

Taft

BULLETIN

ALUMNI ARTISTS

FALL 2024

FALL 2024

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Alumni Weekend 2024
Celebrating, Reuniting & Honoring
Photography by
Robert Falcetti, Seamus F. Conway,
and James Shannon



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ON THE COVER

A photo of the Super Flower Blood Moon lunar eclipse rising over the northern Teton Range near Ashton, Idaho, on May 15, 2022, taken by Jonathan Selkowitz '84, one of several alumni artists in our feature on page 80. JONATHAN SELKOWITZ '84

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On MAIN HALL

A WORD WITH HEAD OF
SCHOOL PETER BECKER '95

Resisting Cynicism, Inspiring Hope, and the Will to Serve Others

Remarks from the Head of School Installation on Alumni Weekend

THE THING THAT DREW AMY JULIA AND ME BACK TO TAFT at this particular moment is that Taft is unique among independent schools in the United States in its combination of existing, historic strength *and* future potential. As alumni, we are right to be proud and even protective of the school's enduring mission to combine educating the whole student and *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*. These commitments have served as Taft's North Star since our founding. As we stand at the cusp of the second quarter of the 21st century, we have the opportunity and responsibility to ask what these two concepts mean today for Taft students.

Today's Taft students have grown up in a time when the definition of what it means to be human—the definition of “the whole child”—is up for grabs like no other time in human history. Late modernity has proved itself very capable of deconstruction, suspicion, and cynicism—of technologized dehumanization—and it has also proved itself skeptical of attempts to offer meaning and purpose.

Today's Taft students have also grown up in a time of unprecedented focus on the self, also facilitated by technology. Billion-dollar industries have sprouted up in just the first quarter of this young century to monetize the self and to get us all addicted to it, particularly those under 20. As I shared with our students at the final School Meeting of the year, Narcissus did not fall in love with himself—he fell in love with an *image* of himself. We are all Narcissus now—or at least Mark Zuckerberg wants us to be.

How can Taft prepare students who have grown up in this environment to be thoughtful, independently minded leaders oriented toward serving others? Navigating the 2024 presidential election will serve as a case study in answering this question. We know that our responsibility is to equip students to think well about the issues (What is at stake? What is the history of this issue?), the office (What is a president for? What makes for an effective or good president? What does history tell us?), the candidates, and the nature of the American political system (a democratic republic)



“ Practical wisdom teaches us that cynics of any age don't become less cynical primarily through rational argument. What students require, first and foremost, is nonjudgmental, unconditional, patient, parent-like love.”

compared to alternatives. We know it is not our responsibility to tell students what they should think. That is easier said than done.

On each of these questions, we can practice respectful dialogue and create room for debate—in the classroom, dorm common room, in our advising groups, or at the dinner table. And yet this year's election does pose a unique challenge for boarding school educators. Amidst widespread claims that the 2020 election was stolen, and that if former President Trump loses again, this too will be a stolen election; claims that the January 6, 2021, uprising

was a legitimate protest; claims that Trump is “obviously” unfit to be president and should be disqualified, what is a teacher to do when a student makes these claims in a classroom?

As I’ve considered this question and how we can prepare as adults to do our jobs with excellence, I’ve realized that the real issue confronting educators this year is not a particular candidate or claim. Rather, the issue we face is modern cynicism. When a student says something that we find “obviously wrong,” teachers might be tempted to put the student in their place—correct them on the spot, provide counterarguments, or demonstrate in some other way that we don’t agree. But this type of correction misses the bigger picture.

Cynicism prevails as the mood of 21st-century America. We can and we must equip Taft students to resist its temptations. In his

review of Ansgar Allen’s 2021 book, *Cynicism*, Ed Simon describes contemporary cynicism (in contrast to its original form) as “jaded negativity” that “smirkingly reminds us that the world is just as atrophied as we’d always suspected.” It’s one thing for a seasoned adult who has tried everything to give in to cynicism (although it seems like a bummer of a way to go through life), but cynicism must at least be *earned*. Few, if any, students at Taft have had the life experience to lay claim to it. Nonetheless, some students arrive as cynics, convinced that the system is broken, even though they don’t really know what the system is or how it got to be the way it is or what the alternatives are. They are happy to repeat a provocative trope, to bait and set the trap, and to enjoy the fallout. While cynical adolescents are not a new phenomenon, what is new is the prevalence of cynicism in their surrounding atmosphere.



“Taft says that the highest and best path for humans is actually to turn our attention away from ourselves and to turn our attention toward others, toward the needs of our neighbor and even of our planet.”

“Together with all of you, we have the opportunity to build on the insight and wisdom from the past as we create an incredible future for the school and, most importantly, for our students.”

What are the conditions necessary for an adolescent (or an adult) to resist cynicism—and the closing of the mind and heart that accompany it—and develop its opposite, hope and a desire to serve others? Practical wisdom teaches us that cynics of any age don’t become less cynical primarily through rational argument. What students require, first and foremost, is nonjudgmental, unconditional, patient, parent-like love. Love is an ancient teaching tool. Before we engage in a battle of the mind or a battle of the will, we need to engage a student’s heart and gut. (One might reply, “But it is not *unloving* to tell a student they are wrong.” Certainly, but first they need to be sure we respect and love them.) Our shared love of equipping students to learn and grow binds Taft faculty together. We want to encourage students to be and become ever-more thoughtful and discerning, curious, and historically minded, especially given the fact that the prevailing culture in America and in many parts of the world pushes all of us in precisely the opposite direction.

Our approach this fall, and I hope always, will be to remember that our responsibility as educators who serve *in loco parentis* is to model the hope we want our students to learn and practice. If we do hope students will remain open to the powerful human capacity—the willingness and ability to change one’s mind, to admit that one was wrong—we must be willing to change our mind too.

Several resources will anchor the school’s approach to this fall’s election and beyond. One is a framework created by a group of independently minded independent school heads from around the country under the auspices of the EE Ford Foundation. Titled “Thriving in a World of Pluralistic Contention,” it suggests “three pillars of academic pluralism”: a commitment to expressive freedom, a commitment to disciplined nonpartisanship, and a commitment to intellectual diversity. This and other initiatives provide helpful direction as Taft seeks to translate educating the whole student toward a life oriented to services. They focus on preparing students to figure out what they believe and why; to remain open-minded, curious, and willing to change their minds; and to navigate the realities of life in this diverse, chaotic, and contentious world.

It is precisely at a fraught moment like this one that Taft’s commitment to a comprehensive education directed toward service becomes so relevant. It is precisely in the face of unprecedented self-centeredness, dehumanization, and cynicism that we realize the importance and urgency of Taft’s mission. Taft cannot control the world outside its walls. We can’t solve the world’s challenges directly. But what we can do—our way of stubbornly embodying

hope in the face of so much confusion, destruction, and darkness—is create an environment actually focused on educating the whole student and equipping students with the imagination, the instinct, the heart, and the skills to serve others.

In many ways what we do here is a modest proposal with profound implications. We seek to truly welcome 14- and 15-year-olds from around the country and around the world, from all kinds of backgrounds, to Taft as their new home and school. Then we ask these adolescents to welcome one another. That doesn’t seem particularly difficult or radical. But most of human history attests to the fact that bringing humans together from disparate backgrounds and equipping them to coexist peacefully, let alone learn to serve one another, is extremely challenging.

Many of them will have a difficult time navigating with their roommate whether to sleep with the window open or closed, let alone know how to answer the question, “What does it mean to be human?”

And yet that’s what we *have* to do—equip them to learn what it means to be human and the incredible power and potential of being embodied souls who think, learn, play, compete, and feel. This speaks to the enduring relevance of the humanities in an increasingly technologized world even as we also have to equip students with the knowledge and skills to participate and contribute (serve) in the realms of engineering, science, and technology.

As we intentionally attend to their whole personhood—mind, body, spirit, emotion—we invite them to develop a moral imagination that runs completely counter to what is sold to them on their phones every day. Taft says that the highest and best path for humans is actually to turn our attention away from ourselves and to turn our attention toward others, toward the needs of our neighbor and even of our planet. This is completely countercultural, even radical.

I have been so encouraged to return to Taft and find that both our board and our faculty are committed to this type of reorientation.

Together with all of you, we have the opportunity to build on the insight and wisdom from the past as we create an incredible future for the school and, most importantly, for our students. Just as you all have, they will be the ones to shape the world—one family, one neighborhood, one school, one company, and one country at a time.

Peter Becker

Peter Becker ’95



Taft's Dean of Community, Justice, and Belonging Thomas Allen Attends DEI Leadership Program

IN APRIL, THOMAS ALLEN, ATTENDED the DEI Leadership Lab hosted by the Association of Board Schools (known as TABS), in Montgomery, Alabama.

"It was a great experience connecting with other DEI practitioners from around the world," says Allen. "It was an opportunity to engage in meaningful and invaluable discussions around diversity, equity, and belonging in our various schools."

TABS describes itself as a "community of communities," a space and resource for boarding school leaders to share, learn, and support one another while connecting their communities and creating sustainable relationships, common understanding, and open dialogue. TABS programming, resources, and opportunity are designed to drive "excellence, innovation, and collaboration so that every student thrives."

Billed as a "transformative, immersive two-day journey" to empower change through inclusive leadership, the lab was built around an exploration of the history of racial injustice and deepening

Above: Thomas Allen, Taft's dean of Community, Justice, and Belonging, joined attendees from around the country at the DEI Leadership Lab in Montgomery, Alabama, organized by the Association of Boarding Schools. TABS/DEE SANDERS PHOTOGRAPHY

COMMUNITY CORNER ILLUSTRATION BY FRANZIS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

understanding, developing strategies, and identifying tools for growing and supporting more inclusive school communities. Each of those objectives was supported and enhanced through work done by attendees at Montgomery's Legacy Museum and Legacy Memorial.

"The location of the conference provided us with a greater sense of self and allowed for us to connect with one another in a much more meaningful way," says Allen. "We learned more about the history of slavery in America through our visits to the Legacy Museum sites, and to consider difficult topics, including lynching, mass incarceration, and the transatlantic slave trade."

A highlight of the program, says Allen, was the opportunity to spend time with

Below: Allen at Montgomery's Legacy Museum and Legacy Memorial. TABS/DEE SANDERS PHOTOGRAPHY



lawyer and NYU law professor Bryan Stevenson, who is also a social justice activist and founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. Stevenson's work challenges bias against the poor and minorities in the criminal justice system; his story was told in the 2019 film *Just Mercy*. He has assisted in cases that have saved dozens of inmates from the death penalty, advocated for the poor, and developed community-based reform litigation aimed at improving the administration of criminal justice. Stevenson encouraged the program attendees to remain focused and driven in the important work of advancing equity, inclusivity, and belonging in their school communities. ■

"It was a great experience connecting with other DEI practitioners from around the world. It was an opportunity to engage in meaningful and invaluable discussions around diversity, equity, and belonging in our various schools."

Studying Species at Risk



An Ecologist in the National Park Service's Upper Columbia Basin

TOM RODHOUSE '88 lives at the intersection of nature and science, wandering the woods while also performing vital research to protect the flora and fauna of the country's national parks for today and the future.

An ecologist, Rodhouse spends his days with the National Park Service's Upper Columbia Basin Inventory & Monitoring Network. He is working to prepare plant and animal species for the coming climate crisis, which is already affecting the parks. His work involves "biogeography," the study of the patterns of geographic distribution of plants and animals and the factors that

determine those patterns, including habitat loss, climate change effects, and human encroachment. He studies these elements in many of the country's national parks and monuments, concentrating in the Columbia Basin of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

"The Park Service is tasked with stewarding, protecting, and preserving resources for future generations," he says. "We have a strong sense that we're doing this for others, for our kids and grand-kids. I have really taken that to heart."

The NPS is trying to get ahead of "really big and devastating events," he

adds, such as the fires that have decimated landscapes in the Western United States, caused by our changing climate.

"The idea that climate change isn't really a thing—that's no longer an interesting conversation," Rodhouse says. "It's not really a question. It's more about what do

Above: NPS ecologist Tom Rodhouse '88 with bats emerging at dusk from an Oregon Lava Tube Cave. MICHAEL DURHAM

Above inset: Rodhouse observing shorebird migration at Lewis and Clark National Historic Park, near the mouth of the Columbia River, Oregon. CASEY RODHOUSE

we do now. We're trying to build a more resilient and adaptive society. We have a suite of species we know through observation and study are harder and tend to compete well with nonnative [species]."

His life's work has been to determine what species are at risk of extinction from climate changes in landscapes that may push both plants and animals out of their usual habitats. While today Rodhouse spends much of his time in front of computers instead of exploring in nature, he's always been fascinated by the natural world surrounding him. His father and grandfather were avid bird-watchers, and they passed that love of ornithology to him. He says he learned to recognize birds by their calls while sitting on his father's lap, listening to vinyl recordings of different birdcalls.

Birds, in particular, he says, are a "great measure of how [species] can recover and respond" to efforts to protect them. "There are reasons for hope and reasons to motivate collective action."

Rodhouse is no stranger to the often-contentious battle between those seeking to exploit the natural world for profit and those who seek to ensure the survival of species. After college at Lewis & Clark University, he spent three years researching the spotted owl, which was at the

time being considered for addition to the Endangered Species List. Federal attempts to protect the bird were at odds with the Pacific Northwest's timber industry, and the struggle between commerce and environmentalism was playing out on a national scale. Lessons from that battle have informed the way the National Park Service approaches listing of species.

"It's been a paradigm shift," he says. "The Park Service has very deliberately and with some visionary leadership" sought to respond to these competing interests more collaboratively.

Rodhouse has been involved in a series of protective efforts that involve species ranging from the spotted owl to pikas, a relative of the rabbit. He works to develop protections that get buy-in from other entities, from Native tribes to state and local governments and private landowners.

What really appeals to Rodhouse now is mentoring the next generation of "citizen scientists."

"It all goes back to my experience at Taft," he says. "I've long had an interest in mentorship. I've benefited from mentorship. Those sorts of experiences are so important. I started out working as an environmental educator and taught kids. I really liked seeing kids' eyes light up

and share that wonder of the natural world."

Later, Rodhouse put together van-based programs in the summer, bringing research to the national parks, where laypeople could help with studies such as Rodhouse's work with bats that are increasingly affected by white nose syndrome, a fungus that has rapidly spread across the country and decimated bat colonies.

"We had kids help with the bat study. We have them even write papers and reports. They learn what it's really like to be a scientist and design a study and go out and figure it out and then report their findings," he says.

Ultimately, the goal is to find a way



Above: Rodhouse surveying recently burned habitat in Big Hole National Battlefield, Montana. NPS PHOTO

Left: Rodhouse photographing weed invasion following wildfire in Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument, Idaho. NPS PHOTO

to be proactive to prevent further loss of species without resorting to the politically fraught Endangered Species List.

"How can we be proactive to prevent further loss of [species] without listing," he says. "Can we put a dollar-and-cents value on ecosystems? To speak in more economic terms, what are people willing to pay for the societal benefit?" ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84

Connecting People with Nature

Working for the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Program

YOU COULD CALL LELIA MELLEN '82 a connector: a person who brings others together for the greater good, but one who also helps connect wild areas to each other and to humankind. As an outdoor recreation planner for the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program for the National Park Service, Mellen



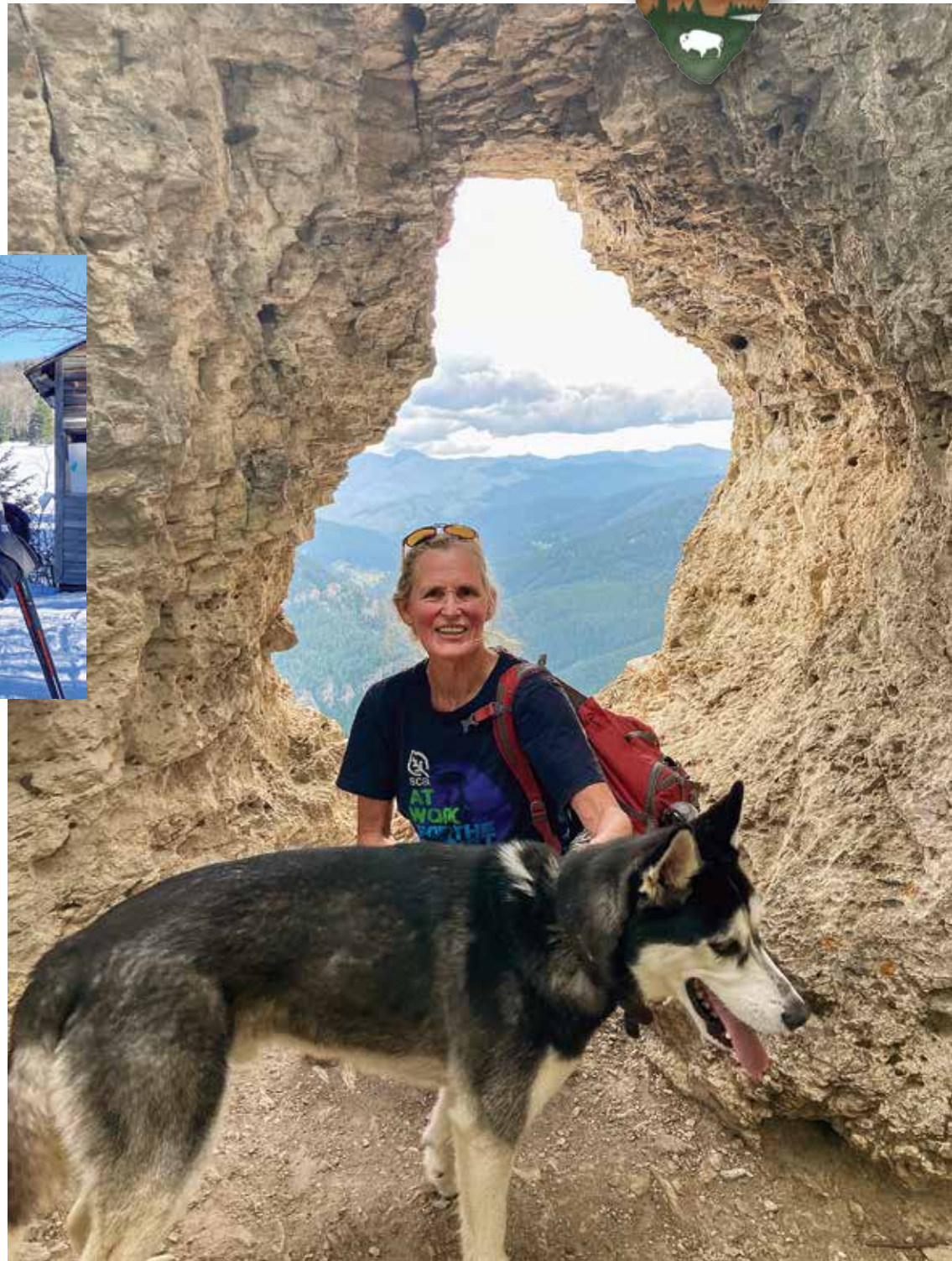
Above: Lelia Mellen '82, cross-country skiing in in Dorchester, New Hampshire, around Cummings Pond at a place called the Greens.

Right: Mellen and her dog at Storm Castle Peak in Gallatin Canyon, Montana.

helps communities plan and develop natural areas for people to enjoy.

