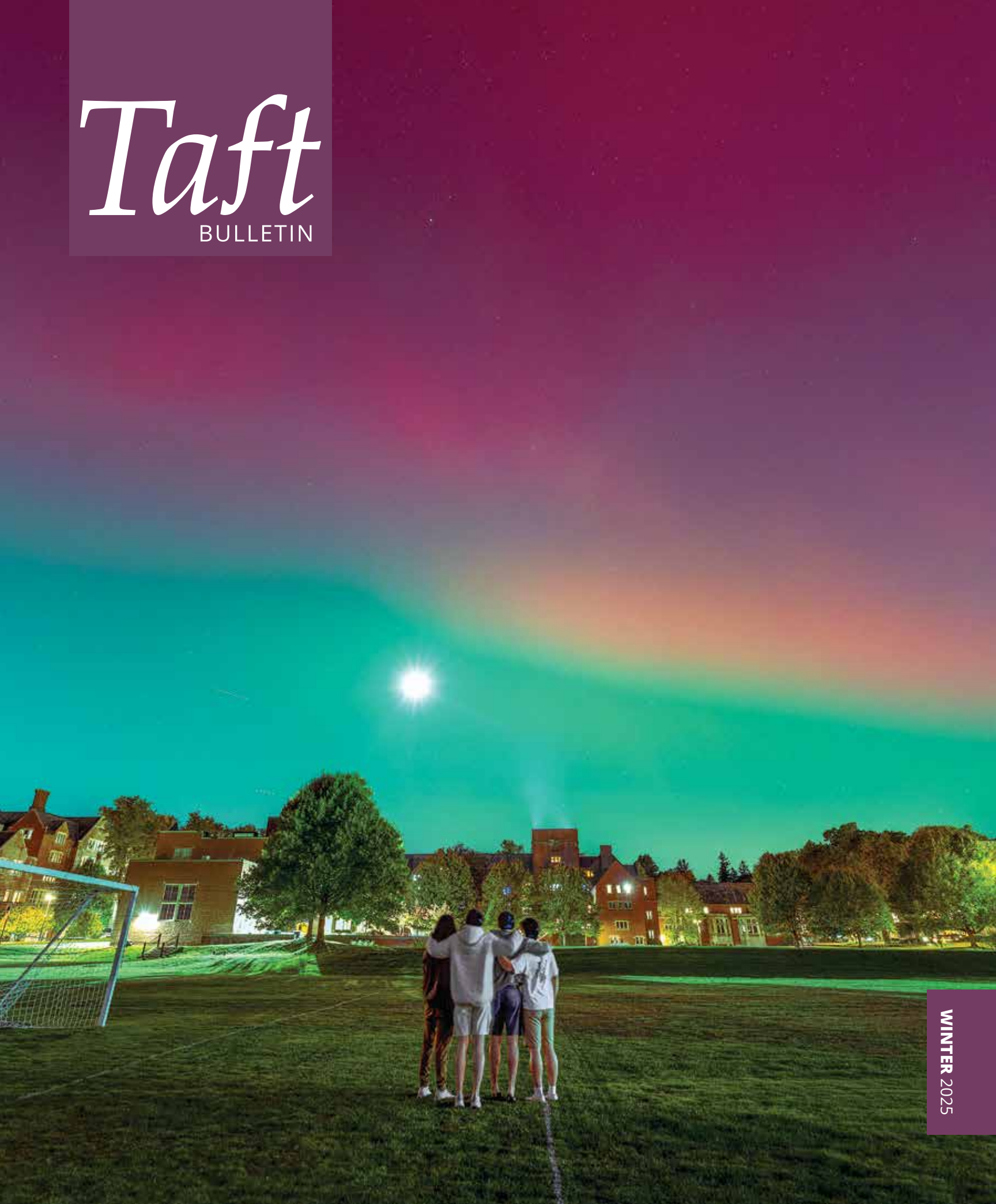


Taft

BULLETIN



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One of several new creative murals at Taft's Athletics Center



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ON THE COVER

Students enjoy the amazing
northern lights over the campus
on the night of October 10.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WILLIAM YANG '26

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On MAIN HALL

A WORD WITH HEAD OF
SCHOOL PETER BECKER '95

Navigating Our Future

Charting Taft's Strategic Path Together

FOR TWO WEEKS THIS SUMMER, I was a student on an adult National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) program in Wyoming's Wind River Valley. My classmates and I had almost none of the wilderness survival skills that the NOLS curriculum offers. After nine days together in the wilderness learning from our instructors (and from one another), completely cut off from the rest of the world, it was time for student-led group travel.

My NOLS classmate Julia and I were up first. We had topographic maps and a compass. We knew our starting point. The only direction our instructors gave us was an X on the map next to a water feature labeled Lake Medina. It was our job to use the skills we'd learned to create a plan to get ourselves from our current camp to Lake Medina. Julia and I had to submit our plan to our instructors before we left—not for feedback but so that the instructors would have a sense of where to look if we failed to show up at camp the next day. We were on our own. Our instructors made clear that the NOLS protocol called for them to come look for us only *after* 24 hours had passed since we were supposed to arrive at camp.

As Julia and I worked together with our classmates to execute the plan, we learned how much it paid off to keep the map and compass (and GPS device) handy and to double-check our assumptions. We asked for input from our classmates regularly. At key moments, we realized that the two of us were wrong and input from our classmates helped keep us on the right path (or helped us find it after we'd lost it!). In thick woods, we practiced orienteering—we knew the direction we needed to follow, but we did not have a trail, so we had to use the compass and map and break our hike into 30-yard chunks from landmark to landmark. At other moments, we would crest a hill of boulders and be greeted by an awe-inspiring vista of Rocky Mountain peaks—and a very clear trail in sight below. It was one of the more gratifying experiences of my life to arrive at Lake Medina with my classmates, and only about an hour late.

I've been thinking about that experience a lot this fall as we have embarked on a strategic planning process for Taft. I am excited to develop Taft's plan with input from all of you. At the most basic level, strategic planning gives all of us who care about Taft and share responsibility for its future—and if you care about



“Strategic planning also invites us to ask questions about the future: What do we think the future will be like. What will Taft students need to know and be able to do—and what character strengths will be required—to flourish, lead, and serve in that future?”

Taft, you share responsibility for its future—the opportunity to identify historic and existing strengths, to uncover core values, to be clear-eyed about what we think needs to change or improve, and to set goals for the next three to five years—and even for the next 10 to 20. Strategic planning is good institutional hygiene.

Strategic planning also invites us to ask questions about the future: What do we think the future will be like? What will Taft students need to know and be able to do—and what character strengths will be required—to flourish, lead, and serve



Becker during a NOLS program in Wyoming with Middle Fork Lake in the background.



Becker's teammates made him a cake on the trail on his son William's birthday.

in that future? To what degree does Taft’s existing curriculum and program already create the conditions for students to develop the habits they will need—not only to gain entry into great colleges and universities, but also to navigate life well? And, what do we need to update and improve?

Certain elements will anchor and orient this process. We are not starting a school from scratch, and Taft has important core commitments. At the heart of these is the school’s commitment to educate the whole student and our motto: Not to be served but to serve. Where and how are we doing these effectively, and how can we improve? Moreover, for more than 20 years, Taft has been guided by the Portrait of a Graduate. It is an impressive and enduring document and will also orient our work.

Needless to say, strategic planning for an institution of Taft’s history and scale is a much more complicated and dynamic project than the relative clarity provided by connecting two points on a topographic map! Together, we get to identify the X on the map that we want for Taft students and for the school overall. Once we identify our goals for Taft, we will create and publish a plan to achieve them and then, most importantly, we will put that plan to work, learning and adjusting at every step

along the way. As we create Taft’s future together, one thing is certain—there are vistas and possibilities available to us that we cannot even imagine today. We get to start from where we are and discover them together. I look forward to working on this project with you . Thank you for your partnership along the way.

I am grateful that we will be guided through this process by a two-time Taft parent, Stephanie Rogen P’12,’19, whose company, Greenwich Leadership Partners, has developed deep expertise in helping boards and institutions like Taft discover the best answers for their particular school, rather than follow a cookie-cutter approach.

The board, Taft’s leadership team, the steering committee, and I are eager for input from all members of the Taft community. Please visit the strategic planning section on the school’s website (www.taftschool.org/about/strategic-design) to learn more about the process and to participate in it.

