors! In Level 01 (8th grade level), we had 7 who received honors through silver. And our 4th and 5th graders rocked the National Spanish Challenge with 15 honored for excellent or outstanding achievement!

Alumni Spotlight



Hannah Gottlieb-Graham (right) with Hannah Traore in *Teen Vogue* (photo credit: Jacq Harriet)

Hannah Gottlieb-Graham (2009) is the founder and director of the rapidly growing arts PR firm, ALMA Communications. Her husband, Andrew Samuels, recently joined the NYC company as COO. The agency's tagline, "Operating at the intersection of contemporary art, design, social change, partnerships, and innovation", says it all.

Founded only four years ago, ALMA has been winning awards and Hannah has been featured in several publications & podcasts.

Check out the fabulous *Surface* magazine interview and the feature in *Teen Vogue* with business woman, gallery owner, and best friend Hannah Traore:

tinyurl.com/HannahInterview
tinyurl.com/HannahTeenVogue

CSA Happenings



Countryside School Association (CSA) has done AMAZING work this year - even bringing back events we have not seen since before COVID. They kicked off the year by providing box lunches to the faculty during in-service in August. They hosted a welcome back coffee for parents and our annual all-school Fall Picnic Homecoming event.

CSA organized fundraisers with Panera, El Toro, and Jersey Mike's. (We cleaned out Panera!) They also coordinated the much-appreciated potluck lunches for the faculty during parent-teacher conferences. They hosted the return of both the Barnes & Noble Bookfair and the Family Ice Skating Party. And CSA even hosted a Family Movie Night in our gym serving popcorn and concessions.

For athletics, CSA offered concession sales and organized exceptionally popular GREEN OUT events for both basketball teams and volleyball where we maxed out the capacity of our gym!

New functions included a fabulous book fair held in the Gallery during parent teacher conferences. Huge thanks to The Literary for providing such a wonderful opportunity to buy books at school and benefit CSA.

During Teacher Appreciation Week, the faculty & staff were treated to massages, a breakfast buffet, a Candy Bar (yum!), a faculty/staff scavenger hunt for cute prizes, and a fabulous potluck lunch provided by our parents.

Our school would not be the special place it is without our CSA. Thank you volunteers!

Ms. Richardson's Retirement Reception

In June last year, our wonderful Ms. Susan Richardson retired from Countryside after an amazing 29 years here. She has since been able to spend lots of time with her granddaughter, and she highly recommends retirement.

Photos of her lovely farewell reception and videos of the speakers - including Krystal Young, Cathie Webber (former Head of School), and guest of honor Susan Richardson - are available at the following links:

tinyurl.com/SusanCelebrationPhotos
tinyurl.com/SusanCelebrationVideo



Above: Krystal Young (Head of School) pulls up Susan Richardson's speech at the farewell reception

Left: Ali Webber (2004) holding Devin's daughter and Devin Richardson (2002) with Ali's son

Below: Donna Battershell (former MS art), Julie Miller (former 3rd grade) Stacy Kirby (former 1st grade, now Associate Head), Arin Cox (2nd grade), Chris Lukeman (former PE), Kim File (former music)





ALUMNI:
BE SURE WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS TO RECEIVE INVITATIONS

Medallion Club Newest Members

Over 20 years ago, Countryside established the Medallion Club to recognize our graduates who attend Countryside from Kindergarten through 8th grade. The honorees receive a medallion at graduation. Out of over 1,000 students to attend Countryside, **only 77 have earned this honor**.

We welcome our newest Medallion Club members:

Nyal Adoni **Isaac Sulkin**
Nicolle Scifres **Allison Williams**

Stop by the school to see your name hanging in our lobby!
We honor you!



High School Alumni Lunches

We hosted two alumni lunches in October - on days when our local high schools are not in session, but we are. This year the returning alumni enjoyed sandwiches from Potbelly and conversation with Mrs. Young.

Save the date: **Tuesday, November 5** from 12 noon - 1 p.m. for our High School Alumni Lunch!

HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI LUNCH
TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 5
NOON - 1 PM



Back row: David King, Nate Sharpe, Oren Akresh, Shreya Haran, Juli Balogh, Sophia Kalantzis-Cope, Krystal Young (Head of School), Kathryn Williams, Layla Zong, Mattox Pugh
Front row: Minna Adoni, Emily Dossey, Sophia Makala, Abigail Makala



Back row: Janaki Raj-Underhill, Alia Ahmad, Mallory Young, JJ Lee, Ian Yao, Cameron Hamilton, Elliot Neault, Simon Hamilton, Alleigha Nelson, Charlotte Chesser, August Lancaster
Front row: Adelaide Kota, Madison Young, Muskaan Garg, Kaitlyn Young, Krystal Young (Head of School)

If You Could See Me Now - and Then

We look back at these alumni with professional performance and directing aspirations to see what they were doing over TEN years ago at Countryside. We LOVE that they are pursuing their dreams!

Following 5th grade at Countryside, **Haley Driver** (2016) and family relocated to St. Louis where she continued performing throughout middle school and high school. Haley is now graduating from The New School in New York City majoring in jazz vocal performance. In addition to performing in St. Louis and New York City, she is currently creating her debut EP.



Check out Haley's website including videos of her phenomenal performances!

www.haleydriver.com



Above: Haley Driver in our All School Music Show back in 5th grade in 2013

Left: Haley Driver in 2024
(photo credit: Brendan Joyce)

ALUMNI:
PLEASE SEND US YOUR UPDATES!

WE'D LOVE TO FEATURE YOU



Above: Jordan Rinkenberger in The *Great Kapok Tree* in kindergarten in 2013

Right: Jordan Rinkenberger in 2024
(photo credit: Mandy Sutton)

Jordan Rinkenberger (2022) is finishing his sophomore year at Champaign Central High School. After performing in over 50 productions locally, he is turning his attention to directing and has founded his own theater company, Champaign Urbana Drama Makers. His first production will be *Carrie: The Musical* at Parkland College's Second Stage Theatre this June.

Check out *The News-Gazette* article featuring Jordan:

tinyurl.com/DirectorJordan



Champaign Urbana Drama Makers

It takes a lot to start a theater company, especially when you are just 16 years old. Help Jordan get Champaign Urbana Drama Makers off the ground:

tinyurl.com/ProductionFundraiser

Check out the theater company's website:

www.cudramamakers.com

Alumnus Mentors Winning Robotics Team

Robert Stavins (2012) worked as a mentor for the local FIRST robotics team, Ctrl-Z 4096. The team travelled to Houston, TX in April 2023 to compete in the world championship. They competed against 600 teams from 59 countries and WON - becoming the 2023 World Champions!

Robert is currently pursuing his PhD in mechanical engineering at the University of Illinois. We remember back in 2015 when Robert and two other Countryside alumni (all in high school at the time and members of the Ctrl-Z 4096 team) demonstrated their robot at our Invention Fair! Way to go, Robert!

Read more about the University of Illinois mentors and check out Robert's fabulous colorful cowboy hat here:

tinyurl.com/MentorRobert



Lyle Regenwetter, Justin Wang, and **Robert Stavins** (all CS class of 2012) shown here in February 2015 demonstrating their robot to our students at Countryside's Invention Fair

ALUMNI REUNION LASER TAG:
DECEMBER 15
6 - 7:30 P.M.

Young Alumni (High School) Updates

Dillon Jones (2021) is currently a junior at Central High School where he played golf and is heading to State in Science Olympiad. He is also a National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society member. He hopes to study computer science when he graduates.

Siddhant Bhat (2022) is finishing his sophomore year of high school and is taking AP US History, doing a 3-year research project on behavioral genetics, and competing in Track & Field/Cross Country. He has achieved new personal bests in the 5k, 3200m, and 1600m. In academics, he is also trying to self-study for AP calculus, a new challenge that he is really loving as there are a lot of cool things to learn, such as how calculators actually compute trig functions.

Janaki Rajamannar–Underhill (2022) is finishing her sophomore year at Centennial High School in Champaign, was accepted to Joffrey School of Ballet in New York City for an intensive this summer. She also plans to attend engineering camps at the University of Illinois to explore STEM options while she focuses on her future passions.