A love of nature was established early in Mellen's life. As a child, her father rewarded Mellen and her sisters for graduating first grade with a trip to the Smoky Mountains, where they would hike, paddle the rivers, and interact with the wilderness.

"That planted the seed for loving nature



and understanding the importance of it in our lives," she says. "There are all kinds of studies showing the benefits of early exposure to nature—I'm the embodiment of that."

As a student at Dartmouth, a friend suggested viewing the only bald eagle nest [at that time] in New Hampshire.

"It was quite remote," she recalls. "We were paddling through this swampy area, and [nature] just touches you."

After Dartmouth, she served with the Peace Corps as an agriculture volunteer in Sierra Leone before heading to Duke University for a master's degree in environmental management. During the summer between her two years of grad school, she worked for the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress, where she was introduced to the RTCA staff of the Park Service.

"I thought, These are my people," she says. "This is what I want to do."

Fortunately for Mellen, the National Park Service had received a rare increase in its budget, allowing more people to be hired to help run RTCA's offices. She spent 30 years with the rivers and trails program in the Vermont/New Hampshire office. She focused on projects in northern New England, working with water-oriented groups; community groups; local, state, and federal agencies; and nonprofits to help them with their outdoor recreation and conservation initiatives.

The lure of new challenges took her to Montana one year ago.

"Life has its moments of inflection, and two years ago, I was ready to do something different. I thought I could retire but I was not ready, so I reached out an NPS colleague in Denver," she says.

Mellen was hired to oversee the Bozeman, Montana, office, and she packed up and headed west.

Already familiar with Montana because her father and her children had moved there from her original home state of Georgia, she was able to reopen the office and begin working with local organizers seeking to enhance their access to water and recreation. As a regionally based program, Mellen's office is part of the Intermountain Region,



Left: Planning the Mascoma River Greenway in New Hampshire: Mellen with an RTCA partner from the Upper Valley Trails Alliance.

Below: Mellen (in blue) helping install trail signs with an NPS colleague and volunteers Woodstock, Vermont, as part of Walk Woodstock.



which ranges from Montana to Texas.

"Groups apply to us for our technical assistance once a year," she says. "Anyone can apply. Often, they've got a project in mind for outdoor recreation or [trails]. They have this great idea, and they want help in getting it going. This is where the rivers and trails program comes in and can help launch their ideas."

Climate change is affecting all facets of the national parks and their environs, something that Montana's ranchers know all too well but their politicians are slower to recognize.

A NPS project on the Yellowstone River that flooded badly two years ago has had to be couched in "safer" terms, Mellen says.

"They could not talk about 'climate' resiliency but...talking about 'flood' resiliency is acceptable," she says. One of the environmental groups she worked with said when they talk to ranchers one on one, they have no doubt [the climate is] changing.

"The recognition is coming, the political will is slower," she says.

That project in particular was a classic one for her: building consensus with myriad stakeholders, from ranchers to environmentalists to city, county, and state officials. Once the NPS portion of the project is completed, the project is turned over to local stakeholders. Mellen usually has about five projects each year, mainly creating river and land trails. She writes grants, offers technical assistance, and connects local organizers with other sources of support.

"I absolutely love my job," she says. "I'm incredibly fortunate. The best day is when I'm outside on a project seeing the plans. Getting outside, I still prioritize, but I love getting outside with my project partners and having them show me what they love.

It is so rewarding to catch their energy and enthusiasm and hear what makes their neighborhood so special. That's incredibly moving and gives you hope for the future.

"Then we move on, and hopefully they are going gangbusters," she continues. "We work with visionaries, and they see potential down the road. There can be frustration along the way. [Projects] can take decades. It takes a champion who is doggedly working at it."

Connecting people happens in boardrooms and on rivers and trails. And trails connect people at a human scale, she says.

"When you pass someone on a trail, you can have that connection. You're just people out there, you can say hi, you have a shared interest. There's some spark of connection. It builds community, bringing us all down to a human level, one to one. We all want the same thing: happy, safe, good, fulfilled lives. Fundamentally, we're all connected," she says.

"For us to be outside, it's so good for our mental and physical health—it's restorative. We are connected to the natural world, and I hope we can remember that, foster that, and keep the opportunities growing." ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84

A Hub for Creatives

HENRY SIMONDS '93 attracts a wide scope of artists to Pedantic, his new creative hub in Pittsburgh that houses an arts nonprofit and a residency program, as well as accommodations for visiting artists.

“Pedantic” is cunning in its double entendre. Simonds, an accomplished creative himself, had more than once been

accused of pedanticism, only to realize how vital the quality is to understanding the importance of research and critique in his own work. To add to that, the hub’s building is located in the midst of one of Pittsburgh’s most bustling art scenes at the intersection of Penn and Atlantic Avenues. Pedantic was the clear nominal choice.

Simonds established Pedantic in 2022 after nearly 30 years in creative industries and bouncing between Pittsburgh and New York. As a visual artist, collector, curator, and filmmaker who has also worked as a writer, editor, and producer, Simonds wears a number of hats. He graduated from Middlebury College in 1997 with a double major in film studies and visual art. Four years later he founded Headwater Media, a company focused on developing and financing independent documentary and narrative films. Although he still works in film, Simonds has spent the past decade



plus concentrating primarily on visual art.

“When I moved back to Pittsburgh in 2017 after a decade-long stint in New York, I didn’t have a studio,” Simonds recalls. “I ended up buying two buildings in pretty bad shape, followed by a quick and dirty renovation.”

In 2018, Simonds began a low-residency

Left: The inaugural Pedantic cohort (Summer 2022) visits the exhibit *Paola Pivi: I Want It All* at the Andy Warhol Museum with former director Patrick Moore; Pedantic cofounder Henry J. Simonds '93, seated. ©2022 PEDANTIC ARTS RESIDENCY

Above: Each resident artist has a dedicated workspace in the apartment; this one on the top floor has views of Garfield down Penn Avenue, the deck, and the Pittsburgh skyline. ©2022 SEAN CARROLL



program at Vermont College of Fine Arts to pursue his MFA in visual art. Throughout the program, he did a great deal of reading and writing—and it sparked something in him.

“I quickly realized how important research is in my field,” Simonds says. “There’s lots of art being produced in Pittsburgh, but historically there’s been no real space for criticism and cultural conversation.”

It was this newfound line of thinking that planted the seed for Pedantic and inspired Simonds to redevelop the two buildings on Penn Avenue into a four-story creative hub. As part of his vision, Simonds cofounded the Pedantic Arts Residency with Casey Droege, a monthlong residency held twice a year in January and June. The residency is comanaged by Droege and her staff at Casey Droege Cultural Productions.

The residency, now in its third year, hosts a cohort of three creatives—one curator, one writer, and one artist.

All sorts of creatives are drawn to Pedantic—the residency has hosted glassblowers, poets, photographers, experimental theater marionettists, filmmakers, actors, and comic book writers, among other professions.

“There isn’t a production mandate,” Simonds explains. “We pair each resident

with a local guide who’s knowledgeable in their discipline, who can arrange experiences like studio visits and museum tours.”

The residency focuses on drawing inspiration through an immersion into Pittsburgh’s cultural community. As part of the program, Pedantic hosts weekly dinners; each week, a different resident is highlighted. “It ends up being a robust and very busy networking opportunity,” Simonds says. “At the end of the month, residents usually end up having somewhere between 80 and 120 points of contact.”

Next door to Pedantic is Simonds’ own studio. As a visual artist, he works in photography, sculpture, and mixed media. He stays away from paint and likes to use whatever tools and materials are on hand—his aesthetic is utilitarian and pared down. In terms of subject, Simonds is interested in responding to historical depictions of madness and trying to correct the vernacular subjugation of people with mental illness—an important mission indeed.

But the daily demands of owning and managing multiple buildings can take away from Simonds’ personal creative endeavors.

“I have a super, but there are still plumbing issues,” he says, half joking. “Another challenge is fundraising for the residency. We’re currently a fiscally

sponsored project and not our own nonprofit, but I would love to be able to have larger, more diverse funding streams.”

Simonds’ life is busy but fulfilled. “I’ve created a space where artists can come out of their silos and chill,” he says. “I get to have intimate conversations and connect with fascinating people from all over the world.” ■

—Carola Lovering Crane '07

Above: The Pedantic building is located at the intersection of Penn and S. Atlantic Avenues in the heart of the Penn Avenue Arts District. ©2022 SEAN CARROLL

Right: Pedantic’s Winter 2024 residents with invited guests at one of the weekly dinners held at the residency apartment. ©2022 PEDANTIC ARTS RESIDENCY





The grand opening of Pawnee Power, a meal replacement and energy tea shop, in Pawnee, Oklahoma, in May 2022.

Dedicated to Pawnee Tribe and City Progress

GEORGE GARDIPE '94 woke up in a hospital room in Oklahoma in late January, where one of the physician's assistants said that she had just seen his brain.

"It was beautiful," she said. Gardipe had to chuckle.

Days earlier, his wife had rushed him to the emergency room after he'd complained of "massive" headaches, dizziness, and fatigue. A CT scan revealed that his brain had *shifted* 14 millimeters inside the skull, the result of a calamitous car accident he'd been in the month before. A midline brain shift of 5 millimeters or more is considered significant; 14 is, well, unheard of. They rushed Gardipe, 47, to OU Medical Center in Oklahoma

City had placed him on an operating table for brain surgery within an hour.

The son of two members of the Pawnee Nation in north-central Oklahoma, Gardipe had no expectations other than living and working in Pawnee. His father worked construction, and when Gardipe was 12, he asked if he could apprentice on his dad's jobs. He told him no. He wanted Gardipe to get an education.

One day, an older couple came to town who said they represented the Dr. Lillie Rosa Minoka Hill Fund, an initiative to help Native Americans attain scholarships to elite college preparatory schools around the country. Gardipe took the PSAT and filled out a universal application.

Taft was a "culture shock," Gardipe says, but playing on the football team helped him assimilate with his new classmates. "One of my best friends [on the football team] was a Puerto Rican [student] from the Bronx," he says. "To that point in my life, the only people I'd ever known were either Mexican, white, or Indian.

"It was so different," he says, "but I wouldn't change anything."

Gardipe went on to attend Dartmouth College, but he never had any intention of living anywhere but the Oklahoma plains. He returned home to follow in his father's footsteps in carpentry and construction—but with an education and worldliness that was uncommon for kids on the reservation

at that time. He dedicated himself to trying to rectify that for the Pawnee people, who number around 3,600 today.

Gardipe was elected secretary of the Pawnee Business Council in 2021 and chairs or sits on several other economic and housing commissions, both within the tribe and the city of Pawnee, Oklahoma. One of his biggest endeavors is bridging the divide between the tribal community and the surrounding county.

"The town is named after us, but there's this green bridge that separates the tribe from the city," Gardipe says. "I'm trying to let our children know that there's more beyond the tribal lands—this is our town. And vice versa. There's older people that have never been across that bridge."

Gardipe was instrumental in forging a first-of-its-kind agreement between the Pawnee Nation and Canoo, an electric-vehicle manufacturer, to connect Pawnee students to internships and jobs in clean-energy fields and perhaps even

produce Canoo vehicles in Oklahoma.

Last year, Gardipe also helped Pawnee Nation secure a \$2 million grant from the Biden administration to repurpose abandoned oil wells into plants for geothermal energy.

"It's a movement we want to be in

right now," Gardipe says. "Anything that's an alternative to using fossil fuels. Our tribe, as a people, we want to see that."

Gardipe said he took Taft's *Non ut sibi* mantra to heart for his community. And this life of dedication boomeranged back when he was lying in a recovery



Some members of Gardipe's family; back row, from left, Trey (George III), George himself, wife Lisa, and Alan; in front, Jasper and Daysia.



Gardipe's "bonus daughter" Caitlyn, Alan, Daysia, Trey, and oldest daughter Jaden.

room in Oklahoma City, and the outpouring of calls, texts, and letters came in from his tribe 90 miles north.

Initially, there was shock over what had happened and the slow-moving events that transpired. The accident, in which Gardipe was a passenger in a car that got rear-ended and spun into oncoming traffic, occurred on December 1, but he was released with the hospital with only sore ribs and a hazy memory. "I don't remember hitting my head," he says. "All I remember is the white dust from the airbags."

It wasn't until six weeks later that the headaches and dizziness set in from a brain bleed that nearly cost him his life. He was rescued in the nick of time. And this spring, he was back laying tile for new home constructions and finding new ways to set his tribe up for the future.

"I feel like I was saved for a reason," Gardipe says. ■

—Zach Schonbrun '05

A Window on Health Care Costs



TAE YOUNG WOO '12 never set out to become an entrepreneur, but whenever he encounters a problem, he can't help but devise a solution. Little more than a decade after graduating from Taft, he has already followed this drive to produce a series of seminars and conferences around the globe, write a bestselling memoir, and launch multiple businesses. The newest is Finestra, a search engine that allows users to more accurately track health care costs in their area.

Finestra was born when Woo found himself unemployed and without insurance at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. "My two biggest questions were, where can I get a new job, and how much does a COVID test cost?" he says. "To find a job, I went on Glassdoor, the site that not only tells you about job opportunities but also shares how much people earn at certain companies. Companies aren't sharing this information—it's the



Left: Tae Young Woo '12 giving a talk in Busan, South Korea, after his book *Studying the World* became a national bestseller there.

Above: Woo welcoming guests to a dinner for influential media figures cohoused with the U.S. Embassy Seoul in the U.S. Army Garrison Yongsan, with the U.S. Ambassador to South Korea in attendance.



Above: Woo meeting backstage with former Speaker of the House Sen. Kevin McCarthy at the Asian Leadership Conference in Seoul, South Korea, discussing ways for Finestra to engage with federal agencies.

Right: Woo being interviewed at Finestra's New York office by leaders of South Korea's National Health Insurance Service about health care price transparency legislation and movements in the U.S.



employees. That's when I thought maybe I could create a website where patients can share their experiences, so other people will have an idea of what they should expect to be charged."

The seeds of Woo's business acumen were planted early when, as a student at Taft, he founded a local chapter of the Future Business Leaders of America. Soon, he invited Apple executive Phil Schiller—whose son Mark was in the Class of 2013—to lead a presentation during the upcoming Parents' Weekend. When more than 100 students, faculty, and parents attended the talk, Woo was eager to organize more events. At New York University, he established his first company, CNH Studio, to host conferences with prominent guest speakers—including one featuring journalist Anderson Cooper that drew 1,500 people—and founded Blue Books Media to translate and publish books in his native South Korea.

With this string of early successes, Woo was excited for the opportunity to embark on his latest endeavor. "If I was going to start a website to track health care pricing, I knew that I really had to understand the industry. I had to do my research," he

explains. "I went to the library and borrowed a ton of books. I read a lot of articles and watched a lot of videos. I even signed up for an online class to qualify for my New York State health insurance agent license, which I earned after cramming five to six hours a day for a month." At the same time, the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued new guidelines requiring hospitals to publish pricing information for all their procedures, and Woo realized

in New York City, we kind of went viral," Woo recalls. "We got hundreds of requests a day asking us to share information for more cities, so we spent the next six months frantically expanding to different cities—Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Austin, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. And every time we added another city, we would go viral again!" Ninety days after the release of the initial beta version, the site had already received more than 500,000

visits and processed more than 150,000 searches. Woo and his team have continued to add data for additional cities.

For him, price transparency is the key to helping people take control of their health, explaining that the company's name ("Finestra" is Italian for "window") represents his mission to introduce greater clarity into the often-murky health care industry. "Hospitals have never been interested in clearly disclosing their pricing structures, and many Americans simply don't seek care because they're scared of the price," he says. "I'm so encouraged every time I hear from someone that used the data from our site to negotiate down bills or find places that they didn't know had more reasonable prices. By democratizing that source of information, I think our tool can really help people." ■

—Christopher Browner '12

BY DEBRA MEYERS

For more information, visit www.taftschool.org/news



In introducing Jamella Lee (pictured) at the 10-year anniversary gathering, GLI Director Baba Frew referred to the program as Lee's "brainchild." Lee spoke to the crowd about its inception and development.



Left: Former Waterbury Public School teacher and now U.S. Rep. Jahana Hayes (left) with GLI Director Baba Frew. Hayes was an early supporter of the GLI program and remains committed to its success.

Below: The third cohort of GLI scholars visited the United Nations in 2017, an annual tradition that began with the very first cohort.



students to serve and learn together." Taft successfully met the matching requirement, and the program came to life. In May, program alumni, partners, leaders, families, friends, and supporters gathered to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

"It brings tears to my eyes, to say the least," Lee said at the gathering. "I believed, as did my colleagues at Taft and from Waterbury, that our students could

A Milestone Celebration

Global Leadership and Service Collaborative Marks 10th Anniversary

MORE THAN A DECADE AGO, then Head of School Willy MacMullen '78 invited Dean of Global and Diversity Education Jamella Lee to his office to talk about a unique opportunity available through the Edward E. Ford Foundation.*

"He said they were interested in public-private partnerships and private schools like Taft with a public purpose," Lee recalls. "He asked me what I thought and all I remember saying and thinking was, 'We can do this.' I could see it: Young people from Waterbury and Taft working together, for a greater purpose—breaking down barriers, bridging divides. What an amazing opportunity."

The coming months were filled with meetings to identify and connect with stakeholders, from then Waterbury Mayor Neil O'Leary and the chief academic officer for the city of Waterbury, to now U.S. Rep. Jahana Hayes, and Taft service leaders and mentors Baba Frew, Laura Monti, and Jon Willson '82, to name just a few. Lee's days were filled first with concept and program development, then with pitches, presentations, and critically, the application to the Ford Foundation.

In April 2013, MacMullen received the letter everyone had been hoping for: Taft had been awarded a one-to-one

"Young people from Waterbury and Taft working together, for a greater purpose—breaking down barriers, bridging divides. What an amazing opportunity."

—Jamella Lee

\$250,000 matching grant from the Ford Foundation to "create and develop the Center for Global Leadership and Service programs, including mentorship programs, the Global Leadership Institute, and a service-learning course that provides an opportunity for Taft and Waterbury



change the world; they would be citizen leaders in their communities and across the globe; they would have impact."

A few things have changed since the inception of the program: Lee left Taft to serve a new community, handing the program reins to Baba Frew, who has taken the program to new heights with her extraordinary passion and dedication. And the Center for Global Leadership and Service Collaborative, to better reflect the partnership and collaboration at the heart of the program—a partnership built to grow and benefit students at Taft and in the Waterbury Public School system, while giving them tools to become actively engaged and globally aware citizens and leaders. It is

Left: Shasha Alvares '17, one of the original GLI program scholars, shares thoughts on her culminating research project with then Waterbury Mayor Neil O'Leary. O'Leary was integral in bringing the Global Leadership and Service Collaborative to fruition.

Right: Intrepid, passionate, compassionate, dedicated, giving, and a true mentor and leader, Baba Frew has worked with more than 200 GLI scholars and overseen nearly 120 research projects during her tenure as director. Lauren Fadiman '17 (left) was among the first cohort of GLI scholars. Fadiman, a Harvard University graduate and current Ph.D. candidate at Yale University, returned to Taft for the GLI anniversary gathering.

Below inset: Cohort IX scholars Enasia Eggleston (left), Waterbury Arts Magnet School, and Jasmine Pun '25, explored nutrition education and access for children in their culminating research project. Over the years, project topics have included LGBTQ+ awareness, after-school programs, water for Sudan, mental health interventions for teens, STEAM programming, peer mentoring, gender equality, equitable access to resources in communities, sexual assault prevention education for young women in Afghanistan, sexism in Somalia, immigration and refugee services in Connecticut, and climate action, to name just a few.