Peter Becker '95

“As we create Taft’s future together, one thing is certain—there are vistas and possibilities available to us that we cannot even imagine today. We get to start from where we are and discover them together.”



Community & Belonging

What Does Leadership Look Like?

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



“Regardless of your title, role, or experience, how you live will showcase you as a leader.”

“LEADERSHIP ISN’T WHAT YOU PUT on social media...it’s how you live every day,” says University of Texas Head Football Coach Steve Sarkisian. This quote could not be more appropriate as we develop the next generation of leaders for years to come. Recently Rebecca Harper, the founder of AuthenTEACHCity and the director of equity and community at Hopkins School, spent time helping our affinity leaders define what leadership in their affinity spaces looks like. Ms. Harper helped our students think critically about their “why,” what leadership looks like, and how we can support one another from the seats in which we currently sit.

As I sat and reflected on the work we were asking students to do, I suddenly found myself thinking about these same questions. What does leadership look like to the dean of community, justice, and belonging? What is my “why?” How can I support others as they traverse this ever-demanding, ever-changing Taft experience? As Ms. Harper was challenging

students, instantly I felt as though the same challenge was being issued to me.

My “why” is the students and community I am part of. This is a great place with amazing people all around. It’s a place where everyone should feel as if they belong—and in the event they don’t, it’s incumbent upon me and other leaders in the community to identify the underlying causes. We must therefore look at systems that promote or discourage community members from being their authentic selves and work collaboratively to seek change where necessary.

Leadership from this space looks very different on any given day at any given moment; however, what does not look different is how consistent we live life everyday. Regardless of your title, role, or experience, how you live will showcase you as a leader. *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*; not to be served but to serve. Our school motto. Our school charge. Our ultimate goal. By living our motto, we will indeed cultivate more leaders across our campus to lead for generations to come. ■

A Hidden (and Alive) World

THE ARCTIC USED TO BE A FAIRLY quiet place. But as sea ice disappears and shipping lanes open up, the underwater acoustics have become a cacophony. And that's not good for species like the narwhal that call the colder waters home.

Jack Ewing '18 works in the Scripps Whale Acoustics Laboratory at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California. He spends his days monitoring those acoustics through passive acoustic monitoring (listening underwater), which requires a lot of signal processing. When he's not on an oceangoing research vessel in the Arctic gathering data, he's spending hours analyzing and coding that data to discern the health of Arctic species.

"We need to be able to create automated methods for extracting different signals in our acoustic data, such as narwhal echolocation clicks, vessel noise, naval sonar, walrus knocks, humpback songs, rain, wind, fish choruses, the list goes on,"

Ewing says. "A lot of what we do in our lab includes some level of machine learning and training of neural networks to help in signal detection and classification."

Coding is absolutely necessary to the work he does.

"Since we are recording underwater sound continuously at high frequencies for about a year, we collect a lot of data. For my research on behavioral responses of narwhals to vessels, I needed to create a timetable that described the presence of narwhals, the vessel noise levels, vessel proximity, and a host of environmental variables on a 1-minute resolution across five years, which came out to over half a billion rows of data," he says.

But it's life on the ocean that he loves. Some of the high points Ewing has experienced on the ocean include seeing killer whales following a minke whale, having beluga whales push him around on a paddleboard, seeing

"It's impossible to truly see or fully understand the ocean, but it's a relationship that is constantly changing, and it evolves your perspective on how the natural world works."



beluga whales harass a swimming polar bear, and living in a town where polar bears regularly broke into stores.

"Everyone left their houses and cars unlocked, and with the keys in the ignition of the cars so people could safely escape the bears if need be," he says.

The ocean has always been his place of escape, Ewing says, offering both clarity and challenge.

"Originally, it was where I went to get away from the difficult things happening in life, a place where I felt more safe," he says. "Over time, the ocean became more than just an escape—it's where I've grown, both personally and professionally. The more time you spend with it, whether it's sailing, surfing, or studying it, your perspective starts to change. As a sailor, the roughness of the water told me about the strength and direction of the wind. As a surfer, I learned how that same surface would change throughout the day as the land heated and the onshore winds grew."

"And now, as a scientist, I can look at the ocean from the tops of cliffs and see the long lines of slick glassy water bordering darker rougher patches and know now that these are internal waves that will deliver cold and nutrient-dense water to the local kelp forests. It's impossible to truly see or



fully understand the ocean, but it's a relationship that is constantly changing, and it evolves your perspective on how the natural world works. Acoustics allow me to explore this hidden world, especially in the Arctic with species like belugas and narwhals, and it helps me contribute to the larger effort of protecting these environments." ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84

Left: Marine scientist Jack Ewing '18 on a research vessel in the Arctic

Above: Ewing on an Arctic research vessel



20%

of expectant mothers experience anxiety or depression during the perinatal period.

Up to

1/3

of pregnant women experience suicidal thoughts, making pregnancy a serious risk factor for self-harm.

5

Core beliefs of Seven Starling:

Safe spaces lead to open minds and hearts.

Open conversations broaden perspectives.

Unbiased support fosters community.

Knowledge leads to confidence.

&

All journeys deserve to be celebrated.



Above: The cofounders of Seven Starling, from left, Julia Cole '09, Tina Beilinson Keshani, and Sophia Richter

Inset: Julia Cole '09

Unlocking Wellness for Women

WHAT STARTED AS A CLASS EXERCISE at Harvard Business School has turned into a 10-plus state business designed to help women navigate the often lonely and anxiety-producing world of child-bearing. Helmed by Julia Cole '09 and two Harvard classmates, Seven Starling will expand to even more states in 2025.

Seven Starling “took flight to help women and caregivers navigate the most meaningful transitions in their lives,”

Cole says. The company is headquartered in Washington, D.C., though it is a fully remote company with providers who offer affordable and accessible mental health counseling for expectant and new mothers virtually through online counseling.

Specialized therapists at Seven Starling offer individual therapy along with medical evaluations, group support, and reflective exercises. Their services are designed for people experiencing anxiety,



depression or trauma during fertility challenges, pregnancy loss, pregnancy, postpartum, or early parenthood.

Cole says an estimated 20% of expectant mothers experience anxiety or depression

A recent infusion of \$10.9 million in venture capital means the company can expand further, and later this year Seven Starling will begin serving Medicaid moms suffering from childbirth-related mood disorders, including postpartum depression, pregnancy loss, and perinatal loss.

“It’s definitely a herculean effort to [also] set up a business that accepts Medicaid,” Cole says. “We feel really strongly about expanding access as part of our mission. We have lots of growth goals and ambition, and that comes back to access and affordability.”

The company is guided by five core values: safe spaces lead to open minds and hearts; open conversations broaden perspectives; unbiased support fosters community; knowledge leads to confidence; and all journeys deserve to be celebrated. These principles provide a common understanding of how the company is run, but also how each patient is cared for.

“I’m incredibly proud to be part of a team dedicated to improving women’s

“[For] someone who is suffering from postpartum depression or anxiety, it’s not just them, it’s the whole family, it’s their whole community [who is struggling].”

during the perinatal period (and is likely to be highly underestimated due to stigma and shame), and a very small percentage of these women receive mental health care. Up to one-third of pregnant women experience suicidal thoughts, making pregnancy a serious risk factor for self-harm.

“I think about the maternal mortality rate,” Cole says. “Those deaths—many are preventable. It’s extremely chilling. I remember the first time we got a message—‘Thank you, Seven Starling, for saving my life.’ [For] someone who is suffering from postpartum depression or anxiety, it’s not just them, it’s the whole family, it’s their whole community [who is struggling]. This isn’t something that’s just affecting one person. You unlock wellness and potential for so many others. Unlocking women’s potential really unlocks potential for everyone.”

mental health, especially for new mothers. Since launch, we’ve treated thousands of patients with our specialized clinical model, and over 90% of patients have seen a clinically significant improvement in their symptoms upon completion of our program,” Cole says on LinkedIn.

About that name: A starling is a type of bird that always flies in groups.

“By following their seven closest neighbors, starlings flock together to create beautiful and mesmerizing formations in the sky called murmurations. For us, these whimsical birds represent the feeling of freedom and strength we hope to bring to our community. A constant reminder that together, with our flock, we can achieve a vision far greater than ourselves,” as Seven Starling’s website says. ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84



Inset: Andy Isaacson '94, freelance journalist and instructor at The School of The New York Times

Above: Isaacson interviews Barack Obama's grandmother in Kenya during the 2008 U.S. presidential election.