Daliah Noven (2023) is currently wrapping up freshman year at Glenelg High School in Glenelg, MD where her favorite subject is history. She is also involved in theater, doing both the school show *(Something Rotten)* and other academic theater programs. In addition she volunteers as a teaching assistant at her synagogue's Sunday school.

Kat Williams (2023) is completing her freshman year at Centennial High School. She had a wonderful season in marching band and is involved in Scholastic Bowl where they took 1st place at the Railer Rumble, 2nd at regionals, and hosted the NAQT state tournament with teams coming as far away as Iowa to Centennial. *"I look forward to the day where I can welcome newly graduated Comets to my school and help them transition from a small, private middle school to a large, public high school. GO COMETS!"*

Athletics Raffle

Win a Yeti cooler and two season tickets to Illini football! Winner drawn on June 1.

Purchase raffle tickets:
www.countrysideschool.org/raffle

College Bound and Future Plans

Congratulations to our alumni headed to the following schools: If you are not listed here, we do not have your contact information. Please let us know your post high school plans.

Noreen Adoni	University of Illinois - neuroscience
Ezra Bernhard	Carleton College - statistics/data science
Maxwell Braun	University of Chicago
Charlotte Chesser	University of Michigan - data science (engineering)
Coleman Clougherty	University of California - San Diego - data science
Suhani Garg	University of Illinois - business
Lin Gilbertz	University of Illinois - lyric theatre
Priya Haran	Columbia University - electrical engineering
Claire Keenan	Howard University
Max Libman	University of Southern California - business of cinematic arts
William King	University of Illinois - material science and engineering
Eleanor Laufenberg	Washington University (St. Louis) - psychology
Marco Lu	University of Illinois - psychology
Cassie Patten	Knox College - creative writing
Ray Scifres	University of Illinois - community health (health administration) and biology
Gavin Sheppard	Parkland College
Hadley Siena	University of Illinois - finance
Fraser Smith	Williston Northampton - postgraduate year
Wilson Tian	Washington University (St. Louis) - premed
Layla Vamos	Brown University - liberal medical education (MD class of 2032)
Annalise Williams	University of Illinois - social work

NOT LISTED HERE?
LET US KNOW YOUR POST HIGH SCHOOL PLANS

Former Faculty Updates

Natalya St. Clair (MS math teacher) Hope this finds you well! Since leaving those familiar corridors, I've continued working in educational research, authoring papers on how high school students engage with data in science classes - we even got to present our findings in Buffalo, NY! On the home front, life's bustling with my oldest exploring first grade and the youngest embarking on their kindergarten adventure next fall. We've planted our roots in Berkeley, so if you're ever around, it'd be fantastic to catch up. Miss the old days and think of you often!

Dee Chapman (programming instructor) Our family moved to Austin, TX in July 2021 and have been enjoying warmer winters (but too hot summers!), delicious food, great music, and some pretty hikes. Since moving, I've been working at a private high school in Austin where I teach AP Computer Science and math classes.

Sharon Henson (4th grade teacher) Spring in Florida is pleasant with azaleas and amaryllis blooming and baby sandhill cranes hatching. We continue to enjoy our villa on the lake. But we haven't forgotten our friends, neighbors, colleagues, and former students in Champaign where we spent so many happy years. We want to wish you all continued success and good health.

Countryside School

Joy in Learning, Excellence in Education

NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE SCHOOL ALUMNI

Countryside School
4301 W. Kirby Avenue
Champaign, IL 61822

217.355.1253
E-mail: alumni@countrysideschool.org

We don't want to lose contact!

Please send us your email address: alumni@countrysideschool.org

We Need Your Pennant

We LOVE displaying pennants from all our alumni's colleges and universities, and we have over **135 pennants on display!**

Drop us an e-mail if you can provide us with a pennant (12" x 30") or to ask if we already have it! alumni@countrysideschool.org



Mark your calendars:

Graduation	May 23 at 6:30 p.m. in the gym
4th Annual Golf Outing & Raffle	June 1 at Legends Golf Course
Homecoming/Fall Picnic	August 24, 4:00 - 6:30 p.m. on our back lawn
High School Drop-In Lunch	November 5 (Election Day), 12 noon - 1 p.m.
Winter Alumni Reunion - Laser Tag	December 15, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. at the school