Bottom: For their culminating project, Cohort VII scholars Ronald Ceesay '23 (left) and Gianni Bonval, Wilby High School, studied mental health in young black males.

both forward thinking and compelling, and the embodiment of the Taft School motto, *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret.*

After 10 years, the Collaborative's signature program remains largely the same. The Global Leadership Institute is a competitive and rigorous cocurricular program that brings students from Taft and Waterbury public schools together both in and out of the classroom for shared learning and leadership experiences. The program's mission is to develop a generation of global leaders with a genuine concern for world problems, multiple perspectives on global issues, and the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to change. Through a competitive application process, the GLI program accepts 24 students each academic year—12 from Taft and 12 from public schools in Waterbury. GLI scholars enter the program the winter of their sophomore year and complete the program in the spring of their junior year. During that time, they meet with and hear from community and global leaders, visit



environmental clean-up sites, tour the United Nations, engage in service work, and, working with a partner, conduct in-depth research on a global or “glocal” issue for a culminating project and community presentation.

Mihir Nayar '19 was a member of the third cohort of GLI scholars.

“While this is a much easier thing to say than to do, I tried to use my two years in GLI as a platform to take action on world

“Through GLI, I learned just how big and small our world can simultaneously be. [Despite] the differences that exist between each of us, we are all part of humanity and struggle with basic needs across cultures and continents.”

—Mihir Nayar '19

issues that affect multiple populations across the globe,” says Nayar. “My final project for GLI included a hunger simulation that sparked a growing conversation about the ill effects of malnutrition across the world. My partner and I specifically focused on our home nations of Ghana and India. We took this project beyond the GLI program and into a multipronged solution to tackle the poverty cycle in Ghana, donating hundreds of books to YAF Ghana to tackle another prevalent issue related to the poverty cycle in low literacy rates.”

As a student at the University of California, Berkeley, Nayar maintained his focus on global issues. He earned awards from Harvard and University of Southern California for his Model UN work on global geopolitical issues, including the persecution of Uyghur Muslims and



the modern-day impact of the divisions between India and Pakistan. He also petitioned the United Nations Human Rights Commission to take action for protection of the Rohingya, an ethnic Muslim minority in South Asia facing a refugee crisis.

“Through GLI, I learned just how big and small our world can simultaneously be. [Despite] the differences that exist between each of us, we are all part of humanity and struggle with basic needs across cultures and continents,” Nayar says.

Rina Kurihara '24 partnered with Waterbury Career Academy student Ayderi Avendano for her final “glocal” project—tackling a global issue on a local level. Tapping into Rina's personal experiences, the pair founded a five-pronged educational program to raise awareness of eating disorders. The program, “body of thought,” reached more than 3,000 people in Connecticut almost immediately after it was launched.

The program's tagline, “nourish your body, nourish your mind,” effectively captures the program's five components: educational/

community lectures; providing local schools with nutrition posters with a “food is fuel” message for more intentional eating; working with school counselors to offer new perspectives on approaching conversations about eating disorders; gifting local schools with bathroom mirrors that include positive messaging; and aggregating detailed information on accessing support hotlines.

“We received Special Congressional Recognition from Congresswoman Jahana Hayes for our work,” says Rina, “underscoring how important it is to take action on ‘glocal’ issues that too often go unnoticed in communities. More can always be done, and it can start at the local level.”

The milestone celebration for the Global Leadership and Service Collaborative was a testament to the value and impact of the program—one that continues to flourish after 10 years.

“I look forward to seeing what the next 10 years hold, for it is in our students' hands that the future of our world lies,” says Lee. “And because of this, I am forever hopeful.” ■



Top: Each year, GLI scholars tour the 17-acre Anamet property. Once the largest producer of metal hose in the world and a major employer in the city of Waterbury, Anamet closed in 2000; potential contamination at the former industrial earned it a “brownfields” designation. Waterbury leaders talk to students about the process of securing funds and technical assistance from the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Program to assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse contaminated properties.

Above: For his culminating project, Cohort I GLI Scholar Zyi Jievaltas '17 united Taft students, staff, and faculty, and other community members for Let's Do It! Watertown, to help clean up a number of sites around town. Let's Do It! World is a civic-led mass movement that began in Estonia in 2008 when 50,000 people came together to clean up the entire country in just five hours.

*The Edward E. Ford Foundation seeks to improve secondary education by supporting U.S. independent schools and encouraging promising practices. Since its inception in 1957 and through January 2023, the foundation has awarded nearly 2,300 grants totaling over \$125 million to approximately 1,000 different schools and associations.



Above left: Taft's Chamber Orchestra and Jazz Band recording their work at the renowned RCA Studio B in Nashville, led by T.J. Thompson.

Above: Vincent Chen '24 and T.J. Thompson point to Elvis's mark in the recording studio.

Below: Topher Jones '26 plays Elvis's Steinway in Studio B.

Spring Break in Music City

"I THINK IT'S ESSENTIAL to offer high school students as many inclusive opportunities as possible," says instrumental music teacher T.J. Thompson. "They grow through these experiences and come to more deeply understand music, why they play music, and why they play music with each other."

This philosophy drives Thompson to lead his students on trips to significant music and cultural centers, where they learn a bit of history, experience diverse cultures through music, and create art in new spaces and with new people. They have performed Vivaldi's works on stage in Prague, referenced Carlos Santana's work during a performance at the Capitol

Rotunda in Austin, Texas, and played, learned, and experienced history at Preservation Hall in New Orleans.

This year, 18 members of Taft's Chamber Orchestra and Jazz Band traveled to the Music City itself: Nashville. It was a first for Thompson's program.

"This was a great experience for everyone. We heard many styles of music in packed theaters and rooms throughout the city," says Thompson. "We saw firsthand how that music affects people of various backgrounds, and we saw all of the care, discipline, talent, and passion that it takes to bring this music to literally thousands of people on a daily basis. It was just a phenomenal experience and a thrill to be a part of it even for a short while."

Taft musicians participated in a workshop at Vanderbilt University led by two of the school's music professors, and performed at University School of Nashville and outside the famed and historic Grand Ole Opry. They took in performances at the iconic Ryman Auditorium, the Nashville Symphony, the Listening Room, and, of course, the Opry.

"We got to hear Don McClean himself perform "American Pie" in his Opry debut," Thompson notes. "And

we toured the Museum of African American Music, the Country Music Hall of Fame, and the Frist Museum."

The group also had a most extraordinary experience: recording their own work at the renowned RCA Studio B in Nashville, where Elvis Presley logged more than 240 recording sessions. It is also where (to name just a few) Roy Orbison recorded "Only the Lonely" and Dolly Parton tracked "Coat of Many Colors." The Taft recordings, which you can hear by scanning the QR code on this page, were done in one take.

RCA Studio B Recordings

1. *Concerto Grosso in D Minor by Antonio Vivaldi, arranged by Merle Isaac, featuring Steven Zhang, Eden Thompson on violin, Heidi Li, Hayden Choi, Augi Booth, and Madison Kirkland on cello, Tanya Muangman, Isabel Yang, and Farren Camp on flute, and Michael Ren on clarinet.*

2. *"Mahogany Hall Stomp" by Spencer Williams, transcribed by T.J. Thompson, featuring Vincent Chen on fiddle, Charlotte Murphy on trumpet, Ruhi Vidhun on alto saxophone, Topher Jones on piano, Andrew Dong on vibraphone, Allisen Yen on bass, and Carson Chen on drums.*

Scan the QR code to listen to the recordings. >



A Focus on Mental Health

Taft Partners with The Jed Foundation

ADOLESCENTS ARE AT RISK for a variety of mental health challenges. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide in this age group have increased in recent years. At Taft, we want to help students be well and safe and develop the skills and aptitudes to be resilient in the face of challenges. Despite the caring community and many support systems available at Taft, our students remain vulnerable. With this awareness, community members have sought ways to holistically address mental health and wellness among Taft students. In the fall of 2022, Taft partnered with The Jed Foundation (JED), a nonprofit whose mission is to protect the emotional health of teens and young adults. This partnership was made possible through the generous support of Marti Boyd, Class of 1973.

The goals of the Taft-JED alliance are significant in magnitude and potential impact: to improve student mental health, the inclination to seek help, and the availability of resources; increase distress recognition, reduce the risk of self-harm, and build crisis response protocols; and foster a more connected community with a deeper sense of belonging. JED has provided helpful insight and important guidance while also providing significant affirmation about the quality of our program and supports and the safety of our campus.

"It is a large but critical undertaking for Taft," says Dr. Rachel Jacobs, director of counseling and community health. "We



began our work with JED by surveying the members of our community to identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth. Students who completed the survey in January of 2023 reported that there is a good support system available for those facing challenges, and when those challenges impact academic performance, 95 percent found their teachers to be supportive. Our goal is to have a community of caring and compassionate adults who all feel comfortable having conversations with students about their mental health and know how to direct them to appropriate resources, when necessary."

"Our work with JED is really just beginning," says School Counselor Dr. Lauren Henry '99. "Gathering information about where we are as a community was just the

Below: JED's Ellen Utley and Kiana Davis hosted a Q & A session with Taft students. The session followed individual presentations to faculty and students. Utley spoke with faculty about recognizing distress, having conversations with students about their well-being, and connecting them to resources. Davis spoke to the student body about how to recognize and respond to signs of distress in their peers, as well as how to find and direct them to mental health resources.

first step. The next step—the work we're engaged in now—is to implement interventions that actively support student wellness and reduce stigma around mental illness. Current and upcoming goals include trainings for faculty and students about how to help students who are struggling, improving signage and website information regarding mental health resources, and increasing mental health screenings across our support systems, such as the health center and academic center. This work will continue throughout the 2024–25 academic year, and includes the development and implementation of plans for strategic action within the Taft community. Those plans will strengthen the sense of connection and belonging our community is built on." ■

The Jed Foundation (JED) was founded by Phil and Donna Satow in 2000, two years after their son Jed died by suicide. More than 9,000 high schools, colleges, and universities are transforming the conversation around mental health and mobilizing communities to action using JED resources. More than 70,000 college, high school, and other mental health professionals have been educated by JED in mental health promotion and suicide prevention through conference presentations and webinars. Taft's work with (JED) is made possible in part by the generosity of Marti Boyd '73 and her husband, Michael Boyd.

Morning Meeting Snapshots

1

In addition to delivering a powerful Morning Meeting talk in Bingham Auditorium, activist, educator, thought-leader, and scholar **Dr. Angela Davis** led a question-and-answer session attended by a standing-room-only, overflow crowd in the Black Box Theater, met with the student leaders of Taft's affinity groups, and had lunch with community members. To prepare for her visit, Taft students read some of Dr. Davis's literary works in their English classes and submitted questions in advance for the Q & A.



2

Taft welcomed **Ryan O'Callaghan** to campus as part of our community Pride Month learning and celebration. After a successful college career with the California



Golden Bears, O'Callaghan was selected by the New England Patriots in the fifth round of the 2006 NFL Draft. He played two seasons for the Kansas City Chiefs at the end of his career. O'Callaghan wrote about his struggle with self-acceptance and coming out in 2019 his autobiography, *My Life on the Line: How the NFL Damn Near Killed Me and Ended Up Saving My Life*. He shared those experiences with the Taft community during his Morning Meeting talk.

3

Each year, Taft welcomes guest speakers to campus to commemorate Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. This year, **Jeanette Brod**, the daughter of two Holocaust survivors, delivered Taft's Yom HaShoah Morning Meeting talk. Brod serves as an educational consultant for Voices of Hope, an organization of descendants of Holocaust survivors.



4



4

Author, educator, and transgender rights activist **Alex Myers** shared his experiences and thoughts on inclusivity. A transgender man, Myers began transitioning right before his senior year at Exeter, making him the first openly transgender student in the school's history. Myers has worked with schools and colleges to educate students, faculty, and administrators about gender identity. He has assisted dozens of schools as they consider gender inclusive practices and policies.

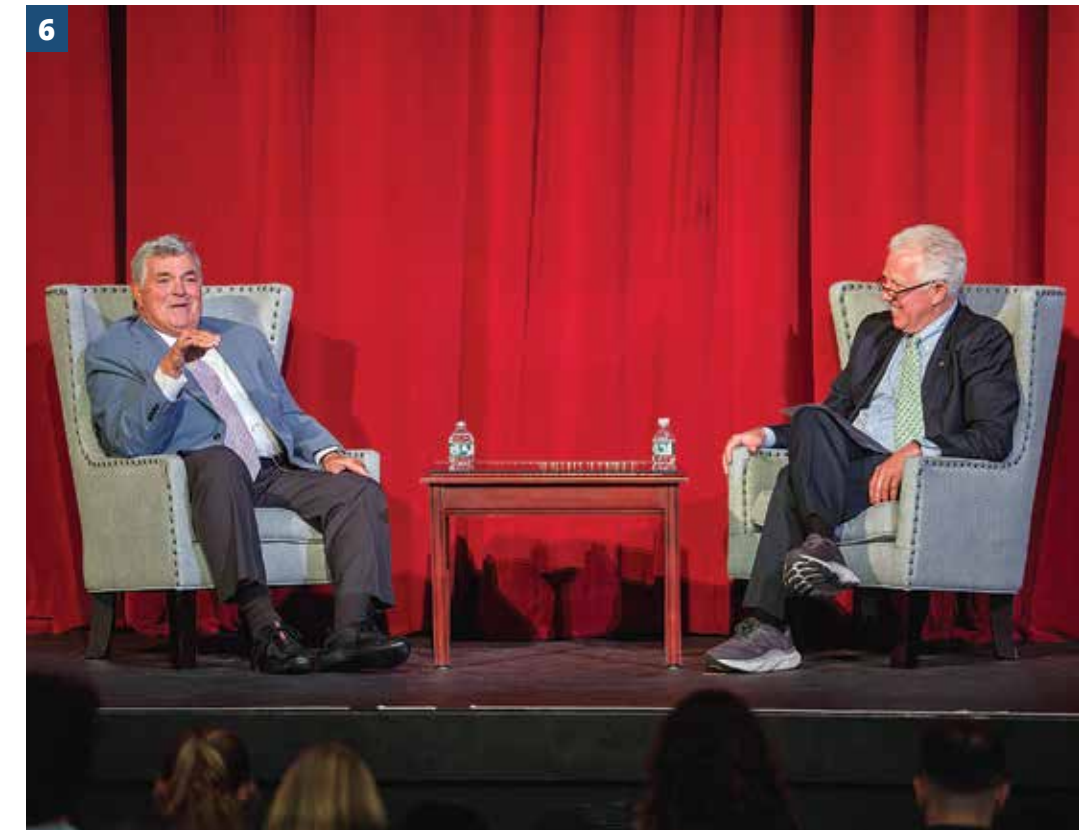
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5

Sharon Belden Castonguay is an adult developmental psychologist and career counselor with over 20 years of experience working with professionals at

6



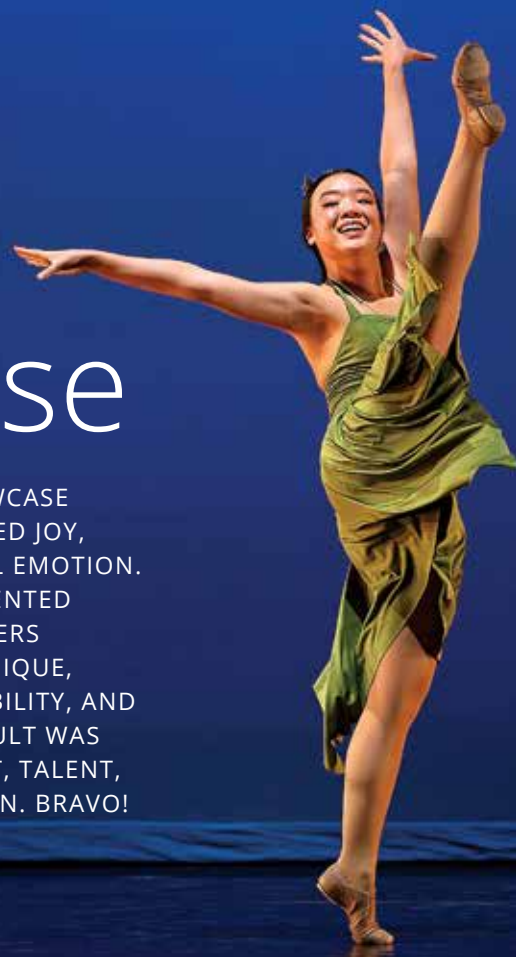
all levels of their careers. Her TEDx talk, "The Psychology of Career Decisions," considers themes of identity, culture, and decision making. Her career advice has been featured in *Oprah Magazine*/*Oprah Daily*, *Forbes.com*, *Inc.com*, and *Apple News*. She is the executive director of the Gordon Career Center and a professor at Wesleyan University. Castonguay has produced and hosted two podcasts, *Careers by Design: The Interviews* and *First Year Out*.

6

John Dayton '64 received the 2024 Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal, given each year to a person whose life's work best reflects the essence of the Taft School motto, *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*; Not to be served but to serve. It has become tradition for the medal winners to address the school community during the Morning Meeting leading into Alumni Weekend. Dayton's talk took the form of a sit-down chat with Director of Admissions Peter Frew '75. ■

Spring Dance Showcase

THE ANNUAL SPRING DANCE SHOWCASE FEATURED MOMENTS OF UNBRIDLED JOY, DEEP REFLECTION, AND POWERFUL EMOTION. THROUGH THEIR PIECES, OUR TALENTED PERFORMERS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS EXPLORED MOVEMENT AND TECHNIQUE, CULTURE AND HISTORY, VULNERABILITY, AND THE HUMAN CONDITION. THE RESULT WAS A POWERFUL CELEBRATION OF ART, TALENT, AND INTELLECTUAL INTROSPECTION. BRAVO!



Good Question

THE QUESTION ON EVERYONE'S LIPS THROUGHOUT THE SPRING: WHAT WILL THE SPRING MUSICAL BE? THE ANSWER: GOOD QUESTION. TRULY. *GOOD QUESTION: A CABARET* WAS LIVE ON STAGE IN BINGHAM AUDITORIUM FOR A THREE-NIGHT ENGAGEMENT IN MAY. AS WITH ANY GOOD CABARET, THERE WAS GREAT MUSIC, EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMERS, SINGING, DANCING, ACTING, AND GOOD FUN! THIS ONE FEATURED THREE, ONE-ACT CELEBRATIONS OF TALENT:

- > *Bad Auditions by Bad Actors*, directed by Vincent Chen '24, featured bits of *LaLa Land*, *The Greatest Showman*, and *Something Rotten!*
- > *Excerpts from Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Mike*, directed by Sara Takanabe '24, featured pieces from *Aladdin* and *13: The Musical*.
- > *Naked*, directed by Heidi Li '26, featured music from *Spring Awakening* and *Stevie Wonder*.



Bravo! Celebrating Taft's Artists

2024 Halo Awards



TAFT'S FALL PRODUCTION OF *MATILDA* captured the attention of the statewide arts community and theater critics, catapulting five stellar performances to the top of the Halo Award nomination roster. When the winners were announced in May, Sabrina Moffa '24 took home the Best Performance by a Supporting Actress in a Musical prize for her work as Miss Honey in *Matilda*. Sabrina won last year for her role as Trix in *The Drowsy Chaperone*.