"The thread that unites all the work I do is about giving people the opportunity to see and engage with the world differently."

Bridging Differences

AS A BOY, ANDY ISAACSON '94

was what he calls "a *National Geographic* kid." Devouring the magazine, along with a steady diet of encyclopedias and wildlife books, helped him discover distant lands while cultivating a broad worldview.

As a journalist, Isaacson has covered every corner of the planet. He has reported from all seven continents for *National Geographic* and *The New York Times*, among other publications. "There's no blank spot on the globe for me," he says.

Isaacson's work is immersive and culturally illuminating. He has embedded with anti-immigration vigilantes along the Mexican border and hitched a ride on a Norwegian research vessel in the Arctic Ocean. For one story, he spent a month in the South Atlantic on Tristan

da Cunha, the world's most remote island. For another, he trekked through thick jungle with a team of herpetologists as they surveyed one of South America's least explored mountain ranges.

"My curiosity is broad," Isaacson says of his diverse portfolio. "I want to shadow people in their worlds."

Since 2019, he has modeled this curiosity for aspiring high school journalists as a faculty member at The School of The New York Times. Beyond vocational nuts and bolts, Isaacson teaches the tenets of journalistic thinking. He emphasizes active listening, empathy, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. "These are some of the things that have guided my journalism career and my exploration of the world," Isaacson says.

To develop these skills, Isaacson sends the young journalists out onto the streets of Jackson Heights, Queens, a place he refers to as "the most culturally diverse neighborhood in the world." The students are tasked with approaching strangers and asking questions. "Many of them don't even think they're capable of doing it," Isaacson says. But they all do.

Watching students flourish outside their comfort zones is Isaacson's favorite part of teaching. He particularly loves seeing them engage with people they would never otherwise interact with. "That's really the beautiful thing about journalism," Isaacson says.

Outside of journalism, Isaacson has found other avenues to advance his belief in the power of human connection. He is the cofounder of Camping to Connect, a BIPOC-led nonprofit mentorship program that uses outdoor recreation to address the diverse issues faced by young men of color in America's cities. "We're about creating a space for these kids to be vulnerable with one another and to



access their emotional needs," Isaacson says.

Through RickshawNYC, his public art project, Isaacson gives free rides around New York City in exchange for passengers sharing their stories with him. His authentic, hand-painted Bangladeshi rickshaw will be exhibited at the United Nations this fall. Isaacson is also involved in Portals, an immersive technology that



brings together diverse voices from around the world for transformative dialogues on a range of global issues. "We work with a lot of schools to provide students a global learning experience," Isaacson says.

"The thread that unites all the work I do is about giving people the opportunity to see and engage with the world differently," Isaacson says. "Sometimes that involves meeting people where they are. That's where these public art initiatives come in."

Underlying all of Isaacson's endeavors is his conviction that our society would be better off if people were able to understand and relate to one another.

"A lot of this work is bridging difference," he says. "Bridging the familiar with the unfamiliar. I feel like I've spent a lot of my life in unfamiliar places and out of my comfort zone, so I feel suited to be able to facilitate those experiences for others." ■

—Elliott Grover

Above: Through RickshawNYC, his public art project, Isaacson gives free rides around New York City in exchange for passengers sharing their stories with him.

Left: Isaacson in Borneo with orangutans. He's followed herpetologists to the Peruvian Amazon, penguin researchers to Antarctica, and marine biologists to the Phillipines.

Below: Isaacson serving as polar bear guard while on an assignment for *National Geographic* about climate change in the Arctic.





Left: Fulbright Scholar Francesca Nyakora '19 at her graduation from Yale in May 2023, wearing her yellow stole representing Ezra Stiles, her college at Yale

“Growing up with one foot in the developed world and one foot in the developing world, I couldn't help but confront how realities that are so simple for some are unfathomable for others.”

Global Steward

“GROWING UP WITH ONE FOOT IN THE developed world and one foot in the developing world, I couldn't help but confront how realities that are so simple for some are unfathomable for others,” reflects Francesca Nyakora '19. It is this awareness of the challenges facing the world's most underserved communities—instilled by her mother at an early age, reinforced during her studies at Taft and later Yale, and now put into action in some of the nation's most prestigious

fellowships—that has led Nyakora to work toward achieving lasting global change. Raised across five countries as the daughter of a Kenyan diplomat, Nyakora seemed almost destined to follow in her mother's footsteps. “My mom is my greatest inspiration,” she says. “She spent the bulk of her career in conflict areas, including in Afghanistan for eight years, in northern Nigeria during the Boko Haram insurgency, and in Mali during its civil war.”

Still only 23 years old, Nyakora has already begun to carry on her mother's legacy and has wasted no time reaching out to areas affected by conflict and extreme poverty. After graduating from Taft, she pursued a double degree in African studies and political science, as well as certificates in French and human rights, at Yale University. During her time there, she also spent a year conducting research and helping shape policy as a fellow in the prestigious Kerry

Right: Nyakora, far left, moderates a panel at the annual Carnegie Junior Fellows conference in 2024 called Today's Challenges, Tomorrow's Leaders.

Below: Nyakora, center left, was one of the 2023–24 class of Gaither Junior Fellows at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.



Initiative, founded by former Secretary of State John Kerry to partner with a select group of students to help address some of the world's most pressing challenges. In her time as a fellow, Nyakora primarily focused on the African continent, particularly the impacts of climate change on the region. She followed this formative experience with a year as a junior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, advising on a wide range of issues—from ongoing unrest in Somalia to a series of political coups in the Sahel to an alarming rise in femicide in Kenya. “As a young Kenyan American, I was really gratified

to be able to provide a dual perspective on many of these challenges,” she says. “One of the scholars I worked with was appointed to be senior director for Africa on the National Security Council (NSC), and as she was preparing to take on that role, she kept telling me how my research would have a major impact on her work on the NSC. That was particularly rewarding.” This coming February, Nyakora embarks on her latest adventure, this time as a Fulbright Scholar in Brazil examining the role of community organizations to address violence and instability in the impoverished, long-neglected favelas of Rio

de Janeiro. But for her, all of these accomplishments are just the beginning. “After I finish my Fulbright, I'd like to complete a graduate program in development studies and, from there, pursue a career at the nexus of development and security studies to influence policy, either with a role in government or within an international organization or NGO,” she explains. “I love this work because you can see the impact so clearly generation to generation—even year to year. I think that's rewarding beyond measure.” ■

—Christopher Browner '12





Entrepreneuring Women

"I invest with entrepreneurs and partner with them, and I'm always inspired by their stories of what motivates them."

"Women are really good at this form of entrepreneurship. They form very good connections with the people selling their businesses. They're good at motivating their management team and employees to buy into their vision."

FOR 10 YEARS, Lacey Hunter Wismer '95 served as managing director at her father's firm, Hunter Trust, in Minneapolis. But "extra thinking time" during COVID-19 motivated her to take her career in a new direction.

"I invest with entrepreneurs and partner with them, and I'm always inspired by their stories of what motivates them," she says. "I decided I wanted to do something more entrepreneurial myself. I think that bug was inside me, but it was dormant for a while while I was raising my kids and pretty happy at a family office position."

So what did something more entrepreneurial look like for her? It meant starting a fund, Wismer says. She launched Hunter Search Capital in August 2020, "the first female-founded investment fund to invest in the lower middle market through search funds and other entrepreneurship through acquisition (ETA) vehicles." Women are the company's target market.

"We've seen a lot of change in the last

four years," Wismer says. "In our space, typically women have only represented 5–10% of those who pursue this form of entrepreneurship, but that number just shot above 10% for the first time in 2024. So it's slow, slow changes, but our goal was definitely to hit gender parity."

Having a primary focus on women was a carefully constructed strategy based on Wismer's deep knowledge of women's strong interpersonal leadership skills.

"Women are really good at this form of entrepreneurship," she says. "They form very good connections with the people selling their businesses. They're good at motivating their management team and employees to buy into their vision."

The most exciting part of Wismer's work is watching women flourish, step by step, as first-time CEOs, she says. "It takes a while, there are bumps in the road, and it's not for the faint of heart for sure. But when they have a little success and there's total buy-in to what they're doing," it's extremely

gratifying for both Wismer and her clients.