Left: Halo Award nominees (from left) Sabrina Moffa '24, Isaac Obeng '26, and Elle Smiley '25 at the 2024 Halo Awards ceremony at Waterbury, Connecticut's Palace Theater. COURTESY MR. SILVERMAN

Taft's 2024 Halo Award nominees were:

- > **Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Musical:**
Isaac Obeng '26 as Bruce in *Matilda*
- > **Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical:**
Kyla O'Byrne '24 as Mrs. Wormwood in *Matilda*
- > **Best Comic Female Performance in a Musical:**
Maddie Gabriele '24 as Miss Trunchbull in *Matilda*
- > **Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Contemporary Musical:**
Daniel Kaminju '26 as Mr. Wormwood in *Matilda*
- > **Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Contemporary Musical:**
Elle Smiley '25 as Matilda in *Matilda*

Now in their 21st year, the Halo Awards were created by Waterbury's Seven Angels Theater to honor high school student achievements in all aspects of theater, from acting and dancing to set design and stage management. Productions mounted by nearly 100 high schools across Connecticut were considered during the nominating process.



Taft's Chamber Orchestra was invited to take the stage in May for a phenomenal side-by-side performance with the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra. Together, the musicians performed the Overture from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. The invitation and collaboration are acknowledgment of the high level of talent and achievement in Taft's arts programs.

All State Musicians

AFTER A COMPETITIVE audition process, Steven Zhang '26, Maddie Hsu '25, and Matt Romero '25 were selected to perform at the 2024 Connecticut All State Music Festival. The three-day event was held in the state's capitol, and featured orchestra, concert band, jazz, mixed choir, and treble choir performances by exceptional student musicians led by celebrated guest conductors.

PHOTO COURTESY MR. ROMERO



Cellist Hayden Leehyun Choi '27 to Play Carnegie Hall

HAYDEN CHOI '27 RECENTLY EARNED top honors in the Seoul International Music Competition and was among the second-place honorees in the American Protégé International Music Talent Competition. With his performance in the American Protégé competition, Hayden also earned a chair in the winner's recital, which takes place at Carnegie Hall in December.

American Protégé offers international music competitions for different genres, instruments, and skill levels. Hayden competed in the Strings and Piano Spring 2024 competition. Overall, this year's American Protégé programs at Carnegie Hall attracted a record number of applicants from more than 70 countries. Sponsored by the Korean Professional Artists Association and the New York Institute of the Arts, the Seoul International Competition provides an open forum for music lovers worldwide, focusing on nonprofit and public interest.

For both competitions, Hayden performed the fourth movement of Edward Elgar's *Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85*.



Hayden Choi '27, center, performing with Taft's Chamber Orchestra.

The Life of the Mind

Harnessing Technology to Advance Global Health



Michael Xu '25 (second from left) and his friend Faisal, (second from right) at Regeneron ISEF 2024.
PHOTO COURTESY MICHAEL XU '25

WHILE WORKING TO FIND A MORE effective, less intrusive tuberculosis test, (which as an international student he is required to get each year,) Michael Xu '25 found that there are acoustical differences between patients with respiratory diseases that even trained physicians struggle to distinguish. “But with the proliferation of artificial intelligence and crowdsourced datasets, there is the possibility for machine learning algorithms to listen to millions

of audio clips and develop a more nuanced understanding of sound,” he explains. He found ML models built from on the largest TB benchmark dataset (CODA), and working with Faisal, a friend from California, Michael sourced code from existing models and incorporated novel machine learning techniques to build his own model; it outperformed all other published techniques on standard performance metrics. The strength of their concept and research earned Michael and Faisal a spot in the 2024 Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair, the world’s largest precollege STEM competition. There they won the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) First Place Award for Global Health, which came with a \$5,000 prize. They also earned fourth-place honors in the Robotics and Intelligent Machines category, and an additional \$500.

Learn more about Michael and Faisal’s work through their Regeneron ISEF virtual booth by scanning this QR code. >



Engineers for Earth Day!

TAFT’S ENGINEERING CLUB invited the full Taft community to join them in building a campus habitat for native pollinators. The bee house project, which was designed and conceptualized by Engineering Club members, began during Earth Week and was installed later in the spring.



Global Changemaker

FOR HER CAPSTONE PROJECT in the Global Online Academy’s Prisons and Criminal Justice Systems course, Theresa Alves ’24 considered the abolition of the prison system as we know it and explored alternative approaches to criminal justice. Central to her work were three essential questions related to public safety and accountability, challenges that could accompany the transition from punitive justice to rehabilitation and restorative justice, and the role of communities in shaping and implementing alternative forms of justice. Her project was selected for inclusion in the GOA Catalyst Exhibition Showcase; it was among only 53 chosen for inclusion from a field of more than 950 projects.

Taft is a member of the Global Online Academy, giving students access to a wide range of nontraditional courses, as well as a network of people and resources from more than 140 independent schools in more than 30 countries around the world. GOA students are global citizens and modern learners, working in an environment where curiosity and passion drive learning. Students log in multiple times a week to engage in discussions, collaborate on projects, and apply knowledge in creative ways.



Honoring Excellence

The annual Upper Mid Awards Ceremony is a celebration of academic excellence and achievement, community service and commitment, and accomplishments in both the national and international arenas. “These awards are really about rewarding consistent hard work over time, habit, sacrifice, perseverance,” noted Head of School Peter Becker ’95 in opening the ceremony. “And hopefully also the joy of pursuit.”



^ Scan the QR code for the full list of honorees and to watch the ceremony.



PHOTO COURTESY BRUCE FIFER

Through independent tutorials, Taft

offers students who have taken all available courses in specific disciplines the chance to continue their studies through high-level, independent work. This year, Elle Smiley ’25 and Sara Takanabe ’24 worked with theater teacher Helena Fifer and New York-based theater and film actress Andrus Nichols on scenes from Stephen Sondheim’s musical *Assassins* and Kate Hamill’s adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*. Nichols appeared as Elinor Dashwood in Hamill’s original production of the adapted work. Their study culminated in a five-scene performance in the Woodward Black Box Theater.



From the Taft classroom to Lehigh University,

Collins Aerospace Space Systems, and back again, Kevin Molder ’16 returned to the Taft classroom to talk about his experience as an electrical manufacturing engineer, building and refurbishing extravehicular mobility units (space suits!) for NASA astronauts. Molder (right), with Taft engineering teacher Dan Calore, brought his scale-model EMU to give Taft engineering students an exciting look at life after Taft.

‘Glocal’ Learning

STUDENTS IN MRS. FREW’S HUMAN GEOGRAPHY class visited Hungry Reaper Farm in Morris, Connecticut, to close out their unit of study on agricultural systems around the world. The farm’s cofounder and manager, Will O’Meara ’12, walked Tafties through the farm’s systems, philosophies, and products. Hungry Reaper Farm adheres to National Organic Program standards and manages the farm “in a way that mimics the systems we observe in nature.” It sells its produce in local grocery stores and farm markets, and at its own farm stand on weekends.



Campus Life



PHOTO COURTESY BRUCE FIFER

Each year, James M. Barton '60 offers members of the Taft community an opportunity to travel to New York and enjoy a performance at the Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center, followed by dinner in the city. This year, Tafties were thrilled to take in Puccini's *Turandot*. Many of the

attendees (as well as a large contingent of opera aficionados) enjoyed a preview on campus Friday night, when The Met's senior editor, Christopher Browner '12, returned to campus with performers from The Met's Young Artist Program to share the story of *Turandot* and its inception.



Living History

THE TOTALITY of the much-anticipated 2024 eclipse may have only lasted 4 minutes and 27 seconds (and Watertown may only have seen 93% totality), but the fun and community connection lasted all afternoon. Tafties donned their eclipse glasses and gathered on Jig Patio for the big event.



Fleeting Thoughts, the Taft School student art collective, showcased their art in Potter Gallery. Fleeting Thoughts artists work in a range of mediums, from painting and photography, to textiles, fashion and jewelry design, spoken-word poetry, and more. The group hosts exhibits, coffeehouses, and pop-up, hallway galleries throughout the year. Pictured, exhibiting artist and 2024 Mark Potter Award in Art winner Julianne Jin '24 .

The Red Plate Society: Culture, Connection, and Community

THE RED PLATE SOCIETY—a catering club that cooks student-submitted cultural dishes in the style of a “dorm feed”—was the brainchild of Nam Dao '25, Sean Liao '25, and Christian Yeung '25. The trio found themselves cooking a lot of meals from home in the HDT4 kitchen; they began sharing their favorite foods from Vietnam, Taiwan, and Hong Kong first with one another and then with other international students across campus. Tonchok Dhanasarnsilp'25 and Aman Dhiman'25 soon joined the cooking team.

“We end up bringing people back home through food,” says Christian. “I think it's a small thing, but having someone say to me, ‘Wow, I haven't had this in a year,’ or ‘I

haven't been home in a year and this really hit the spot,’ is probably the biggest reason I keep cooking.”

In the spring, they hosted a borscht dinner to raise funds to show support those affected by the war in Ukraine.

“Through our collective efforts,” says Nam, “we can make a meaningful difference.”

Below: From left, Red Plate Society chefs Christian, Tonchok, Nam, and Sean.

PHOTO COURTESY WILLIAM YANG '26



Taft's philanthropy group, the Red Rhino Fund, continued its tradition of awarding grant dollars to local nonprofits with a focus on youth, arts, and literacy. This year, the fund presented organizations with a total of \$14,500.



Collegium Musicum's performance at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields in New York City was a true tour de force! Taft's showcase choir took the show on the road to much acclaim.



PHOTO COURTESY PETER FREW

Tafties gathered along Main Hall for the annual World Fest celebration, an opportunity for community members—who represent more than 60 nations worldwide—to share their cultural heritage through the customs, art, music, food, and the traditions of their families. Students don traditional dress, prepare regional foods, and celebrate their heritage through the arts during the festival.



Taft's Mahjong Club is bringing the 19th-century Chinese tile game to the Taft's campus. Typically a four-person game, it is often played at family gatherings. There are many regional variations; the students in the photo are playing a Taiwanese version of the game. Fun fact: The game was originally called 麻雀, or sparrow, because the clatter made when the tiles are shuffled sounds like the chattering of sparrows.



That feeling when you finally spot your brick...



"The Annual" Carnival! As in, *The Taft Annual* (our yearbook) Carnival. An opportunity to collect yearbooks (and some signatures) while enjoying food trucks, games, music, inflatable fun, and more!

The school year didn't end

for the classes of '25, '26, and '27 when our graduates left campus on June 26. The hours and days that followed included reflection activities with advisors;

leadership activities for school mons, class committee members, and mids; college process meetings for upper mids; and teambuilding at an adventure course and service work for our lower mids.

On June 27, the remaining students gathered in celebration and connection at an event that featured a live band, dancing, an ice cream truck, and a candlelight ceremony unifying our community.



PHOTO COURTESY MELANIE PANASCI

Taft's Advancement team

hosted a special dinner to welcome the Class of 2024 to the ranks of the alumni community. Chief Advancement Officer Lawrence Crimmins and superstar alumnus and class agent Chandler Houldin '16 paid tribute to the class during the event. Seniors also received their yearbooks, and a pewter coin with the school shield on one side and the bust of Lincoln on the other, so that they can continue to rub his nose for luck long after their days of passing through Lincoln Lobby each day have passed.



Commencement morning always includes a beloved Taft tradition: Senior Class Chalk Talk, a collection of chalk messages honoring the graduating class on their big day.



This year dining services launched its new Kitchen 101 cooking classes with everyone's favorite meal—pasta! Led by our exceptional dining services team, the classes are a great way for students to learn basic cooking skills from real pros. The monthly classes feature different cuisines and include partnerships with campus clubs and affinity groups.



The Senior Class Picnic

is a time of fun and celebration, food trucks, yearbooks, college tees and sweats, games and gatherings, and one last chance to make lasting Taft memories.



Is there anything better than sharing warm moments on a cool spring night around a firepit? We think not!



MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 2024 WILL CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION JOURNEYS AT A BROAD RANGE OF EXCEPTIONAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES. LIKE MANY CLASSES BEFORE THEM, 2024 WILL SEND MORE RHINOS (9) TO GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY THAN ANY OTHER SCHOOL. THERE WILL ALSO BE AN IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF RHINOS AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY (7), WITH ANOTHER DOZEN SPLIT EVENLY BETWEEN BOSTON COLLEGE AND NEW YORK UNIVERSITY.

The number of students from this year’s graduating class attending a given university is reflected in parentheses following the school’s name. Those with no parenthetical reference will welcome one Taft grad this fall.

American University of Paris	George Washington University	Rice University	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (3)
Amherst College (4)	Georgetown University (9)	Rutgers University (2)	University of Notre Dame
Babson College (2)	Gettysburg College (4)	Sewanee: The University of the South	University of Pennsylvania (4)
Barnard College (2)	Hamilton College	Southern Connecticut	University of Richmond (2)
Bates College (2)	Harvard University (4)	State University	University of San Diego (3)
Bentley University (2)	Indiana University, Bloomington (2)	Southern Methodist University (2)	University of Southern California (2)
Boston College (6)	Lehigh University	Syracuse University (2)	University of St Andrews (5)
Boston University (3)	Marist College	Texas Christian University	University of Texas at Austin
Bowdoin College (2)	McGill University (2)	Trinity College (3)	University of Toronto
Brown University	Middle Tennessee State University	Tufts University	University of Virginia (3)
Bucknell University (2)	Middlebury College (2)	Tulane University (2)	Unliversity of Western Ontario
Centre College	New York University (6)	Union College (NY)	University of Wisconsin, Madison (3)
Colby College (3)	Northeastern University (2)	United States Air Force Academy	Villanova University (2)
College of the Holy Cross	Oberlin College	United States Naval Academy (2)	Wake Forest University
Colorado College (2)	Ohio State University, Main Campus	University of California, Berkeley (3)	Washington and Lee University (2)
Columbia University	Pennsylvania State University (2)	University of Chicago (3)	Washington University in St. Louis (2)
Cornell University (7)	Pomona College	University of Connecticut (2)	Wesleyan University (3)
Dartmouth College (3)	Providence College	University of Denver	William & Mary
Denison University	Purdue University	University of Massachusetts, Amherst	Williams College (2)
Emory University	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	Yale University (2)	
Franklin and Marshall College	Rhode Island School of Design (2)		

Welcome

Lydia Mann,
Director of College Counseling

LYDIA MANN, an accomplished college admission leader with deep experience in boarding school college counseling, has been named Taft’s next director of college counseling. The appointment comes after a five-month nationwide search. “We are thrilled to welcome Lydia to the Taft community,” said Head of School Peter Becker ’95. “Her experience in college admission coupled with her background in boarding school college counseling position Lydia to strategically lead Taft’s

college counseling work. Lydia stood out in the search for her ability to build on Taft’s student-centered process, ensure that it is integrated into the school’s overall program and result in college options that are great for Taft students.” Mann will lead the college office’s staff of six as they support students and their parents/guardians through the college selection, application, and admission process. She previously served as the director of admissions outreach at Clark University,

where she built a student-centered college admission process, managed and mentored nine staff members, made strategic improvements to the university’s recruitment efforts, developed innovative marketing and outreach materials, and was instrumental in developing admission access and inclusion initiatives. Prior to her work at Clark, Mann served as senior associate director of college counseling at Pomfret School and as senior assistant dean of admission at Reed College. ■

New Parents’ Fund Co-Chairs

Whitney and Raja Chatterjee P’25,’27



TAFT IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE the newest leaders in our volunteer community, Parents’ Fund co-chairs Whitney and Raja Chatterjee P’25,’27. The Chatterjees also serve as members of Taft’s Board of Trustees. We are grateful for the dedication and leadership they have already shown as Taft parents and members of the Parents’ Committee for the past two years, and look forward to the connections they will build and insights they will bring to this important role. Residents of New York City and Washington, Connecticut, Whitney and Raja are familiar faces on campus, spending time cheering on Xander ’25 and his teammates on the basketball and lacrosse teams, and Cece ’27

on the soccer field and tennis courts. They are engaged and enthusiastic school supporters in every regard, and, with other Taft families, postgame regulars at Fino. Whitney is a partner and chief legal officer of Apollo Global Management, where she oversees and manages its legal and compliance team and serves on the firm’s leadership team. Prior to joining Apollo, she spent over 20 years at Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, where she most recently served as head of the investment management practice. Whitney serves on the board of Advocates for Children and is a member of the Steep Rock Foundation’s Preservation Committee. She received her J.D. from Columbia Law School and her B.A. from Hamilton College.

Raja is general counsel at Kasa. Prior to joining Kasa, he was global risk and compliance officer at Tishman Speyer, and managing director at Morgan Stanley in several global roles in the legal and compliance division. Raja started his career as a prosecutor at the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office and the U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division. He serves on the board of Lawyers Without Borders and is the president of the board of trustees of the Gunn Memorial Library and Museum. Raja received his J.D. from Temple Law School and B.A. from the University of Maryland. ■

2024 Retirements

Reflection & Gratitude

THIS YEAR'S RETIREMENT OF SEVERAL LONGTIME FACULTY MARKS A TIME OF DEEP REFLECTION AND GRATITUDE. FOR MANY ALUMNI, MEMORIES OF THE KINDNESS, COMPASSION, KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE, EXCELLENCE, AND DEDICATION EACH OF THOSE FACULTY MEMBERS BROUGHT TO THE COMMUNITY ARE SEMINAL; THEY FORM THE FOUNDATION OF WHAT TAFT IS, WAS, AND REPRESENTS TO SO MANY, INCLUDING HEAD OF SCHOOL PETER BECKER '95.

“The Frews, the McCabes, Patti Taylor, and John Magee are boarding school educators who exemplify the best of what it means to teach at Taft,” says Becker. “In classrooms, over meals, in the dorm, on the bus, athletics, arts, and service, Peter, Baba, Sue, Steve, Patti, and John have cared personally about students, about their colleagues, and about the interconnected school community. They’ve done it with a positive attitude, humor, patience, tireless and self-sacrificial work, and excellence. To each of you I say, Taft will miss you even as we hold you up as models of what to aspire to for ourselves and future Taft faculty. On behalf of the thousands of students, alumni, colleagues, and parents whose lives you’ve touched—who are more humane and more likely to seek to serve others because of you—thank you!”



John Magee
English

AFTER GRADUATING from Berkshire School, Dartmouth College, and with an MA from Middlebury College, John taught at The Lawrenceville School and then worked in the finance sector. In 2005, he arrived at Taft, his teaching home for the next 19 years. John’s students (and *Papyrus* editors) “benefited from his unique brand of nurturing during their time at Taft, and gained a lifelong mentor,” notes Dean of Faculty Edie Traina.

English Department Head Eileen Bouffard ’98 recalls John’s frequent reference to Robert Browning’s line, “Ah but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp/ Or what’s a heaven for?” noting that it invites a number of relevant pedagogical

questions, including what happens to effort once perfection is attained?

“The spirit of the line parallels John’s contributions to the English Department and the wider Taft community,” she says. “He would often appear at my door saying, ‘How can I help? What do you need me to do?’ In the classroom, his electives were often overenrolled. One of our resident poets, he frequently shared his original work with the wider community. He served as the faculty advisor to *The Taft Papyrus* for decades. He regularly facilitated independent studies in capital markets. Hundreds of Taft students have benefited from his teaching, his coaching, his advising, and his mentorship.”