"One woman runs a pediatric therapy business that does autism, speech, and occupational therapies for kids," she says. "They had turned a nonverbal patient into being able to speak some, and she listened as he said to his parents for the first time, 'I love you.' There's a lot of different reasons why they might light up as an entrepreneur and get really excited, but those are the best moments for sure."

Moreover, women who succeed in this space will serve as examples, galvanizing other women to take a similar direction.

"It's important to tell someone, anyone—I have two daughters—that you can do anything you want to do," Wismer says. "There's no reason you can't do something you see other people doing, even if they don't look like you. We believe really deeply in that and want women to understand that this is a path they can choose."

With her story, Wismer hopes to inspire Taft's young women to orient themselves toward business school entrepreneurship and finance classes, and that they can begin to set those plans in motion right now.

"I want women to understand that they can work towards this path as young as high school—that's where we want to see women making those decisions for themselves—and to know that entrepreneurship means more than just starting a company," she says. "There's tremendous value to be had in buying and running a company—not just self-fulfillment, but financial gain and leadership skills and so many great things that come along with it." ■

—Marisa Procopio

Opposite page: Lacey Hunter Wismer '95, founder and managing partner of Hunter Search Capital

Left: Wismer presents at the Stanford Search Fund CEO Conference at Stanford Graduate School of Business.



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

Summer Journeys

EVERY SUMMER, TAFT STUDENTS TRAVEL THE WORLD TO SERVE, TO LEARN, AND TO GROW INTELLECTUALLY, SPIRITUALLY, AND ARTISTICALLY. MANY DO SO WITH SUPPORT FROM MEG PAGE '74, ROBERT KEYES POOLE '50, WILLIAM W. HATFIELD '32, AND KILBOURNE SUMMER ENRICHMENT FELLOWSHIP GRANTS.* IN 2024, STUDENTS TRAVELED TO TANZANIA TO STUDY THE EFFECTS OF THE DRUG METFORMIN IN PREDIABETIC HIV PATIENTS; TO GHANA TO WORK IN A CLINIC DEDICATED TO PREVENTING BLINDNESS THROUGH VISION CARE; AND TO THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS TO UNLOCK THE SECRETS OF THE SALISH SEA. THEY WORKED TO RESTORE CORAL REEFS IN BALI, STUDIED THE HEALTH OF THE ECOSYSTEM IN THE PYRENEES, AND STUDIED CREATIVE WRITING AMONG THE ANCIENT RUINS OF ROME. AND THAT WAS JUST THE BEGINNING. HERE IS A SAMPLING OF SOME OF THE WORK—AND PLAY—ENJOYED BY TAFT STUDENTS DURING THE SUMMER OF 2024.



^
Read the full stories
by scanning the
QR code here.



1

work for the scientists, followed by data analysis and shoreline restoration work. Programming and activities also included learning opportunities with SeaDoc Society of the Karen C. Drayer Wildlife Health Center at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, Friends of the San Juans, The Whale Museum, and the Center for Whale

Research. In the photo, Wats used LED lights at the Friday Harbor Labs to attract vertebrates and invertebrates—hundreds of jellyfish, microscopic shrimp, and minnows—from deep in the water column.

2

Eden Thompson '25 used her Page Grant to travel to Ghana with SEE International, an organization providing vision health services in underserved communities. At the Save the Nation's Sight Clinic in Accra, Ghana, Eden supported the medical team and their patients before, during, and after medical procedures, primarily cataract surgeries and pterygium excisions. In addition to conducting patient intake, Eden administered pre-op dilation eye drops and prepared syringes with a lidocaine/epinephrine solution; provided nurses and surgeons with tools and equipment during surgery; and provided post-op care, which included administering anti-bacterial eye drops and ointments, and covering the affected eye with gauze and a protective eye shield to promote healing.



2

1

With support from a Poole Grant, **Wats Littman '26** spent time in the Salish Sea's San Juan Islands, supporting environmental science, marine ecology, and conservation research at the University of Washington's Friday Harbor Laboratories. Wats spent half of each day doing field



3

3

Zoë Woodhall '27 (left) spent two weeks on the Duke University campus in Durham, North Carolina, engaged in rigorous technical and creative training through a pre-professional dance intensive conducted by the prestigious American Dance Festival. Her experience was made possible in part by a Kilbourne Grant.

4

Sam Richard '25 spent 10 days in Costa Rica last summer with support from a Hatfield Grant. She spent time in Turrialba, Fortuna, and Samara, where she visited schools to offer basic



4



5

English instruction and much-needed labor, including landscaping, general repairs and maintenance, repaving, and installing new drainage systems.

5

Maddie Hsu '25 traveled to Bali with Poole Grant support to participate in a coral reef conservation project. "Cataloguing is an important aspect to reef conservation, as it can help evaluate the biodiversity, health, and resilience of the reef ecosystem," Maddie says. "While cataloguing fish and coral, I navigated the entire reef in a zigzag pattern, capturing images and videos of various fish and coral species. Afterward, the fish and coral species were identified using online fish and coral databases and placed into a slideshow for future reference."

6

Ruhi Vidhun '25 (left center, light green scrubs) traveled to Costa Rica with support from a Page Grant, where she supported a number of public health initiatives in the local schools. "The biggest project on my trip was the vision tests we conducted at the local elementary school. Each day, we assessed hundreds of students and sent them to the optometrist as needed based on their test results. It was rewarding to see the kids' excitement upon receiving their glasses." Ruhi also worked on a dental hygiene education project. "This was a highlight from my trip because, despite the language barrier, we were able to break through and put smiles on their faces. We gifted every student a colorful toothbrush that they could use at home."



6



7
Daniel Kaminju '26 has delighted Taft audiences with his impressive acting ability. Last summer, he spent time advancing his talent as a musician. With help from a Kilbourne Grant, Daniel studied at the renowned Berklee College of Music in Boston. Through a dynamic piano and keyboard workshop, Daniel grew his improvisation, performance, chord theory, and ensemble playing skills across a range of styles, including jazz, hip-hop, rock, R&B, pop, funk, Latin, and fusion.

8
With Poole Grant support, **Estelle Magnan '26** hiked through the high slopes of the Andorran Pyrenees to study the health of the region's ecosystem. Among other



things, she weighed and measured banded birds and small mammals, visited their nest boxes, studied alpine flora, and assessed the growth of various species of trees.

9
With support from a Page Grant, **Heidi Li '26** returned to Tanzania, where she worked as a research assistant at a clinical trial lab in Dar es Salaam studying the effects of the drug Metformin in prediabetic HIV patients. There are currently 1,600 patients enrolled in the clinical trial; each is required to visit the clinic for checkups every three months. Heidi worked directly with patients during those visits. During her spare time, Heidi volunteered at an elementary school in Arusha. She is pictured with the doctor who oversaw her clinic work, and with the children at the Arusha school.

10
Quinn Leonard '25 is considering a career as a writer. With support from a Kilbourne Grant, he was able to spend time in Rome last summer honing his craft. With Rome as both backdrop and inspiration, Quinn and his peers began by writing origin stories for ancient statues. For his culminating project—to make a creative work involving some aspect of Roman mythology—Quinn wrote and, with his peers, performed a play. In the photo, Quinn, second from right, with other student writers at the Colosseum.



11
Jed Spencer '25 traveled to Iceland and the Faroe Islands with support from a Poole Grant. He visited places where sheep outnumber people, learned about puffins, hiked miles and miles, and absorbed plenty of local culture. Jed was required to complete an independent exploration of one specific aspect of regional culture

during his two-week stay. This photo was taken during a long, academic boat ride dedicated to learning the history of the Faroe Islands. "We learned about one of the Faroe's ghost towns and we saw hundreds of puffins flying all over the cliffs. We also saw many sheep climbing up jagged edges, and we learned that every single sheep in the Faroe Islands belongs to someone, even if they appear to be wild."



Summer Travel and Study Grants and Fellowships

The William W. Hatfield '32 Grant celebrates the ideals of Horace Dutton Taft—service above self—and is given annually to one or more students whose commitment to volunteerism brings to life the message behind Taft's motto: *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*—Not to be served but to serve. The grant was established in 2010 through the generosity of Guy Hatfield '65, Ross Hatfield, and the ongoing support of William W. Hatfield's family.

Established by John Kilbourne '58, in memory of his parents, Samuel W. and Evelyn S. Kilbourne, the **Kilbourne Summer Enrichment Fund** provides students with opportunities in the summer to participate in enriching programs in the arts.