Patti Taylor
Reference Librarian



FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, Patti Taylor was a steady and welcoming presence in the Hulbert Taft Jr. Library. She joined the staff in 1993 as a library assistant and retired this year as a reference librarian and esteemed faculty member.

“Patti had the unique ability to take any student—regardless of their level of experience, how much progress they have made in their project, or level of panic—and calmly and gently bring them to a place of enthusiastic buy-in with the research process,” says Library Director Sean Padgett. “She approached her work as a reference librarian with both empathy and professionalism, and the students responded to that with trust. It is that trust that helped make her such an effective teacher, and ensured that students will comfortably and confidently seek out her help again and again.”

Patti holds a bachelor’s degree from St. Lawrence University; she earned a Master of Library and Information Science from Simmons University, widely regarded as one of the top MLS programs in the country. And while library science changed dramatically during Patti’s tenure at Taft, her dedication to the discipline did not. Guiding students and faculty members to reference sources and services required Patti to not only enter the digital information era at its onset, but to effectively master



its navigation and ongoing evolution—and to always be one step ahead of the curve, and of the constituents she served in the Taft community. The challenges were dynamic and unpredictable, from helping students understand the importance of referencing only credible online sources, to discerning which fit the bill in an age of often unfiltered information overload.

“Patti has been a rock-solid ally through a time of tremendous challenge and change at the library,” notes Padgett. “She has been willing to continuously learn new skills and push her comfort zone as a teacher and librarian in service of our students and faculty.”

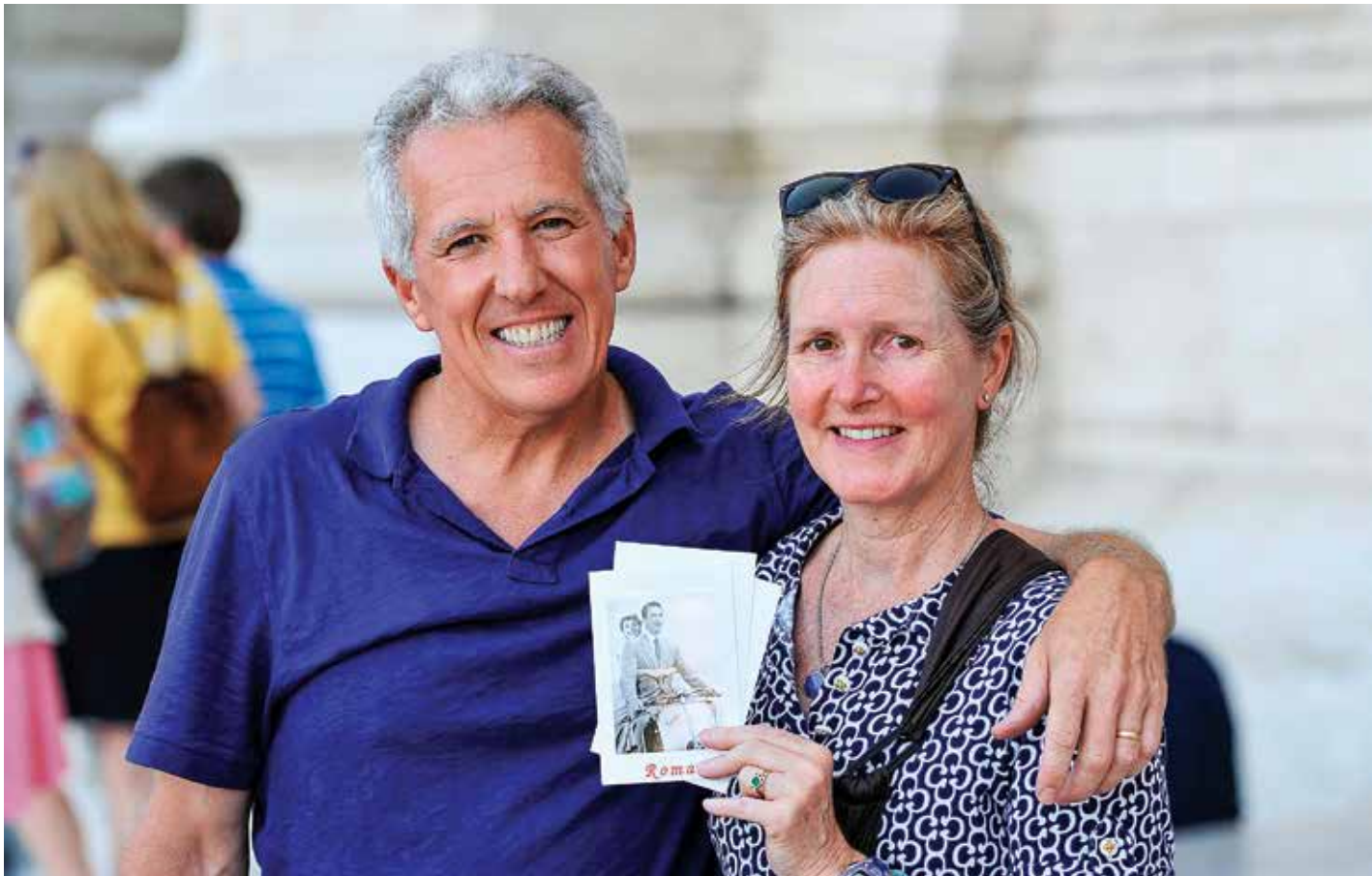
As a faculty member, Patti also served as an advisor to Taft students, establishing lasting relationships with many. She was a role model in the community, living the school motto on campus and beyond. Patti played an integral role on Taft’s Summer Reading Committee, led Taft’s Annual Holiday Drive for a number of years, gave blood during our campus blood drives, and chaperoned students traveling to the St. Vincent DePaul Soup Kitchen for Friday night meal service, to name just a few of her contributions to service and to our community.

Patti was (and will surely remain!) a Taft superfan, often on sidelines cheering our student athletes on. ■



Like everyone in the Taft community, the *Bulletin* team is filled with a range of emotions when our colleagues announce their retirements. We are grateful for the years they have dedicated to Taft students and the community; in awe of their talents and achievements and of all we have learned from them; wistful that the next generation of students won’t know their wit and brilliance; excited to see what lies ahead. While we would love to dedicate pages and pages to each, we have established the following policy for covering retirements in this space:

- > The *Taft Bulletin* will run a one- to two-page article on Taft faculty members who are retiring after 30 or more years of service to the school.
- > Any employee who is retiring with 20-plus years and who is student- or alumni-facing receives a paragraph or two.
- > Any employee who is retiring with 20-plus years of service to Taft receives a photo and a two- to three-sentence caption.



The Legacy That is Peter & Baba Frew

PETER FREW '75 first arrived on the Taft campus eager to study science. He was in fourth grade; the science program was for young campers. Now, more than a half-century later, Pete is retiring as one of the most highly regarded admissions directors in the independent school community.

Pete officially enrolled as a day student in 1971—a revolutionary year, he notes, the first year of coeducation at Taft. In a 1985 letter to then Head of School Lance Odden inquiring about job prospects, Pete

described himself as “a mediocre student at Taft,” and a seemingly “unlikely candidate for an intellectual future.” But Pete had found his passion in the English classroom at Middlebury College. And in a history classroom, he found Elizabeth Ashby aka Baba. Baba was a human geography major at Middlebury. She later earned a master of arts in Spanish language and literature. Pete went on to earn a master of arts from Middlebury’s Bread Loaf School of English. Pete did, indeed, return to Taft



to teach English in 1985; Baba, an exceptional Spanish teacher, followed in 1988. Together, they have touched almost every aspect of life at our school. They built a life here, raising their children, Max '10 and Amanda '05, on campus. They have helped shape Taft into the community it is today, and we couldn't be more grateful.

EXCERPTS FROM TRIBUTES HONORING PETE AND BABA FREW ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR RETIREMENTS

Honoring Baba From Head of School Emeritus Willy MacMullen '78

When Lance Odden appointed Baba in 1988, he knew that Taft was getting a gifted young Spanish teacher, but he could not have known then that a woman who would light up the classroom, change the school, and leave a profound legacy had arrived.

By her third year, she was clearly one of the finest instructors on campus, and then she did something *no one* was doing: she started teaching World Geography, meaning she was simultaneously working in two different departments. Naturally, the two chairs fought over her, each wanting her full time since she brought an amazing, gentle, and empathic care to her classes, this combined with high standards, impeccable pedagogy, and passion for the material. Students loved her. She made the material *matter*. She personified teaching excellence.

Carrying deep convictions about service and citizenship, Baba became increasingly

interested in and committed to our community service program, such that today she is service at Taft, the person more responsible than anyone in leading the school to new ways of living our motto.

In 1998, she became the head of our afternoon volunteer program—everything from taking students to the soup kitchen, to leading the school on Community Service Day, to coordinating bold new programs in Waterbury. Using her Spanish fluency, her unique warmth, and her quiet determination, she connected with diverse municipal

leaders and created partnerships and programs that connected Taft students and faculty with the city. Tafties tutored in city schools, cared for the elderly, cleaned neighborhoods, and mentored in the Police Activities League. She was wonderfully ambitious, a dreamer who got things done, who solved problems, and who created change. With no ego and no interest in accolades, with gentle kindness and iron resolve, she was changing Waterbury, changing Taft, changing lives. That will be her legacy, and it is a beautiful and enduring one.

“[Baba] is service at Taft, the person more responsible than anyone in leading the school to new ways of living our motto.”





Honoring Pete

From Head of School Emeritus Willy MacMullen '78

Peter's first love was the English classroom. That's how I remember him as well in those years: we were both teacher/coaches. Students loved him: he was passionate and energetic, enthusiastic about the literature, fun in the classroom. And from the start, he was coaching: girls' JV soccer, boys' varsity squash, and tennis. It was clear he

was born for this work and this place.

Early in my tenure, I asked Peter to become the Director of Admissions. My appointment letter read, "This begins a new era: the Frew years." And so it did. For the next nearly 20 years, Peter was the best in the business. Peers all over New England saw him as a model, constantly

calling him for advice. National conferences asked him to speak. Visiting families loved him, thinking if Taft was anything like this guy—humble, funny, honest, caring, inclusive, warm, smart—then this the school for them. I was awed at his energy, his ability to connect, his charisma.

Colleagues marveled at how he oversaw



"He, more than anyone, shaped the global student body and our school reputation into what you know today."



the admissions process, the daunting task of finding 180 students from a pool of 1,800, with his combination of humor, experience, and commitment. He built the best office team around. He was funny and informal, but make no mistake: he was also incredibly strategic, tactically astute, tireless in effort. He had a vision of Taft—modern, global, exciting, challenging, communal—and it inspired everyone. And every September he presented the faculty with a gift of a new community: bright, eager students from around the world and with wonderfully diverse experiences. He, more than anyone, shaped the global student body and our school reputation into what you know today.

But there is more. Peter will leave as one of the greatest coaches Taft has known—in two sports. As squash coach, he coached from 1987 to 2006, and won eight league and four New England's titles. He's still coaching tennis today. He is viewed by peers all across the landscape as the finest racquet coach in New England.

Taft will never have another Peter Frew. He loves this place, and it loves him back. With the rarest optimism and energy, with his expansive vision of what Taft might be, with the passion and class he showed on the courts, Peter has served Taft brilliantly, and his legacy as the man who annually shaped campus and who planted the seeds of the dreams we teachers have each September will never be forgotten.



Honoring Pete and Baba

Tributes from Arts Faculty Bruce and Helena Fifer

"There will probably never be anyone who exemplifies the school motto quite like Baba."

Twenty-eight years is a good amount of time to get to know someone. The Frews were not only our friends at school, they were our traveling companions in Europe and chaperones on every Collegium choir trip. They were our best cheerleaders, chaperones, documentarians, and crisis management team. Along with Lindsay Leal and Mark and Edie Traina, we called ourselves the Dream Team, because we enjoyed each other's company, and we enjoyed seeing the effect that the trips had on the kids as well as the effect their singing had on their audiences.

There will probably never be anyone who exemplifies the school motto quite like Baba, but she also loves roller coasters, staying fit, and Javier Bardem. She can fall asleep immediately after getting in a car. She loves going to the dentist, which I find really strange. She never eats junk food. More importantly, Baba is a deeply committed and talented teacher, a champion of countless charitable causes, a fantastic cook, a generous host, and a thoughtful friend.

Pete loved Taft as a student, in much



"[Pete] has been the gatekeeper of this school, the person who has been most responsible for who we are as a community, with a blend of just the right portions of humor, flexibility, dedication, and vision."

the same way that he loves it still. In his years of service here, he has been the gatekeeper of this school, the person who has been most responsible for who we are as a community, with a blend of just the right portions of humor, flexibility, dedication, and vision. Without him we would not be the school we are today. ■

Together at Taft

Celebrating 43 Years with Sue & Steve McCabe

SUE AND STEVE MCCABE met as students at Bowdoin College. After graduation—and marriage in 1980—they joined Taft’s Mathematics Department in the fall of 1981. Together. And together they raised three children—Kara ’02, Katie ’04, and Michael ’07—as part of the Taft family. For 43 years, they were not only the mainstays of the Mathematics Department, but beacons of light, compassion, and caring; leaders and mentors, counselors, confidants, and advisors; the longest serving coach in school history (looking at you, Steve!); and truly, deeply beloved members of the Taft School community. And now, together, Sue and Steve McCabe retire.

Over the course of her four decades at Taft, Sue has been a head varsity squash and tennis coach, dormitory faculty, and senior class dean. She has taught algebra at the introductory through honors levels, geometry, precalculus, calculus, and honors statistics. In 1990, she completed a master of arts in liberal studies in mathematics at Wesleyan University.



Steve, too, has made his mark both in and outside the classroom. He has served as head and assistant varsity football coach, assistant varsity hockey coach, and head track coach. He has taught algebra at the introductory through honors levels, geometry, and precalculus. Additionally,

Steve taught at Taft’s Summer School for close to 30 years and served as the program’s director in 1994–96 and 2002–10. He, too, completed a master of arts in liberal studies in mathematics at Wesleyan University. It has been, he told *The Pap*, a “very charmed career.”



EXCERPTS FROM TRIBUTES HONORING SUE AND STEVE MCCABE ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR RETIREMENTS

Honoring Sue

Words of Tribute from Head of School Emeritus Willy MacMullen ’78

From the start, one of the things that marked Susan was her humility. Her respect for the talent of others was such that she almost couldn’t see how good she was. Everyone else did. That’s Susan: someone who never blew her own horn, who simply came to campus every day and was the portrait of professionalism, empathy, commitment, and care.

She was a great math teacher, and she insisted on challenging herself. Susan never rested. But where she was best was where perhaps no other teacher could succeed: with students who, to be charitable, were not our strongest. A series of academic deans knew that it would take the very best teacher to take this group through senior spring term, and while none would admit it, they found a way to assign them to Susan. She had incredible balance: she was tough enough to tongue-lash a recalcitrant

class, give a pop quiz, call out bad behavior—but she also cheer led, laughed a lot, cared deeply, and they knew it. The last thing a Mrs. McCabe student wanted to do was disappoint her. They loved her.

Susan emerged as one of my most trusted figures on campus. For years, she worked closely with me advising the school monitors, and I relied on her. Every year we sat in my living room with them, Susan there fireside, sharing wisdom and laughs and tears and love. In 2013, I asked her to be senior class dean, and it was as if this was the role she was born for. She was amazing. For the class, she was like your cool

aunt—the only one you will listen to when things are hard and you don’t want to hear from your parents. There was nothing she would not do, and to the faltering senior she was at their side right to Commencement. She shaped the identity not just of every senior but also of the entire class.

Writing Susan last spring was one of the harder letters I have ever penned. My affection and respect can scarcely be measured. I wrote, “Yours has been a beautiful, brave, and passionate career of service.” Like so many of you out there, I was lucky to have worked alongside her, knowing she changed me in ways she will not even know.

“That’s Susan: someone who never blew her own horn, who simply came to campus every day and was the portrait of professionalism, empathy, commitment, and care.”



Honoring Steve

Words of Tribute from Head of School Emeritus Willy MacMullen '78

Steve seemed born to teach. He was a great math teacher, clear and commanding but also surprisingly gentle, and this I know from the many students who would tell me. When I asked what made him so good, I heard things like, “He just makes things clear”; “He’s super patient”; “He’s the first teacher I’ve had who made me feel I could actually succeed.” He taught everywhere: in the classroom, in his office, over a lunch. Steve simply refused to believe a student should fail. When a dean at a class committee meeting would ask Steve about a student who was struggling, his comments always showed he knew the student really well and had thought about how they best learned.

But it may be as coach that Steve had his greatest impact. He was a passionate

football coach, working alongside Larry Stone for years, and then winning a New England Championship in 1993. But it has been in track that Steve will leave a legacy unmatched in our school history: over 40 uninterrupted years as a head varsity coach and who knows how many Founders League champions. Coaching track is different and harder than any other sport: you have boys’ and girls’ teams, there are upwards of 70 or 80 athletes, ability levels vary hugely, and meets involve circus-like logistics. That’s where I will always remember Steve, striding around the track amidst the cacophony of bullhorn announcements for the next race, the crack of the starting gun, the sudden roar of a knot of fans. He would be everywhere, supervising the weight



“Steve seemed born to teach. He was a great math teacher, clear and commanding but also surprisingly gentle.”

events and congratulating an opposing shot putter for her personal best, stretching the tape to measure the discus throw, with a “There you go!” to a football player he had convinced to come out; high fiving the relay team when they broke a record. I have given up trying to do the math on how many Tafties he inspired at that track, but you and I know it’s in the thousands.

Steve seemed to do everything, and often the unglamorous things no one else wanted to do. He picked up classes when a colleague was ill. He ran our Summer School. He was a third of the Irish trio of McCabe, Magee, and MacMullen, splitting wood and clearing trails on Community Service Day. He oversaw Stayover for the hardened Disciplinary Report felons every vacation as they scrubbed the squash courts or stacked firewood—a Giamatti-esque *Holdovers* duty no one wanted. And when the Berkshire fans crowded into Odden Arena for a Saturday night hockey game, it was Steve I wanted standing between the fan groups. His instincts with teenagers were so true: he knew how to laugh, cajole, scold, convince, check. They listened to him with the perfect mix of affection, respect, and fear—and you don’t find that combination often. To do so much and so well, with so little ego and such cheer—well, that is rare, and if you witness it, as I did, you feel very lucky indeed.



Honoring the McCabes

Words of Tribute from Jen Kenerson

Susan and Steve have been math colleagues of mine for 30 years and more importantly, they have been like family to Jack and me and our boys. When I think of the McCabes, I think of family, friendship, and dedication. I met all of them in the summer of 1993 when I taught summer school. They are the model family unit that Jack and I hoped our family would be.

As math colleagues, they taught me how to set high expectations for myself and my students. They form incredible connections with their students that are valued and remembered. When Susan was the senior class dean with Jack, she knew *exactly* what the senior class was up to, as the kids would tell her *everything*. She supported them and helped them, especially those in great need.

We have attended weddings, baptisms, wedding showers, and baby showers and have celebrated love and loss. I can’t imagine Taft without Steve and Susan, but they won’t be far away. The impact [they] both have had on the thousands of students at Taft over the last 43 years is remarkable, and [they] will be deeply missed.