Meg Page '74 Fellowships honor her commitment to compassionate health care. The fellowships are awarded annually to students who wish to explore an experience or course of study devoted to the provision of better health care in areas such as public health, family planning, medical research, mental health, and non-Western practices of healing.

Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowships enable Taft students to engage in travel or in projects consistent with Mr. Poole's lifetime interest in wildlife and the environment. Mr. Poole taught at Taft from 1956 to 1962.

12
Wilhelmina Houck '26 (far right in photo) used her Poole Grant support to travel to Costa Rica, where she worked on a number of construction and renovation projects. Her work included time with Project Abraham, which provides housing and education for single mothers and orphans; partnering with Fundación Nórdicos de Costa Rica, a dog shelter; and the construction of a house and a rudimentary "sewage" system. ■

NYBG Intern

Fiona Chou '25

FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS, Taft students have embraced the opportunity to work side by side with research scientists in the laboratories at the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG). Last summer, Fiona Chou '25 earned the opportunity to work with Dr. Brad Oberle, an associate curator at NYBG. Dr. Oberle specializes in forest ecology, carbon cycling, and conservation biology. And while his research often takes him to places like Florida and Australia, he

has found a wealth of resources in NYBG's Thain Family Forest. That's where Fiona spent a good deal of time last summer on field data collection, focusing on soil samples from different parts of the forest. In the lab, Fiona processed the samples she collected, then assessed their bulk density and composition. Finally, she prepared the processed samples for longer-term storage, reference, and access, which included labeling them by their forest plot location. ■



Fiona works in the Thain Family Forest.

< Hear more from Fiona and enjoy her interview with Dr. Oberle by scanning this QR code.

Fiona's internship at the New York Botanical Garden was made possible in part through The Stott Family New York Botanical Garden Summer Internship.

Rise Scholar

Isabella Nascimento Silva Pinto '25



Isabella presents at the Rise Residential Summit.

BEING NAMED ONE OF 100 Rise Global Scholars (from a pool of more than 14,000 nominees) has created seemingly endless opportunities for learning, personal growth, service, leadership, and connection for Isabella Nascimento Silva Pinto '25. Last summer, Isabella—and the other 99 Rise Global Scholars representing 37 different countries—attended 2024 Rise Residential Summit at the University of Oxford, where she engaged with entrepreneurs, policymakers, and scholars. She attended lectures and workshops led by Dr. Elizabeth Kiss, CEO of the Rhodes Trust; Versha Sharma, former editor-in-chief of *Teen Vogue*; Dr. John Redd, CEO

of the Schmidt Initiative for Long Covid; science communicator and activist Joel Bervell; Manchester United Foundation CEO John Shiels; and physics professor and Rhodes Scholar Brian Greene.

“The 2024 Rise Residential Summit was an eye-opening cultural, academic, and professional experience,” says Isabella. “While connecting with renowned world leaders, activists, and scientists, I was able to explore topics in systems change, bridging inequalities through collaboration and creating meaningful change locally and globally. Additionally, I shared my multicultural experiences studying at Taft as an international student.” ■

Rise is the flagship program of a \$1 billion commitment by former Google CEO Eric Schmidt and his wife, Wendy Schmidt, to find and support global talent and encourage service and learning by providing support through four-year scholarships (including a living stipend), career services, and funding opportunities. Rise is an initiative of Schmidt Futures and the Rhodes Trust.

Convocation 2024



Attention with Intention

OVER THE SUMMER, Head of School Peter Becker '95 spent two weeks at the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) in Wyoming's Wind River Valley. “The most incredible thing was how focused and single-minded my classmates and I got to be for those 14 days and how easy it was to pay attention to one thing,” Becker told the Taft community during his 2024 Convocation Address.

Attention, Becker noted, is “arguably

the most important capacity we have as humans. What we pay attention to is who and what we become.”

Which leads to a critical question for Becker: “How can we be more deliberate, individually and as a school, about cultivating habits of attention that are life-giving and aligned with how we want to spend our lives?”

The answer, he posits, may lie in the Taft School motto: Not to be served but to serve. ■

Watch Becker's full Convocation Address by scanning this QR code. >



First Look

Taft's 2024-25 Speaker Series

EACH SCHOOL YEAR, THE TAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGES WITH A GUIDING QUESTION THROUGH AN ALL-SCHOOL READ, COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS, MORNING MEETINGS, AND DISCUSSIONS WITH OUTSIDE SPEAKERS. THIS YEAR, TAFTIES SPENT THE SUMMER READING DAVID BROOKS' *HOW TO KNOW A PERSON: THE ART OF SEEING OTHERS DEEPLY AND BEING DEEPLY SEEN*. THE GUIDING QUESTION THAT AROSE FROM THAT READING: HOW DO WE KNOW ANOTHER PERSON?

But that's just the start.

To fully and effectively approach our guiding question, we must work through other very big, broad, and important questions. What does it mean to be a person? How do we know ourselves? How do we know one another? How do we coalesce as a community while respecting diverse opinions and beliefs, including ideas with which we disagree and may find offensive? How does knowing another person connect to our ideals of serving one another? How do we learn from each other, especially if and when we disagree?

As of the fall, Taft has invited five Morning Meeting speakers to visit the school during the 2024-25 academic year. Their goal is to help Taft explore its guiding and attendant questions from a range of perspectives. Those speakers are:



1

1 David Brooks

A bestselling author, op-ed columnist at *The New York Times*, and recurring commentator on *PBS NewsHour*, Brooks used his experience as a political journalist and social commentator who can help our school explore how we can care for and serve one another well in the midst of intense political and social divisions. He is the author of Taft's 2024 all-school summer read, *How to Know a Person: The Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen*.



TAFT ARCHIVES

2

2 Eddie Glaude

Dr. Glaude served as the director of the African American Studies Program at Princeton University for many years, and he is the author of several books, including, most recently, *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own*. Glaude will help Taft consider the significance of Black history and United States history as we seek to become a diverse and connected community in service to one another.



3



COURTESY LISAMILLERPHD.COM

4

3 Jonathan Haidt

A social psychologist, author, and the Thomas Cooley Professor of Ethical Leadership at the New York University Stern School of Business, Haidt's work helps us ask about the role of digital technology in shaping and building us as

people and in shaping our community. In his most recent book, *The Anxious Generation*, he suggests that we are overprotecting children in the real world and underprotecting them in the digital world.

4 Lisa Miller

Author of *The Spiritual Child* and *The Awakened Brain*, Dr. Miller has spent her academic career studying the link between spirituality and mental health. She will help us consider the role of spirituality in understanding our humanity and forming our community.

5 Chloé Valdary

Founder of The Theory of Enchantment, Valdary's work begins with the instruction to "treat people like human beings, not



COURTESY CHLOE VALDARY

5

Morning Meetings

A Taft Tradition

The Morning Meeting program, a long-standing Taft tradition, brings the full school community together in Bingham Auditorium, where speakers from across the aisle and across the globe grant exposure to new or unique perspectives, and offer deeper, broader insights into the world. Speakers typically engage with students, faculty, and staff through a range of discussion opportunities throughout the day of their Taft visit. We expect all of our Morning Meeting speakers to:

- > Catalyze transformative conversations around our guiding question
- > Offer ideas and information that help us—as we state in our Portrait of a Graduate—become a community of “lifelong learners, thoughtful citizens, and caring people”
- > Offer diverse and varied perspectives on politics, society, and ideas
- > Engage with students and faculty attentively and respectfully
- > Shape the imaginations of our students so that they begin to envision possibilities for growth and change personally, locally, and even globally

Morning Meetings are just the start of important conversations in our community. Faculty and student leaders play a crucial role in engaging with the ideas presented by our speakers throughout the school year. With each major speaker, we will offer opportunities for students and faculty to meet in smaller groups for conversation. We will also provide follow-up questions for discussion among faculty and students at sit-down meals, and, at times, for discussion among advising groups, afternoon activity groups, or other groups of students.

political abstractions.” Valdary helped us to understand the problems that arise when we treat each other as abstractions and how we can live differently within our community. ■



To a Fantastic Fall Term!

THERE IS ALMOST NOTHING MORE EXHILARATING THAN THE ENERGY THAT TAKES OVER OUR CAMPUS AT THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR. FROM ARRIVAL DAYS AND BESTIE REUNIONS TO THE START OF CLASSES AND CONVOCATION, THE FEELINGS THAT COME WITH THE RETURN TO CAMPUS EACH YEAR ARE JOYFUL AND UNFORGETTABLE.

"Our faculty want you to do well and care about your well-being. There are a multitude of faculty members who want to help you succeed; realistically, not every day is going to be perfect, and you'll need them. Their support will help you not only academically but also in navigating life's challenges."

—Co-Head Mon
Theo Weisman '25
2024 Opening Day
Welcome Address



"Taft is the perfect place to step out of your comfort zone because people will always be in your corner. From your friends to teachers to advisors to coaches to the nurses in the health center to Theo, the school monitors, and myself—we are all here for each and every one of you. The community we have at Taft is a special one. One that is rooted in encouraging one another. One that builds connections stronger by the day."

—Co-Head Mon
Sophie Brown '25
2024 Opening Day
Welcome Address

Fresh Spaces



SUMMER IS OFTEN A TIME FOR CAMPUS PROJECTS, AND THE SUMMER OF 2024 WAS NO EXCEPTION. UNLIKE IN YEARS PAST, HOWEVER, MUCH OF THE WORK IS ONGOING, AND PART OF A FULL-ON CAMPUS GLOW-UP. AND, WHILE THERE WERE SOME LARGE-SCALE PROJECTS—including the complete reconstruction of our 12 OUTDOOR TENNIS (AND NOW PICKLEBALL!) COURTS—THERE WERE SMALLER PROJECTS, AS WELL. REGARDLESS OF THE SCALE, EACH BIT OF WORK IS DESIGNED TO LIGHTEN, BRIGHTEN, ADVANCE, AND IMPROVE THE SPACES IN WHICH OUR STUDENTS LEARN, GROW, AND THRIVE. HERE'S A LOOK AT SOME OF THE WORK:

Main Hall

Main Hall got a much-needed (and much brighter) fresh coat of paint; the color is enhanced by new lighting. The Admissions entryway also has a whole new look. New door signs and wayfinding will also be installed throughout fall to make navigating our halls even easier.

Communal Corridors

Throughout the fall, custom-made furniture and benches will pop up outside and around the Black Box, Potter Gallery, Rhino Lobby, Wu, and Main Hall. This new furniture is designed to enhance

the comfort of these spaces and invites all to pause amidst the fullness of school life and visit with classmates and teachers.

The Jig

The Jig boasts new patio and café furniture, with an organic feel. The result: a comfortable, calming space to relax and connect. Indoors, the lounge side of the Jig shines with new décor, lighting, and flooring.

Athletics Center

In addition to the aforementioned work on our outdoor tennis courts, Cruikshank and Odden are getting facelifts

that include new paint, murals, floors, and updated wayfinding. En route, Tafties will follow the new pavers installed along MacMullen Field.

Infrastructure

Wu Science Center: We installed a new and improved HVAC system to ensure comfort throughout the year.

Sustainability Efforts: A new fuel cell is being installed as a follow-on to the school's installation of solar panel arrays on its athletic facilities arrays a year ago. When complete, the fuel cell will reduce the school's dependence on the grid by 50%. ■

1 In progress: The installation of new pavers along MacMullen Field

2 The Peter Frew '75 Tennis Facility project includes post-tension concrete technology on all 12 tennis courts, new nets, windscreens, pickleball lines, and more. The project does not impact the stunning Donaldson Tennis Pavilion perched above the courts.

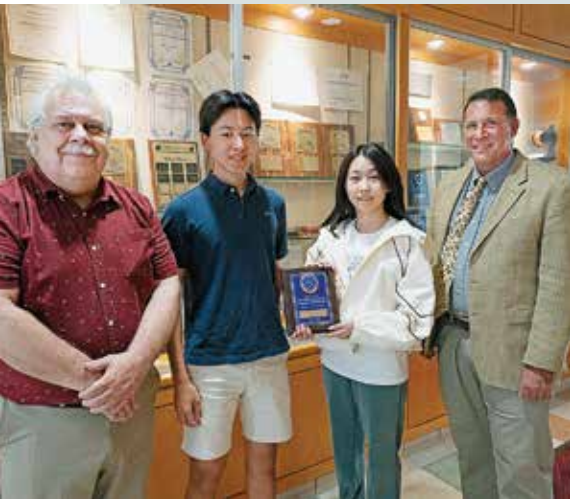
3 Taft alum Rebecca Sterling '94, AIA LEED AP, and her company, Studio STE, are helping bridge the gap between high-end architecture, interiors, and sustainability as we update some of our campus spaces. Sterling's vision brought a new look to Jig patio.

4 It took a crane to install our new and improved HVAC system in Wu.

5 6 7 The Cruikshank facelift includes new paint, murals, and decals.

8 In addition to the major facilities work done around campus, some individuals and departments also gave their spaces glow-ups, including this artistic organization in the ceramics room.





TEAM TAFT RECEIVED THEIR 2023–24 New England Mathematics League (NEML) hardware at the start of the school year. The team earned top regional honors for the third consecutive year. The NEML competition spans the full academic year and challenges competitors at the highest level. The annual event is built on six monthly mathematics challenges, starting in October of each academic year. The monthly contests, completed on-site, challenge competitors with sets of six problems of increasing complexity. Students work individually to solve each problem, earning one point for every correct answer; each

team reports its top five scores from the round to build a cumulative ranking. Taft’s Mathematics Team is an afternoon activity open to everyone on campus with an interest in exploring mathematics through practice, discussion, and competition. Mathletes compete in events at the local, national, and international level, including NEML, The American Mathematics Competition, and the American Invitational Mathematics Examination. In photo, from left, Team Coach Kevin Coleman, Team Co-Captains Kevin Jin ’25 and Yolanda Wei ’26, and Math Department Head Al Reiff ’80.



TYPICALLY HELD ON THE FIRST Sunday after the first full week of the school year, Super Sunday sees each Taft student start out as part of a single-color team. By the end of Super Sunday’s egg toss, tug-of-war, three-legged races, Crisco slide, and full-on colorful paint shenanigans, the individual colors and teams have melded into one complete, connected, and colorfully blended school community. As always, it was great fun, and a great way to start the school year.



ADMINISTRATORS, SCIENCE DEPARTMENT FACULTY, AND MEMBERS of our grounds and facilities teams are among those who have been meeting to consider landscape management measures that would, says Head of School Peter Becker ’95, “allow for a more intentional balance between imposing our will on the landscape and letting it do what it wants.” Last spring, the group identified hillsides on campus where mowing would be discontinued. They then visited those hillsides, considered new “no mow” sites, and heard about new electric mowers in use in some locations on campus.

MARTYNA GLOWACKA ’25, was recently named laureate of the Our Future Foundation’s mentoring program during the 5th Our Future Foundation Scholarship Gala at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland. The scholarship includes year-long mentoring from students at top foreign universities in shaping their career paths, and support in the university application process. Our Future Foundation supports young people from Poland in preparing for and applying to the world’s top universities. The organization is focused on education and professional development, and is committed to providing equal access to talented young people.



Visit www.taftschool.org/arts/concert-series or scan the QR code for additional information.

MUSIC FOR A WHILE 24-25

88TH ANNUAL SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS
December 17, 6 & 8 PM
Woodward Chapel

RUMBAROCO: LATIN-BAROQUE FUSION ENSEMBLE
January 17, 7 Pm
Woodward Chapel

ART FROM THE HEART: TAFT INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC TEACHERS
February 14, 7 PM
Woodward Chapel

JAZZ IN THE UNDERCROFT: A MARDI GRAS CABARET TJ THOMPSON JAZZ ENSEMBLE
March 1, 7 PM
Woodward Chapel Undercroft

SONIC FIREWORKS WITH ORGANIST DANIEL SCIFO
March 30, 4 PM
Woodward Chapel

MUSIC FOR A GREAT SPACE COLLEGIUM MUSICUM & GUESTS BRUCE FIFER, CONDUCTOR
April 11, 7 PM
Woodward Chapel
April 13, 4 PM
St. Luke in the Fields, NYC

AIDA: A NIGHT AT THE OPERA WITH CHRISTOPHER BROWNER '12
April 25, 7 PM
Taft School Choral Room

FLAUTIST VANESSA HOLROYD '90 AND FRIENDS
May 10, 4 PM
Woodward Chapel



An aerial view of
fall colors and
MacMullen Field
KAIYUN XU '27



A
Q
+
A

with
Head of
School
Peter
Becker '95



Reflecting on the First Year

BULLETIN

What were the most significant lessons you learned in your first year as head of school at Taft?