“By being exemplary math teachers and advisors, head coaches, and Summer School Director and Senior Class Dean, [Sue and Steve] have exemplified what it means to be a model team with terrific children who were and remain awesome Tafties.”



Honoring the McCabes

Words of Tribute from Jack Kenerson '82

When I first met Steve at Taft, it was September 8, 1981—the first day of football double sessions with coaches Stone, Brogna, and Romano. Little did anyone know that Steve would become a legendary Taft teacher on par with these three on that day over 40 years ago, and I certainly did not know that this young coach would become one of my closest and dearest friends.

I am not sure I can put into words how important [their] friendship was to me before Jen’s arrival at Taft, but as [they] did for many young teachers, [Sue and Steve] extended [their] friendship and welcomed us into [their] family. Today, I recall the postgame gatherings following football games at [their] home with equal parts nostalgia and romanticism, because I remember these parties as great events in a house that was crowded and loud and nothing ever went wrong. I remember everything as

being perfect—the team always executed perfectly, the food was always grilled just right, nothing was spilled on the floor, and Kara, Katie and Mike got along without any tears or physical altercations. Today, looking back to that time, [their] friendship exemplified how one could achieve balance in their Taft lives, which is a challenge.

During these postgame parties, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to get to know [their] parents, brothers and sisters, as well as Kara, Katie, and Big Mike, and it meant a lot to me. Once Jen and I were married, this opportunity significantly influenced us and how we have tried to keep family at the core of our Taft experiences. By being exemplary math teachers and advisors, head coaches, and Summer School Director and Senior Class Dean, [Sue and Steve] have exemplified what it means to be a model team with terrific children who were and remain awesome Tafties. ■

Winter **SPORTS** wrap-up

BY SEAMUS F. CONWAY
Photography by Robert Falcetti



Boys' Basketball

20-7

NEPSAC CLASS A SEMIFINALISTS

After completing a 20-win regular season, boys' basketball clinched a playoff berth and was the number four seed in the NEPSAC Class A playoffs. They went on to win their quarterfinal matchup against Williston by a score of 66-35, before falling 52-50 to Andover in the semifinals.

Jordan Elliott '24 drives to the basket against Andover in the NEPSAC Class A semifinal game on March 2.



Girls' Basketball

7-16

Faith Graziano '24 gets set to shoot a three-pointer against Kingswood-Oxford on November 29.



Boys' Hockey

10-11-4

Domenico Clarizio '26 heads up the ice against Salisbury during their November 29 matchup.



Girls' Hockey

8-12-3

Maisy Ricciardelli '24 fires a shot on net against Andover during the 40th Annual Patsy K. Odden Hockey Invitational Tournament on December 14.

Boys' Squash

10-2

3RD PLACE, CLASS A NEW ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

7TH PLACE, DIVISION I, U.S. HIGH SCHOOL SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIPS

Boys' varsity squash placed third in the Class A New England Championships. The weekend kicked off with a solid win over Andover in the quarterfinals and continued with a 4-3 loss to eventual champions Brunswick in the semifinals. They ultimately defeated the higher-ranked Kent 5-2 to secure the third-place finish. At Nationals, the boys finished seventh overall in a competitive Division I field.

Eyad Awad '25 in action against Salisbury on January 22. SEAMUS F. CONWAY



Boys' Skiing

4TH PLACE, NEPSAC CLASS B CHAMPIONSHIPS

Riley Geurts '26, Julian Prentice '24, Jack Moucha '24, Viktor Maag '25, and Chatten Simpson '24 had a challenge in the giant slalom and came back strong in the slalom, with Riley earning All-New England honors.

Riley Geurts '26 carving through a tight turn on the way down the mountain at Ski Sundown on February 7.



Girls' Squash

9-6

3RD PLACE, CLASS B NEW ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

CONSOLATION FINAL WINNER, DIVISION II, U.S. HIGH SCHOOL SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIPS

Girls' varsity squash finished third in the Class B New England Championships. The team celebrated a 4-3 win over Nobles, then bounced back from a 3-4 loss against St. George's to take a 4-3 win over Milton. At Nationals, they won the consolation finals, with their only loss coming against the team that would go on to win the tournament. They upset the number four seed on their way to the consolation round, winning three matches in a row, all 4-3.

Paige Bannon '25 looks to finish off a point against Ethel Walker on January 24. SEAMUS F. CONWAY



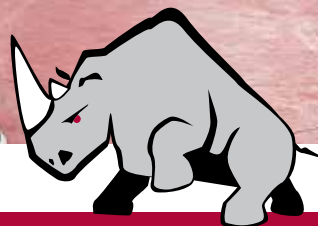
Girls' Skiing

2ND PLACE, NEPSAC CLASS B CHAMPIONSHIPS

Esmee Clew-Bachrach '24, Bella Dane '24, Sydney Grogean '24, Clarisse Moucha '26, and Tessa Lawson '26 had a great day, with both Bella and Esmee earning All-New England honors in both slalom and giant slalom.

Sydney Grogean '24 racing down the mountain at Ski Sundown on February 7.





Wrestling

10-5

7TH PLACE, WESTERN NEW ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

Taft wrestlers traveled to the Western New England Championships in February and came home with some impressive hardware. Congratulations to the entire team, whose work across the board earned them a seventh-place finish in a highly competitive 19-team field.

Jayden Piparo '25 look to pin his opponent from Hotchkiss during a match on January 13.

TREVOR STELLMACH '24

Spring SPORTS wrap-up

BY SEAMUS F. CONWAY
Photography by Robert Falcetti



Girls' Lacrosse

13-3

FOUNDERS LEAGUE
CHAMPIONSHIP FINALISTS

Girls' lacrosse ended their season with an overall record of 13-3, again making it to the Founders League championship game, where they would end up falling to Hotchkiss, 10-3.

Truus van Wees '24 heads into the offensive zone, looking to score against Kent on May 8.

WINTER 2023-24 ATHLETIC AWARDS

Boys' Basketball

James Paynter Logan Memorial Basketball Trophy—Jordan Elliott '24

Girls' Basketball

1978 Girls' Basketball Award—Faith Graziano '24

All-NEPSAC Honorable Mention—Faith Graziano '24

NEPSGBA All-Star, voted on by opposing coaches—Faith Graziano '24

Boys' Hockey

Coaches Hockey Award—Archer Brown '24, Gerrit Lansing '24

Angier Hockey Trophy—Alexander Kenerson '24

Girls' Hockey

Patsy K. Odden Award—Truus van Wees '24

Coaches Hockey Award—Katie Johnson '24

Boys' Squash

Boys' Squash Award—Eyad Awad '25, Wei Yan Tho '25

All-NEPSAC—Eyad Awad '25, Carl Roux '25, Wei Yan Tho '25

All-NEPSAC Honorable Mention—Jayden Oon '27, Harry Revenaugh '24

Girls' Squash

1986 Girls' Squash Award—Cece Salvatore '24

Skiing

Boys' Ski Racing Award—Jack Moucha '24

Girls' Ski Racing Award—Esmee Clew-Bachrach '24, Bella Dane '24

Wrestling

Harry F. Hitch Award—Jayden Piparo '25

Wynne Award—Ben Bazarian '25



Boys' Lacrosse

12-6

FOUNDERS LEAGUE
CHAMPIONSHIP FINALISTS

Boys' lacrosse finished off the year with a 12-6 record for the season, including a trip to the Founders League Championship game, where they fell to Loomis, 14-7.

Russell Fitzgerald '25 wins the face-off and heads up field against Loomis in the Founders League Championship game on May 22.

Girls' Crew

5-3

FOUNDERS
DAY REGATTA
CHAMPIONS (BOAT 1)

DU PONT CUP
CHAMPIONS (BOAT 1)

5TH PLACE, NEIRA
CHAMPIONSHIP
(BOAT 1)

2024 girls' varsity crew team.



Girls' Golf

11-1

2ND PLACE,
FOUNDERS LEAGUE

3RD PLACE, NEPSAC
PIPPY O'CONNOR
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL
GIRLS' GOLF CLASSIC
TOURNAMENT

2024 girls' varsity golf team.



Boys' Crew

3-2

5TH PLACE, FOUNDERS
DAY REGATTA (BOAT 1)

DU PONT CUP
CHAMPIONS (BOAT 1)

9TH PLACE, NEIRA
CHAMPIONSHIP (BOAT 1)

2024 boys' varsity crew team,
with coxswains in front.

Boys' Golf

8-2

FOUNDERS LEAGUE
CHAMPIONS

Boys' golf ended the season with an overall record of 8-2, had an impressive showing in their tournaments, and rounded out the year by claiming the Founders League Championship.

2024 boys' varsity golf team.



Boys' Tennis

10-2

SNETL CHAMPIONS

2ND PLACE, NEITA CLASS
A CHAMPIONSHIPS

In Coach Peter Frew '75's last season at the helm, boys' tennis claimed the SNETL crown and finished the season with a second-place finish at the NEITA Class A Championships.

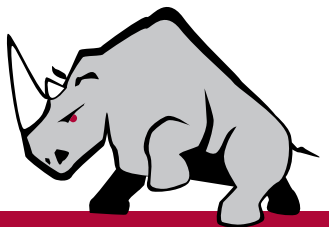
Denzel Seetso '25 serves against Salisbury on April 17.



Softball

6-9

Alayna Mariani '24 looks to throw a Loomis runner out at first base on May 1.



SPRING 2024 ATHLETIC AWARDS

Girls' Lacrosse

Wandelt Lacrosse Award—Truus van Wees '24
All-NEPSAC—Britty Page '25, Truus van Wees '24
All-NEPSAC Honorable Mention—Alexa Blaha '26, Reiley Pascale '25

Boys' Lacrosse

Odden Lacrosse Award—Ben Wick '24
All-NEPSAC—Ben Wick '24, Russell Fitzgerald '25
All-NEPSAC Honorable Mention—Tristan Bach '24, Chris Reinhardt '24

Crew

Girls' Crew Award—Esmee Clew-Bachrach '24, Sabrina Moffa '24
Boys' Crew Award—Agust Booth '24

Girls' Golf

Girls' Golf Award—Iylene Essien '24, Kyla O'Byrne '24

Boys' Golf

Galeski Golf Award—William Theiss '24

Boys' Tennis

Alrick H. Man Jr. '09 Award—Denzel Seetso '25

Girls' Tennis

George D. Gould Tennis Award—Estelle Maggard '25

Softball

Softball Award—Alayna Mariani '24

Baseball

Stone Baseball Award—Braeden Purser-Eber '24

Boys' and Girls' Track & Field

Seymour Willis Beardsley Track Award—Brody Bowser '24, Trevor Stellmach '24, Kate Cicchetti '24, Rina Kurihara '24

Girls' Tennis

6-4

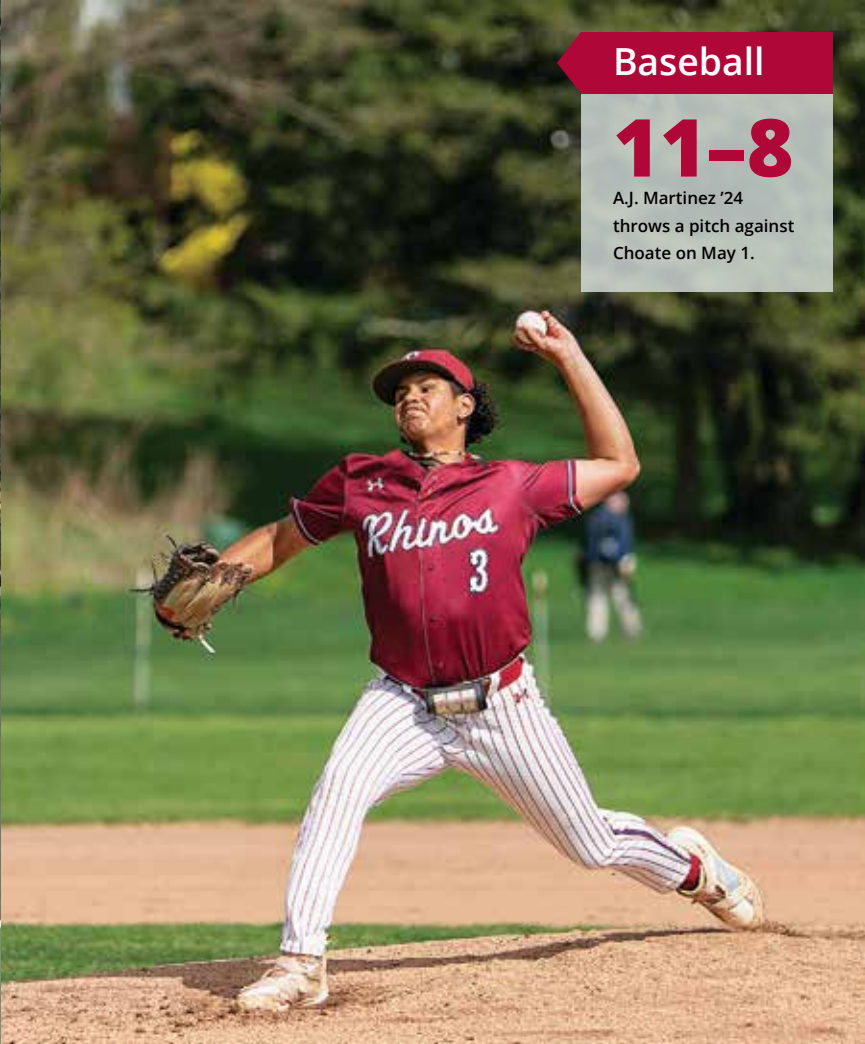
2024 girls' varsity tennis team.



Baseball

11-8

A.J. Martinez '24 throws a pitch against Choate on May 1.



Girls' Track & Field

11-3

2ND PLACE, FOUNDERS
LEAGUE TOURNAMENT

6TH PLACE, NEPSTA
DIVISION I TRACK AND
FIELD CHAMPIONSHIP

Sarah Rochester '26 sprints down the
homestretch during a relay on April 17.



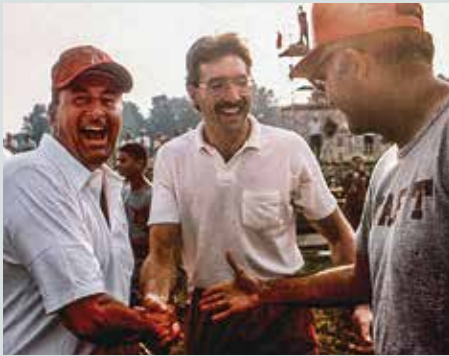
Boys' Track & Field

4-10

7TH PLACE, FOUNDERS
LEAGUE TOURNAMENT

11TH PLACE, NEPSTA
DIVISION I TRACK AND
FIELD CHAMPIONSHIP

Brody Bowser '24 pulls away from the
competition during a meet on April 17.



Longtime Track & Field Coach McCabe Receives Archibald A. Smith III Award

CONGRATULATIONS to Steve McCabe, longtime faculty member and track and field head coach, who was recently named the 2024 Archibald A. Smith III Award winner. The award is given on an annual basis, as warranted, to a coach for lifetime achievement and commitment to the Founders League ideals of educational excellence, sportsmanship, and outstanding competition.

One of two awards given by the Founders League, the Archibald A. Smith III Award was established in 2015 to honor the former Head of Trinity-Pawling School, Arch Smith, upon his

retirement. Smith began his career at Trinity-Pawling in 1975 as a teacher of chemistry and physics. During his transformative 40-year tenure, he went on to serve as director of college placement, assistant, headmaster, and ultimately, headmaster from 1990 to 2015.

"For more than four decades, Steve has served in a variety of positions at Taft—head and assistant varsity football coach, assistant varsity hockey coach, and head track coach. On the field, Steve's presence was equally felt. As head coach for the boys' and girls' track and field teams, he not only produced champions

but also cultivated a sense of community and camaraderie among his athletes. His ability to unite individuals from diverse backgrounds under a common goal exemplifies the transformative power of athletics in a boarding school setting," said Taft Head of School Peter Becker '95. "Beyond his roles as teacher and coach, Steve embodies the values of sportsmanship and integrity that define the Founders League. His unwavering belief in the potential of every student and his commitment to nurturing their growth as scholars, athletes, and individuals have left an indelible mark on our community." ■

A STELLAR YEAR FOR THE TAFT FUND

Thank you!

Our youngest alumni kicked off the fall with four well-attended events in New York City, Boston, D.C., and New Haven during the Taft-Hotchkiss Young Alumni Participation Challenge in November. April saw our most successful Day of Giving ever, with over \$1.7 million raised by 1,100 donors. We closed the 2023-24 fiscal year with a record-breaking \$6,265,950 raised, with 34% of alumni and 90% of current parents participating in the fund. Without the commitment from our amazing constituents, none of this would be possible.

We would like to extend a special note of gratitude to the 600-plus Class Agents and Parents' Fund Committee volunteers who work so hard for the fund throughout the year. Chris and Jane Hentemann P'19,'21,'24 did an incredible job as returning Parents' Fund co-chairs. A special thank you to Leslie Herrlinger Lanahan '73, P'08, who stepped up as a leader for the Former Parents' Fund. And finally, the Grandparents' Fund was successfully headed by Sam Crocker '60, P'89, GP'25,'27. Thanks to all our volunteers, and especially these leaders, who ensured Taft's success.

Go Rhinos and Go BIG RED!

Charlie Watson '88, P'21,'24,'26 and Tamara Sinclair '05

Taft Fund Co-Chairs



Taft Fund Class Awards

Chair of the Board Award

Largest Taft Fund amount contributed by a non-reunion class
Class of 1991: \$174,229
Peter Bowden
Brian Lincoln

Class of 1920 Award

Greatest increase in Taft Fund dollars from a non-reunion class
Class of 2000: Increase of \$100,633
Andrew Goodwin and John McCardell

Kerr Award

Highest percent participation from a class more than 50 years out
Class of 1960: 72%
Sam Crocker

McCabe Award

Largest Taft Fund amount contributed by a non-reunion class
Class of 1991: \$174,229
Peter Bowden

Romano Award

Greatest increase in participation from a non-reunion class 50 or fewer years out
Class of 2016: Increased participation by 7%
Teddy Zoellner

Snyder Award

Largest Taft Fund amount contributed by a reunion class 50 or fewer years out
Class of 1979: \$164,264
Patty Buttenheim and Pamela Cole

Spencer Award

Highest percent of gifts from classmates who have not given in the last five years
Class of 2016: 6%
Teddy Zoellner

Welch Award

Honors a long-serving class agent for their dedication to fundraising over the years
Class of 1958: Charlie Yonkers

Young Alumni Dollars Award

Largest Taft Fund amount contributed from a class 10 or fewer years out
Class of 2016: \$7,276
Teddy Zoellner

Young Alumni Participation Award

Highest percent participation from a class 10 or fewer years out
Class of 2018: 36%
Joe Hardison and Maddie Savage

Awards determined by dollars raised as of June 30, 2024

Parents' Fund Committee

Jane and Chris Hentemann, Co-Chairs
Allison and Matt Abbott
Jaiyeola and Tim Ashaye
Chris Barbuto and Dianne Duffey
Anne and Eric Baurmeister
Paula and John Bowser
Stacey Bronfman
Anderson Brown and Barbara Dillard-Brown
Mona and Simon Brown
Gina and Steven Burrows
Michelle and John Camp '92
Whitney and Raja Chatterjee
Hélène and Stuyvie Comfort
Melissa and Brook Dane
Adi and Vikram Dhiman
Rudette Dias
Bonita and Howard Erbstein
Marjorie and Nat Furman
Ally and Peter Gabriele
Tracy and Ray Harper
Debbie and Adam Heine
Bing Hsu '83 and Christine Wai

Polly and Alastair Hunt
Andrea and Christopher Ip
Deb and Chris Jaroch
Geoffrey Kao and Grace Cheung
Jana and Tim Kierstead
Patricia and Gerrity Lansing
Guochang Li and Yan Su
Victoria Larson Maggard '94 and Jeff Maggard
Gloria and Michael Masterson
Rina and Brian McNamara
Paige and Chad Meuse
Katie Michel
Aaron Dickson Millhiser '98 and Ross Millhiser
Jen and Terry Morris
Allison and Kevin O'Malley
Kim and Doug Pepper
Adrienne and Brian Raphalian
Cesar Reyes and Kim Famous
Alexia and Baird Ryan
Claire and Randy Salvatore
Scott Schereschewsky and Emma Risley



Parents' Fund Committee Co-Chairs Jane and Chris Hentemann at Taft's Commencement with children Henry '19, Emma '21, and Patrick '24. HIGHPOINT PICTURES

Marni and Bill Schwartz
Marisa and Nicholas Sheumack
Brooke and Luke Simpson
Charlotte and Douglas Snyder
Anne and Wally Sze
Chihiro and Teppei Takanabe
Sharon and Tom Teles
Annette and Mitch Theiss
Tara and Paul Vittone

Lu Wang and Xiaoqin Xiang
Lisa and Jake Watkins '93
Anne and Charlie Watson '88
Kim and Stu Woody '95
David Xu and Tiffany Hu
Jason Xu and Yilei Sun
Joanne and Wayne Yow
Zhanna and Dauren Zhaksybek

\$6,265,950
Taft Fund dollars

\$2,689,983
raised by Alumni

\$3,101,991
raised by Current Parents

\$473,976
raised by Former Parents,
Grandparents & Friends

3,548
Taft Fund donors

34%
Alumni participation

90%
Current Parent participation

49
states represented +
Washington, D.C.

50
countries represented

OUR VOLUNTEERS
558
Class Agents

60
Parents' Fund
Committee families

DAY OF GIVING
April 18, 2024
1,100
donors
\$1,752,282

YOUNG ALUMNI PARTICIPATION CHALLENGE
18%
Taft
vs.
21%
Hotchkiss

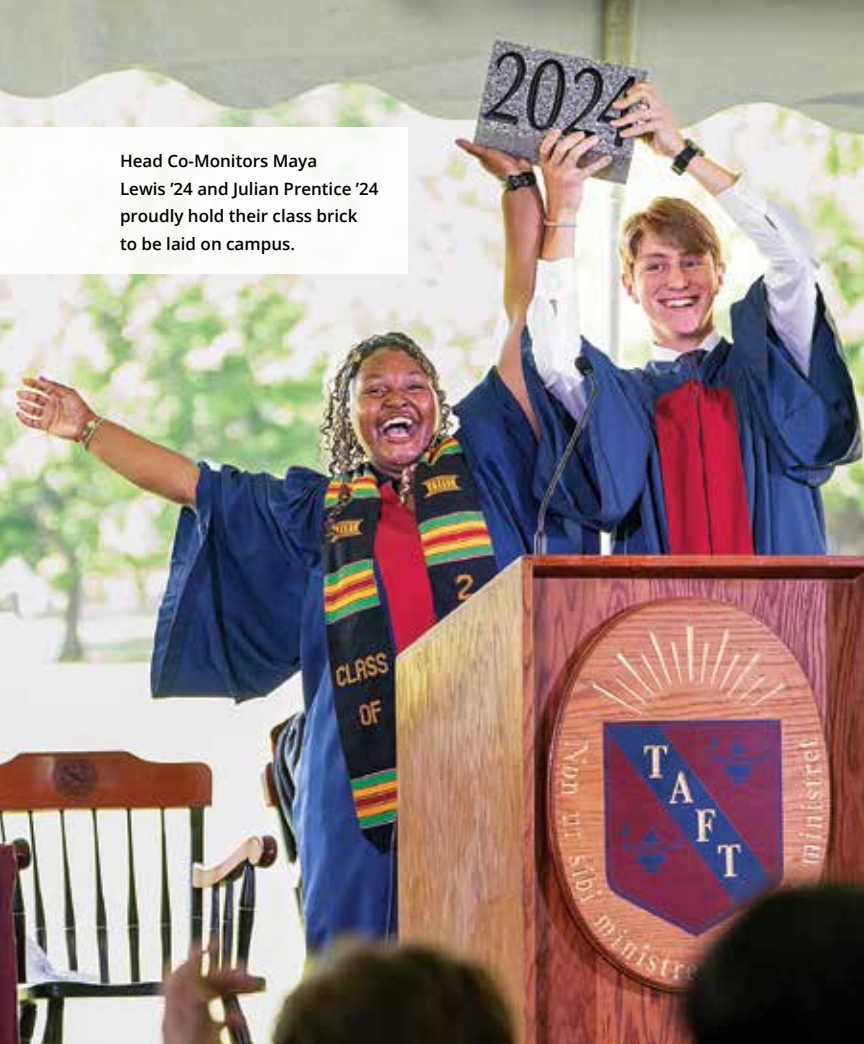




134th Commencement



Commencement speakers and current parents
Prof. Kathy Taylor, Esq. P'24 and Kevin T. Taylor P'24.



Head Co-Monitors Maya
Lewis '24 and Julian Prentice '24
proudly hold their class brick
to be laid on campus.

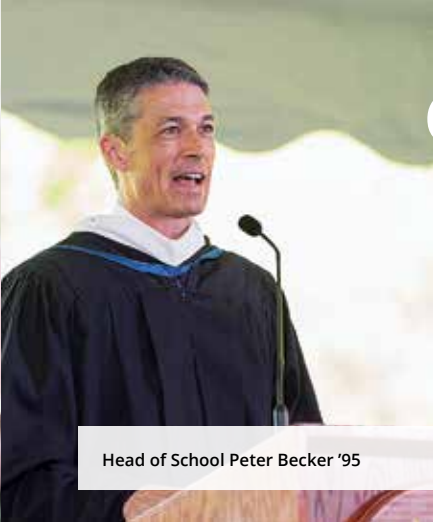
Photography by Robert Falcetti

Congratulations to the
Class of
2024!

HNKZ - STOCK.ADOBE.COM



2024!



“To cultivate wisdom is to embrace the perplexities of reality despite the temptation to oversimplify. At the deepest level, wisdom is in service of the question, ‘What am I living for?’ Know why you live the way you live and why you make the choices you make. Know what you believe and why and test it constantly.”

—Head of School Peter Becker '95



Saturday's Prize Night included a concert featuring Taft's Jazz Band and Chamber Ensemble (pictured) and Collegium Musicum.



For more photos, visit TaftPhotos.com.





Celebrating Reuniting & Honoring

Photography by Robert Falcetti, Seamus F. Conway, and James Shannon



Above: Retiring longtime faculty Baba and Peter Frew '75 were honored at the All-Alumni Dinner Dance.



75th Reunion

CLASS OF
19
49

It was a weekend to remember.

From class gatherings and an array of events and activities to a wonderful All-Alumni Dinner Dance honoring the McCabes and the Frews, it was a weekend of fun times and memorable moments.

View photo galleries >
<https://bit.ly/AW24Photos>





CLASS OF
19
89

35th Reunion



CLASS OF
20
04

20th Reunion



CLASS OF
19
54

70th Reunion



Celebrating Reuniting & Honoring



50th Reunion

CLASS OF
19
74





55th Reunion

Below: Hal Leeds '49, celebrating his 75th Reunion, and Henrietta Taylor take to the dance floor at the All-Alumni Dinner Dance.



15th Reunion



45th Reunion

Celebrating
Reuniting
& Honoring



30th Reunion





Left: Retiring longtime faculty Susan and Steve McCabe, with family, at the All-Alumni Dinner Dance, where they were honored.

Celebrating
Reuniting
& Honoring



John Dayton '64 Honored With 2024 Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal

In recognition of his steadfast loyalty and dedication to Taft, John Dayton '64 was honored with the 2024 Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal at the Old Guard Dinner during Alumni Weekend. The medal is given each year to a person whose life work best reflects the essence of the Taft School motto: *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*; Not to be served but to serve.

Below: Willy MacMullen '78, head of school emeritus; John Dayton '64, alumni medal honoree; and Peter Becker '95, head of school.



Celebrating
Reuniting
& Honoring



40th Reunion


CLASS OF
19
84



10th Reunion

CLASS OF
20
14



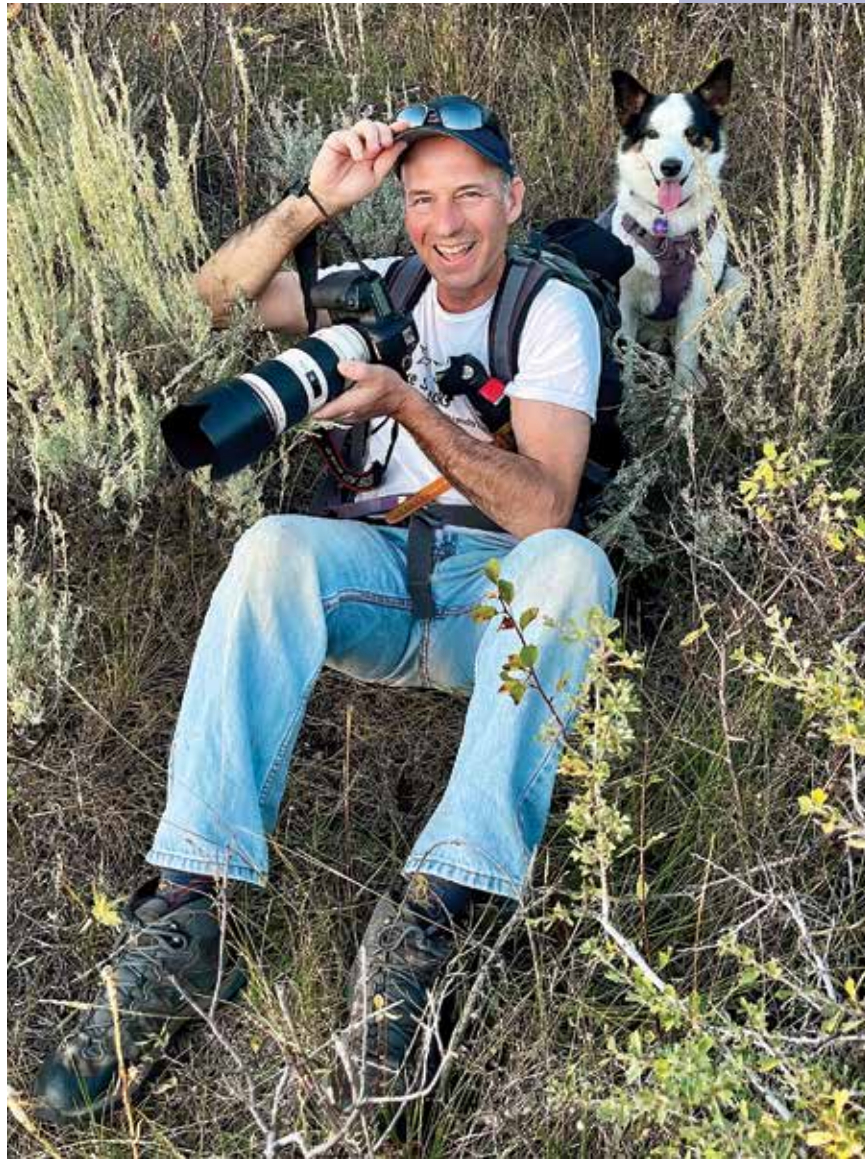


In the Studio & on Gallery Walls

Snow and light on a mountain ridge
in the Chugach Range near Cordova,
Alaska, on April 11, 2011, taken while
Jonathan Selkowitz '84 was on assignment with
a Warren Miller Entertainment film crew.

8 PROFESSIONAL **ALUMNI ARTISTS**

The Taft alumni community includes many professional visual artists. We've highlighted a few of them here to share a sampling of their creative work with our readers.



Jonathan Selkowitz '84 and his beloved dog Lucy, photographed by longtime friend Bryan Salatino.

JONATHAN SELKOWITZ '84

photographer

www.selkophoto.com

“I enjoy working with light, composition, and gesture to create visual impact in still photographs that communicate a slice of a story or an inspiration. Making photos is uniquely intriguing and satiating regardless of if I am using my iPhone or a professional camera.”



U.S. Ski Team member Lindsey Vonn beautifully bending her ski while charging down a giant slalom training course on Golden Peak in Vail, Colorado, on November 18, 2010.



The Super Flower Blood Moon
lunar eclipse rising over the northern Teton Range near Ashton, Idaho, on May 15, 2022.

Another Day At Sea
oil on canvas, 60 x 50 in.



MATT
PINNEY '96



Revolutionaries
oil on aluminum UV print, 48 x 48 in.

Matt Pinney '96 in his studio.



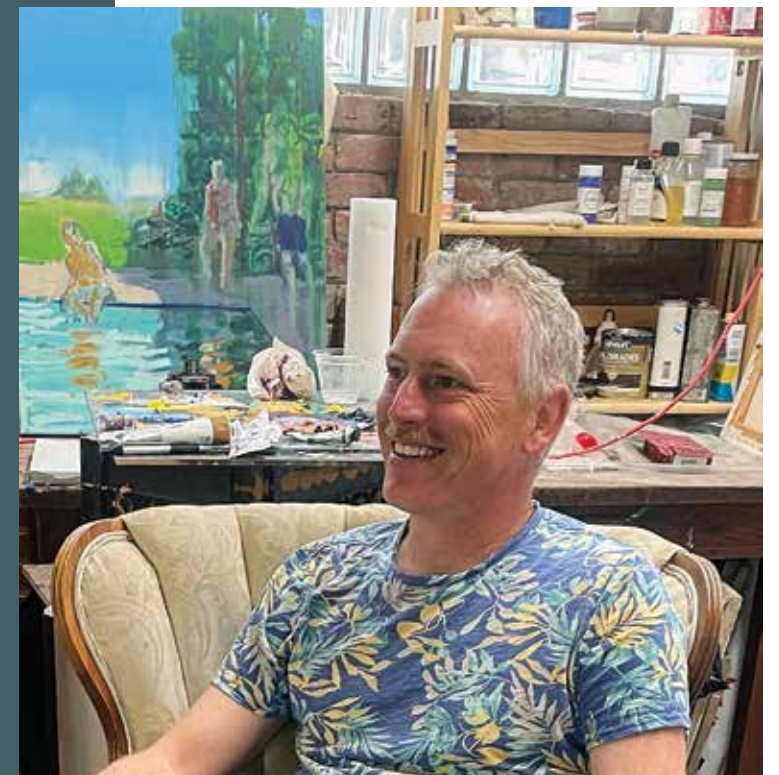
Pushkin's Tale of the Gold Fish
oil on canvas, 48 x 60 in.

MATT PINNEY '96

professor of art
Northern Virginia Community College

mattpinney.com

“**M**aking a painting for me is about looking closer at the world around me. As I become more attuned to what’s around me, I see more of the beauty in nature, more of the humanity in people, and more hope for our society. Even in the darkest observations, with a little creativity, a path forward becomes visible.”



EILEEN B. MOONEY '96

artist/teacher

eileenmooney.com

“I paint mostly from perception, but I also experiment with more conceptual, abstract work. I think that across all of the different work that I do, I am trying to express being—being with the objects/landscape and the light. I don’t want that to sound like more than what it is—I’m not trying to be too deep, but I do think that it is kind of contemplative. Painting from perception implies an artist’s ‘point of view,’ but the objects and the landscape are already there, whether I am there or not. I, this painter that I am, am here, witnessing them, and my paintings express this moment of witnessing—of being—on canvas.”



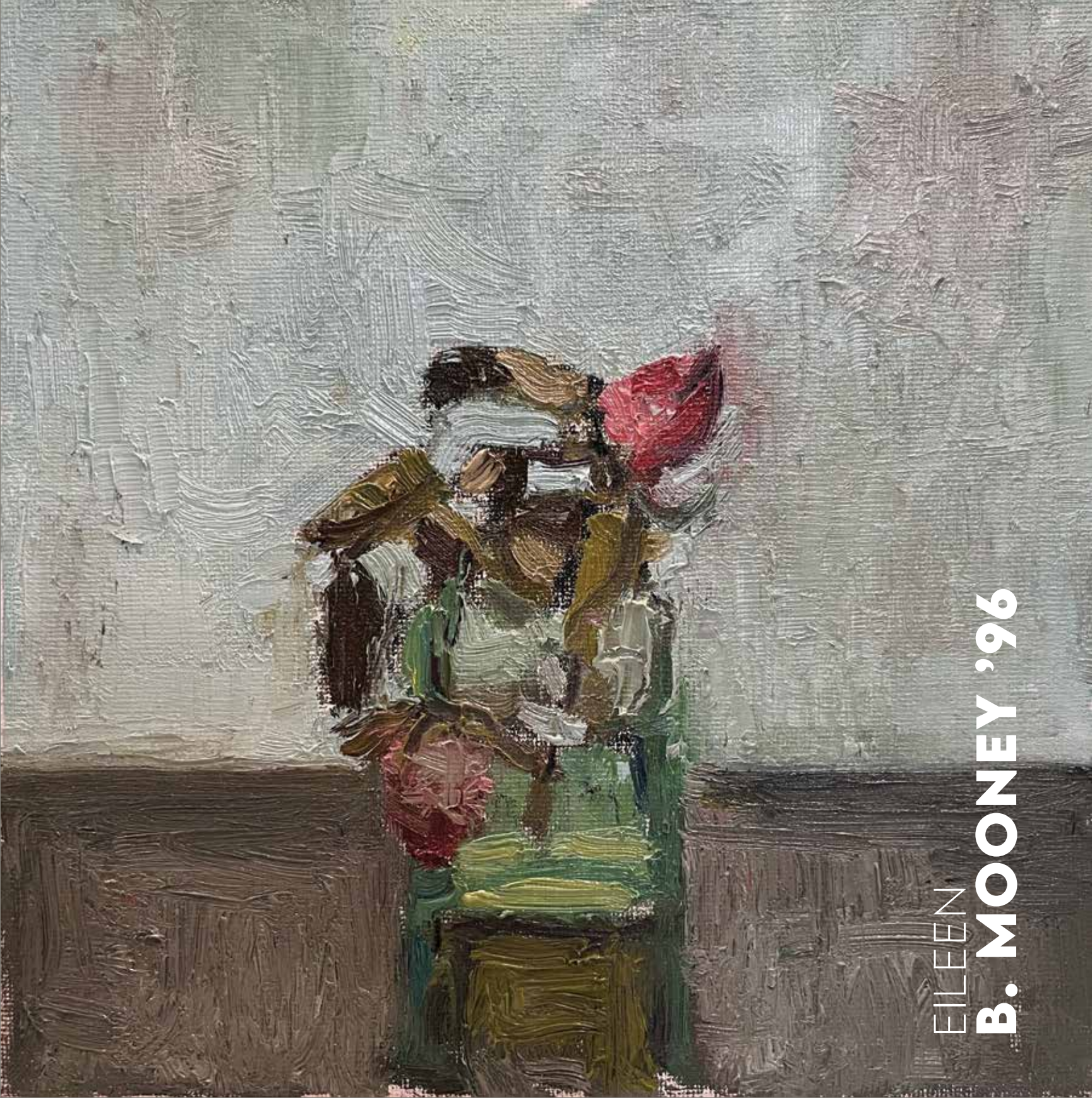
Colored Pencils in a Glass
acrylic on wood panel, 12 x 12 in.