PB

Taft is in great shape. This wasn't a surprise, but it was exciting to have it confirmed. In particular, Taft's faculty are awesome—and this is critical because faculty and the school's leadership create the conditions for student learning and growth. Taft has remarkable—and remarkably exciting—opportunities for growth, building on existing strengths and creating new ones.

BULLETIN

Can you share some of the challenges you faced during your first year and how you navigated them?

PB

Maybe the only downside to Taft having only five heads in 133 years before me, and both my predecessors having worked at the school before becoming head, is that it wasn't clear to any of us what to do with the new guy. I appreciated

everyone's patience! Having two kids finishing school a few towns away just meant that, as a family, we navigated much of the year with a foot in Watertown and a foot in Washington. We are very glad to have all of our feet in Watertown now!

BULLETIN

Were there any moments or achievements from your first year that stand out as particularly meaningful?

PB

The board's engagement with revamping Taft's governance structure and practices was an integral step in setting the school up for success in the future. Other moments were: standing in my office on drop-off day with six classmates from '95 who were dropping off their kids and all of us wondering what we were doing in Mr. Odden's office. I loved celebrating the Class of 2024 on a beautiful day in May! And the Frew and McCabe retirements—four individuals who had a big impact on my time as a student at Taft and on the lives of so many Tafties. Also sharing Alumni Weekend with Lance and Willy—I am (and probably will remain) a little awestruck that I get to overlap with 50 years of Taft leadership and wisdom.



BULLETIN

What is something about Taft that you've grown particularly fond of since becoming head of school?

PB

The office on Main Hall. There's nothing else like it. The lifeblood of the school flows past the office all day and night. It makes it very easy to remember why we do all of this in the first place—for our students today and in the future. It's also fun—spending time with students and colleagues is the best part of my day.

BULLETIN

When you're not on campus, how do you unwind and recharge?

PB

We've entered a phase of family life where it's very rare for all five of us to be in one place at the same time, so we work hard to make that happen. My morning routine is pretty vital—wake up early to have time to read/think/meditate/exercise. I have a weekly, nonnegotiable date night with Amy Julia. I love to spend time running and hiking—and as much time outdoors as possible.



Looking Ahead

BULLETIN

What are your top priorities for your second year?

PB

Strategic planning; campus planning; continuing to understand Taft today; staying connected to students and colleagues; excellent leadership for the individuals who lead school; and reconnecting with Taft alumni.

BULLETIN

What is the Strategic Design Process? Who is involved, why does Taft need it, and what will it accomplish?

PB

It is another term for strategic planning, but one that reflects the relationship between clarifying the school's core values and goals for students and then ensuring that the program and shape of school life (all parts of school life—we are a boarding school, not a day school, that houses its students, so the time after classes and extracurriculars, especially residential life, is as important as what happens from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) aligns with that—and that we review and update that intentionally over time.

The Strategic Design Team, a group of Taft

trustees, faculty and administrators, alumni and parents, and friends of the school, leads the process. The school's senior administrative team engages with the process once a month and the board, who are the final decision-makers, connect with it regularly.

We will actively seek input from Taft's faculty and staff, students, alumni, parents, and neighbors along the way and share updates, through in-person meetings, surveys, and our website. We hope everyone will participate.

Taft, like all schools, needs a plan because without a plan—and without executing on a plan and gauging progress and making adjustments along the way—it's really an ongoing exercise in learning. Without a plan, schools drift. We will create a plan that provides clarity internally and externally about why we do what we do the way we do it at Taft, and about where Taft wants to plant a flag in the landscape of American boarding schools and high school education more broadly.

The process will incorporate and build on historical parts of Taft's mission—service and educating the whole student in particular, as well as on the existing Portrait of a Graduate—while being clear eyed about the need to define what Taft means by those terms today versus what Mr. Taft meant by those terms in the late 19th century. They were novel insights at the school's founding, but now they have become common practice for most independent schools.





“

We want Taft students to know how to develop relationships with other humans in an age when technology is encouraging them to turn in on themselves. We want them to increase their capacity to create when technology is encouraging them to let the machine do the creating for them. We want them to learn to appreciate and use and care for their human bodies when technology is encouraging them to be passive.”

Vision and Strategy

BULLETIN

How do you balance tradition with innovation in guiding the school forward?

PB

I taught history before becoming a head of school, and I bring the lens of history to everything I do in this role. Identifying and holding on to the best of a culture, while examining it honestly in the clear light of day, and asking how we hold on to that, build on it, and letting it inform the path forward intentionally leads to the best answers for any given institution. We need to ask where a given tradition came from and if we want it to continue, and what have we learned along the way as we seek answers to how we move forward.

BULLETIN

How is the school addressing current educational challenges, such as preparing students for a rapidly changing world?

PB

We are being deliberate about not letting the tail wag the dog. More important than any specific skill set (think coding 10 years ago) will be the capacity and eagerness to keep learning, to adapt, to take good informed risks, to seek the good of one's neighbor and one's community, to understand which movements in culture are ennobling and humanizing and which are dehumanizing, to create, to think independently, and to lead. Many of these are long-standing ideas and strengths

of the school, and they will serve Taft and Taft students well in the future as long as we continually ask ourselves what we can do during a student's years on campus to cultivate these capacities.

BULLETIN

What is your vision for student development—academically, socially, and personally—at Taft in the next five years?

PB

Taft students are driven! (Read David Brooks' "The Organization Kid" article from *The Atlantic* to get a sense of what I mean.) We want to make sure that as focused as students are on goals like a great college outcome, GPA, success in the arts or in a sport, that at each step along the way they are developing the habits of thought and action that will help them identify a deeper purpose that animates their striving. At Taft that starts with seeing and serving your neighbor, and that will make their lives sustainable, life-giving and joyful and not just a grind. We want to ensure that Taft students know how to support their own health and well-being and develop resilience out of that, not just through white-knuckling life. We want Taft students to know how to develop relationships with other humans in an age when technology is encouraging them to turn in on themselves. We want them to increase their capacity to create when technology is encouraging them to let the machine do the creating for them. We want them to learn to

appreciate and use and care for their human bodies when technology is encouraging them to be passive.

BULLETIN

How does Taft's commitment to community and belonging inform your leadership?

PB

Continually creating—as new students and colleagues from diverse backgrounds join the school each year—a school community in which every student belongs as who they are (and not only once they conform to a narrow type) is central to Taft's educational vision. Every adult at school shares responsibility for creating the conditions of belonging so that every student is well known and learns to practice the skills of hospitality and welcoming that are the constitutive parts of a healthy and strong community. We don't assume that every—or even most—lower mids understand or know how to practice these skills, especially in the intensity of a boarding community, so we get to help them learn these skills, patiently over time. Doing this well sets up students to be intellectually curious and to practice viewpoint diversity, to put themselves in one another's shoes and imagine what the world looks like from vantage points other than the ones they grew up with, and then to live well together even when they don't agree with one another. Achieving all this takes intentional work every day and is fundamental to the community we create and the outcomes we want for students.





Engaging the Alumni Community

BULLETIN

What message do you have for alumni who want to stay connected and involved with the school?

PB

- > Come visit!
- > Reach out to at least one classmate who has not been engaged, see how they are doing, and encourage them to visit or to have a meeting with someone from the Alumni Office, or just tell them what's happening at school.
- > Share your news with the Alumni Office—connect to Taft on LinkedIn.
- > Share your favorite (appropriate) story from your time at Taft with the Alumni Office.
- > Provide input to the strategic planning processes.

BULLETIN

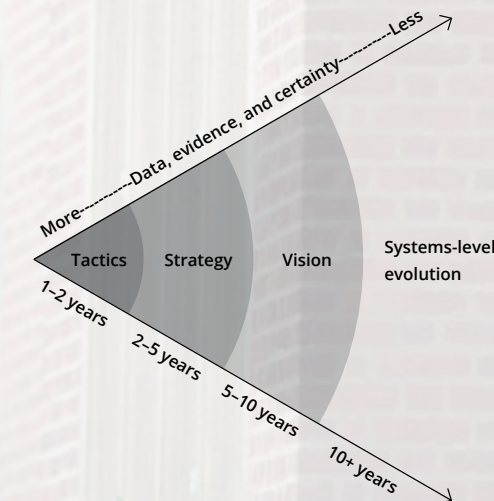
What role do you see alumni playing in shaping the future of the school?