Eileen Mooney '96 with her work at the Bowery Gallery in 2023.



Acorn Squash, Dried Roses in a Green Glass Bottle, Paper, and String
oil on wood panel, 9¼ x 14¾ in.



Dried Roses in a Green Glass Bottle
oil on canvas, 8 x 8 in.

EILEEN
B. MOONEY '96



Walking the Land
Flashe on paper



Pamet River
Gouache on paper

AMY
WYNNE '84



Amy Wynne '84 at
work in her studio.
MILES BURNETT

AMY WYNNE '84

artist

amywynne.com

“My creative process is an attempt to generate the bravery and momentum to communicate what it means to be human in relationship to impermanence. Making things is my vehicle for expressing and understanding that intimate relationship authentically.”

“My recent work includes color data, poetry, collage, and paintings, which I consider ‘Systems of Presence.’ These pieces are inspired by ‘awe walks’ in nature, mapping my experience moving through space and time. The speed of our existence leaves us with fleeting glimpses of nature. Walking is a touchstone, an invitation to slow down and pay attention. This practice has resulted in layers of perceptual memories...emerging in sequence and transforming over time.”

“This newest work is about interconnection...interbeing. It is a visual manifestation of my deep love and gratitude for the natural world and how walking the landscape has taught me over and over how to begin again.”

KENDALL AYOUB NICHOLS '92
contemporary portrait artist

kendallayoubnichols.com
Instagram: @kendallayoubnicholsartist

“I enjoy documenting and reflecting the contemporary culture I live in by painting representational portraits. I am currently focused on a series of paintings of women. I am highlighting activities and jobs various women are engaging and excelling in, especially those seen as stereotypically male—they are wilderness guides, athletes, restaurant and business owners. I believe that producing these works celebrates the progress women have already achieved through dedication and hard work. A few years ago, I captured the youthful attitudes and energy of my two children, Tom and Sam.”



Thomas
November 2018, oil on canvas, 36 x 60 in.



Sisters
October 2023, oil on canvas, 18 x 24 in.



Kendall Ayoub Nichols '92 in her studio
THOMAS NICHOLS

Wapokunie
November 2022, oil on canvas, 40 x 40 in.



KENDALL
AYOUB NICHOLS '92



Utah Jazz
2023, collage



Mural
Capital One Headquarters, Tyson's Corner, Virginia



Baja Blast
2023, collage



JD Deardourff '04
screen printing.

JD DEARDOURFF '04

artist/
screen printer/
muralist

deardourff.com

“like working with
colors that give
your eyeballs a
sunburn.”



Heather Capen Cox '90 in her studio.



Old School Division Street
oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in.

HEATHER CAPEN COX '90

painter

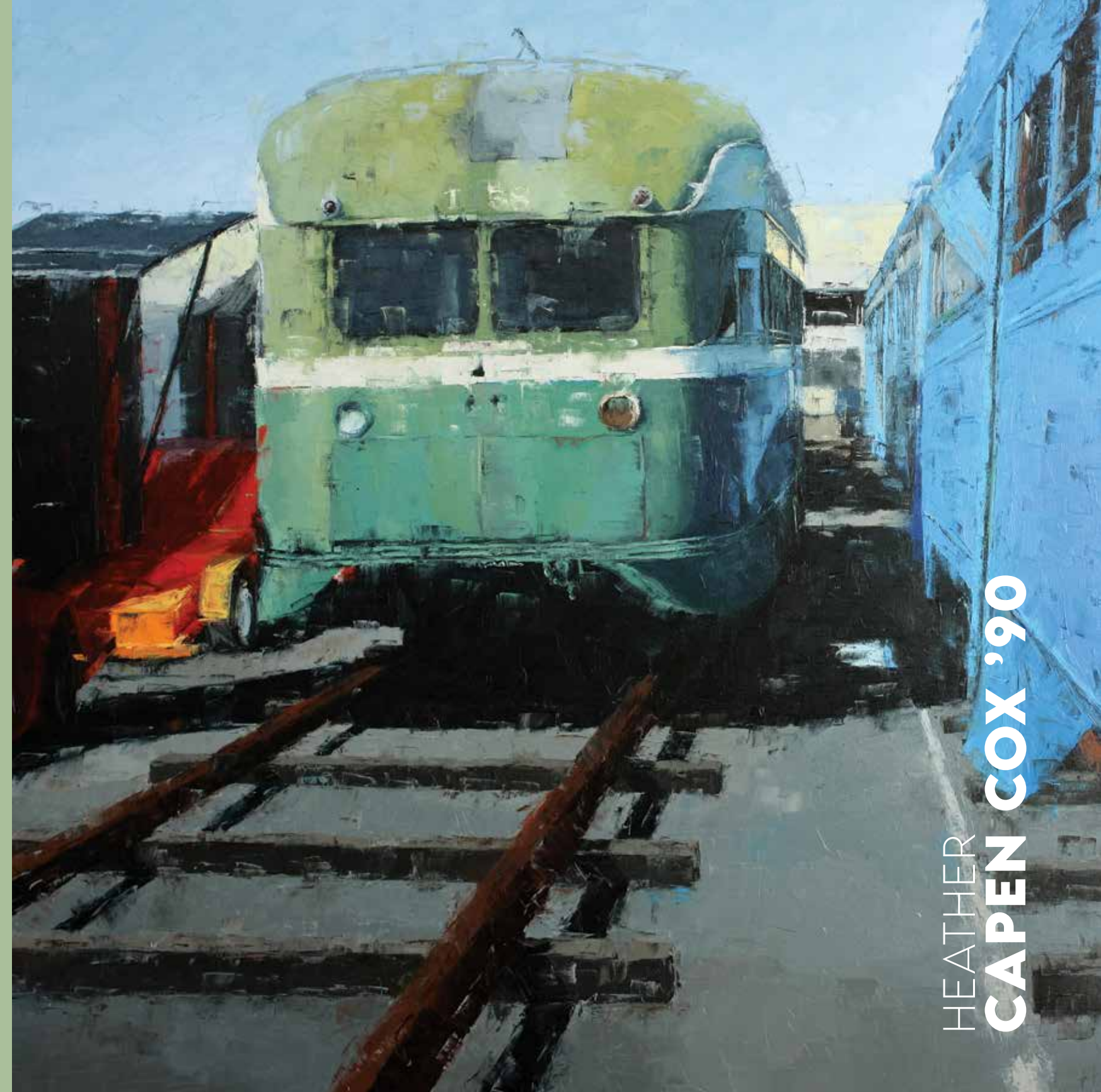
heathercapen.com

“I have always loved art in all forms. As a child, I was an avid drawer, and when I arrived at Taft, I learned the craft of batik from Mrs. Wynne, and Mr. Potter taught me how to paint with oils, which I love to this day. I was an art major in college, with a focus on oil painting, and then went on to pursue a master's in landscape architecture. My work is greatly influenced by my career as a landscape architect, where I learned to appreciate the overlap of history, topography, cultures, and nature that occurs in an urban environment.

“Responding to certain sites that might otherwise be overlooked, I enjoy capturing the appeal and life of these settings in an ever challenging creative pursuit of oil painting.”



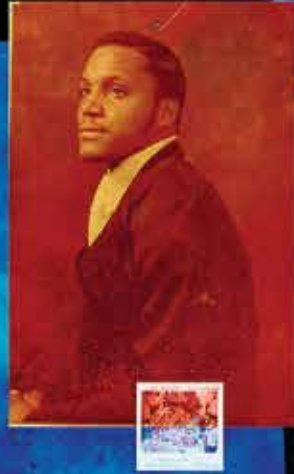
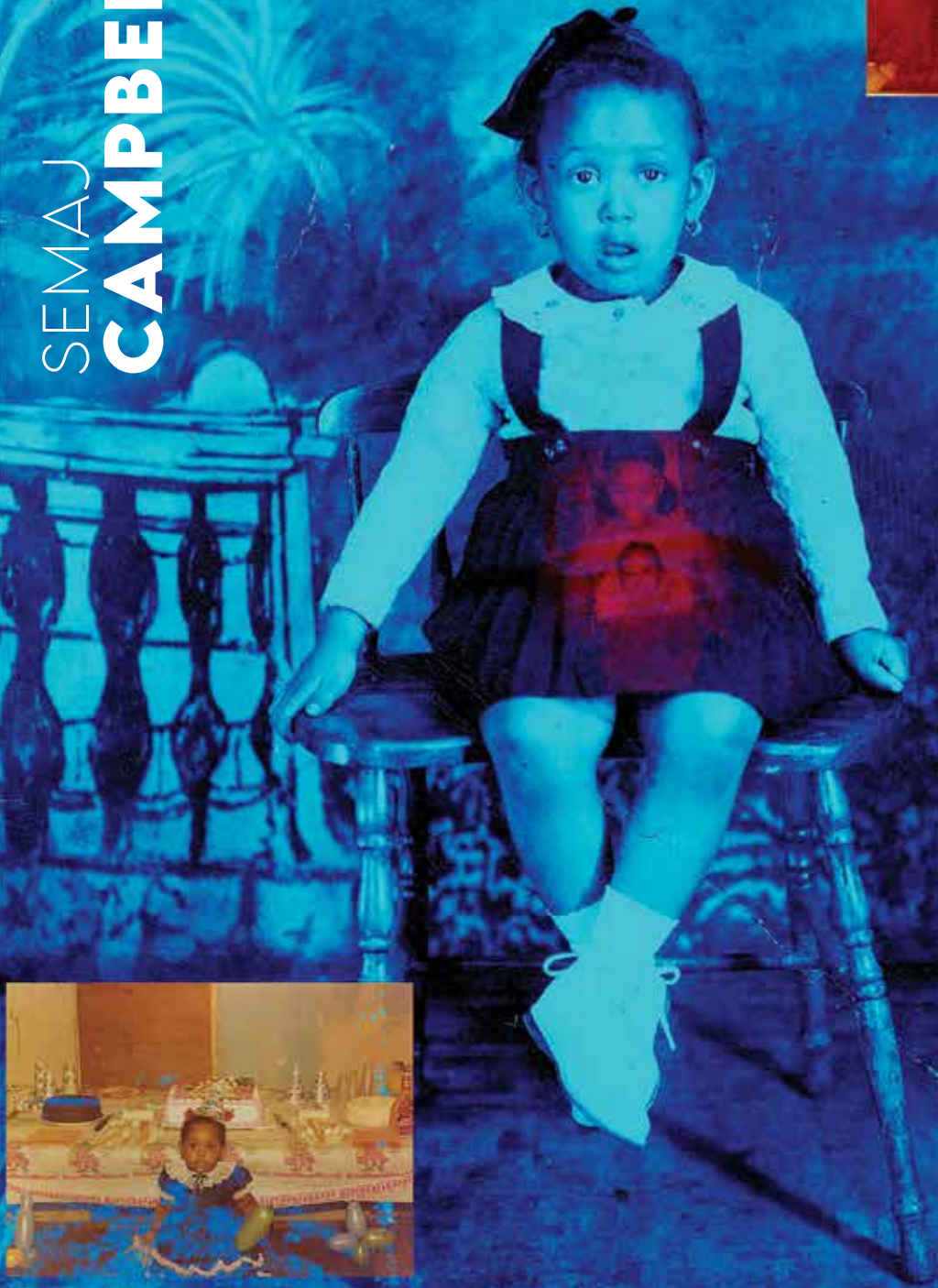
Ocean Park Motel
oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in.



Orange, Green, Blue, No. 3
oil on canvas, 48 x 48 in.

HEATHER
CAPEN COX '90

SEMAJ CAMPBELL '14



Origins
2022, digital collage



Daddy's Girl
2021, photograph



Snuggles
2021, photograph



Semaj Campbell '14 in his studio.

SEMAJ CAMPBELL '14

photographer/teacher

semajcampbellphotography.com

My first exposure to photography occurred during my senior year at Taft. Since then, photography has become a fundamental part of my life—a medium that has helped me navigate the world.

"It has provided me with a way to express what I find important and has given me a new voice and connection to others. Photography has also served as a form of meditation, allowing me to question and reflect on my decisions and tendencies. It slows me down and enables me to be present.

"I also have the opportunity to teach it to high school students. As a [high school] educator, I relish in opening young minds to various forms of expression. Often, young men are conditioned to believe they must fit into one category—smart, athletic, or artistic—but rarely all three. I encourage my students to pursue all aspects, just as I did by participating in [sports] while also pursuing my passion for the arts."

Looking BACK

Laughter is brightest in the place where the food is.

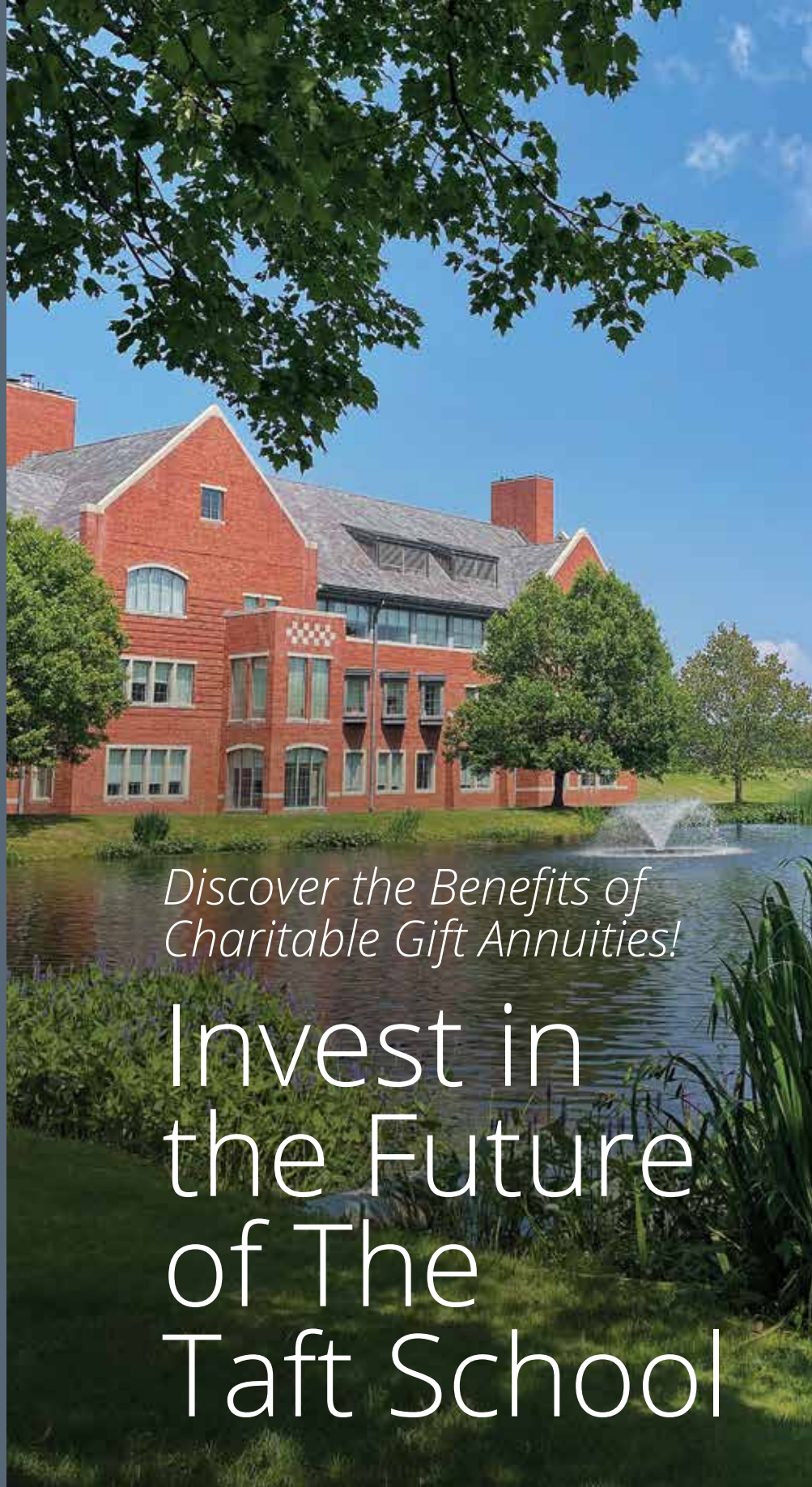
—Irish Proverb

From the days of student waiters in white jackets to our current, more casual meals, Taft students have relied on the kitchens and dining rooms to keep them going. It is more than just nourishing food, it is a social time. For decades the dining rooms have been a place for dances and tutoring for classes to meet and for advisors and their advisees to connect. The dining rooms have also held banquets, game nights, cooking classes, and World Fest. Every day you can see extra chairs pulled to the tables and friends or classmates stopping in to grab a coffee and a bagel during meeting block.

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



1. Taft's first Community Lunch, February 2024.
2. The chef-led Cooking 101 session had students creating some fantastic pasta!
3. Student waiters lined up to get their trays in 1943.
4. Students enjoying the band at the All School BBQ, Spring 2018.
5. Students dance the night away during the 1993 Winter Formal in the former lower dining room.



Discover the Benefits of
Charitable Gift Annuities!

Invest in the Future of The Taft School

Since the American Council on Gift Annuities increased its suggested maximum annuity rates on **January 1, 2024**, this is an optimal time to consider a CGA.

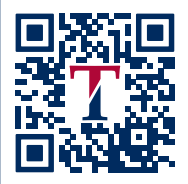
For most gift annuities, the new rates are **approximately 0.4 percentage points higher than previous rates.** And, if one defers the start of payments for a year or more, the increase is even greater. The higher annuity rates will result in modestly lower charitable deductions; however, they also make gift annuities more attractive to donors seeking to make a gift and receive fixed payments for life.

Charitable gift annuities have consistently provided a high rate of return, making them an excellent choice for those looking to support Taft while securing a reliable income stream. By choosing to invest in a charitable gift annuity with Taft, you not only contribute to the growth and development of our students but also enjoy:

- > **Attractive Returns**
Lock in gift annuity payments for life without concerns about market fluctuations.
- > **Fixed Income for Life**
Enjoy stable and predictable payments for life. While the income tax charitable deduction for a gift annuity is lower using the 2024 rates, the potential tax-free portion of your annuity increases.
- > **Tax Benefits**
Receive immediate tax deductions and reduce your estate taxes. If one doesn't need income now, deferring your annuity payment increases these rates. (For example, a 70-year-old deferring payments to age 75 is entitled to 8.7% annuity for life.)
- > **Legacy Building**
Leave a lasting impact on the future of education and help nurture the next generation of leaders.

Please consider joining Taft's community of dedicated supporters and experience the dual benefits of financial security and philanthropic fulfillment.

**Together, we can
make a difference!**



For more information on how one can benefit from a charitable gift annuity or other life income options at Taft, please contact Richard J. Galiette, Director of Major and Planned Giving, at 860-945-7747 or rgaliette@taftschoo.edu.

Visit plannedgiving.taftschoo.org

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