PB

Understanding what made Taft special and transformative—and challenging—for alumni will help us constantly distill the best of Taft so that we can preserve that as we help the school evolve. Taft is a national and global family—in other words, it's a network of people having an impact on their immediate environments today and on the world at large. Let's consider what we want that impact to be and, in the spirit of *non ut sibi*, leave the world a better place because Tafties exist. Also, we hope to find ways to connect current Taft students with alumni and to connect young alumni with the network. We hope everyone will participate. This has happened organically in awesome ways over generations, and we hope to do this more intentionally going forward. ■

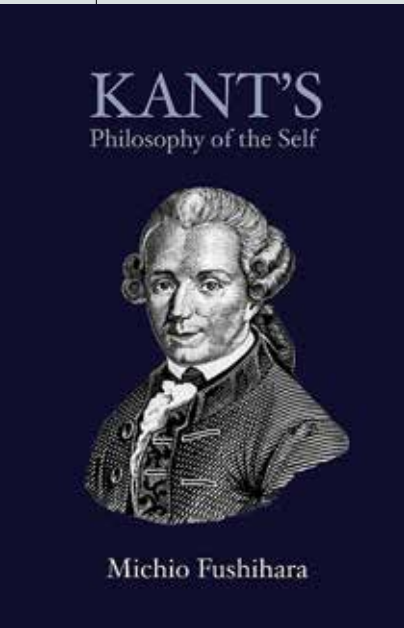
A Futurist's Framework for Strategic Planning

Instead of arbitrarily assigning goals on a quarterly or yearly timeline, use a cone instead. First identify probable events for which there's already data or evidence, and then work outward. Each section of the cone is a strategic approach, and it encompasses the one before it until you reach major systems-level evolution at your company.



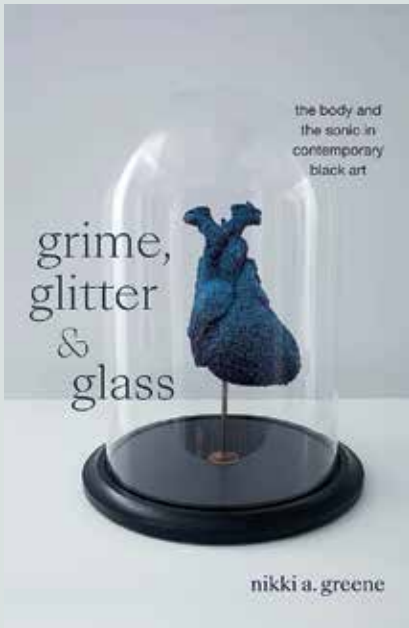
Amy Webb, Future Today Institute

In PRINT



Kant's Philosophy of the Self
Michio Fushihara '79

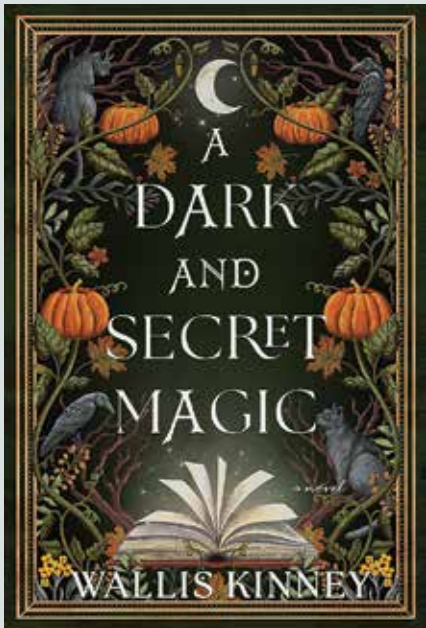
The core of this volume is an investigation of Kant's philosophy of the self. By thought alone, the self can be conscious of its own existence, but it cannot know itself as an object. In order to have knowledge of the self, intuition is required in addition to thought. Thus, there is a distinction between self-consciousness and self-knowledge.



Grime, Glitter, and Glass: The Body and the Sonic in Contemporary Black Art

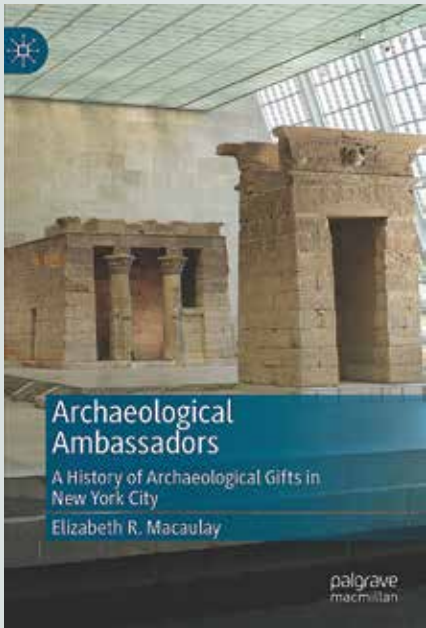
Nikki A. (Mayhew) Greene '93

Greene examines contemporary Black visual artists' use of sonic elements to refigure the formal and philosophical developments of Black art and culture. Focusing on the multimedia works of Renée Stout, Radcliffe Bailey, and María Magdalena Campos-Pons, she employs her concept of "visual aesthetic musicality" to interpret art through musical genres such as jazz, funk, rap, and rumba within art historiography.



A Dark and Secret Magic
Wallis Kinney '12

A warm, spellbinding tale about a witch and the secrets her coven has been keeping from her, with echoes of the classic Hades and Persephone story. *A Dark and Secret Magic* is a celebration of the Halloween season and a love letter to anyone who drinks pumpkin spice in August and carries the spirit of a witch inside their heart all year long.



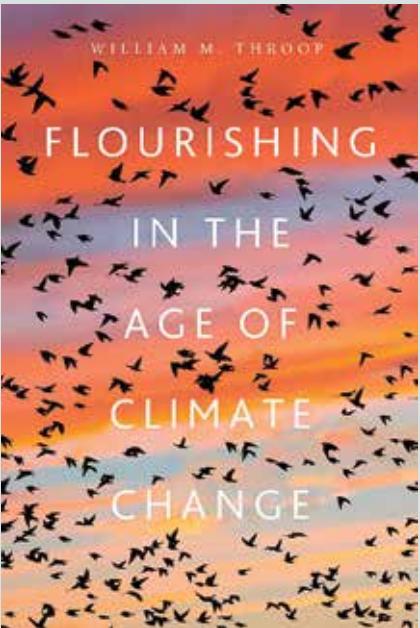
Archaeological Ambassadors: A History of Archaeological Gifts in New York City
Elizabeth R. Macaulay '98

This book investigates why nations with rich archaeological pasts like Egypt, Greece, and Jordan gave important antiquities—often unique, rare, and highly valued monuments—to New York City, New York Institutions, and the United States from 1879 to 1965. In addition to analyzing the givers' motivations, the author examines why New Yorkers and Americans coveted such objects.



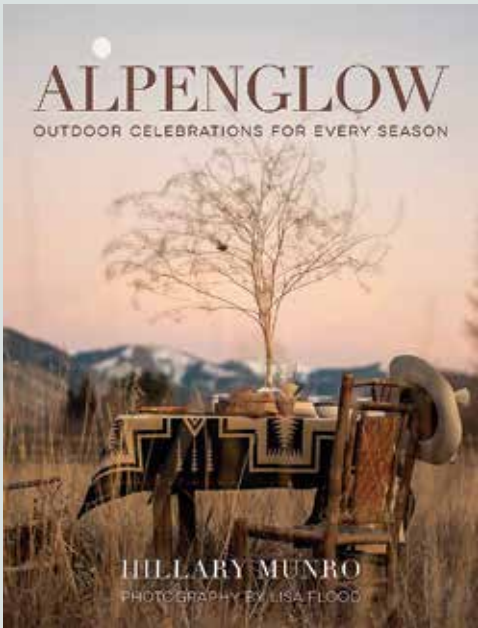
Boiling Wells Lane: Stories From an Inner City Country Lane
Carrie Hitchcock '75

Boiling Wells Lane is an anomaly—a country lane in the center of Bristol's inner city hidden in a secret valley and a popular footpath for Sunday walkers. In the past 10 years it has also been home to several self-built houses, one community city farm, and more. Hitchcock started to document the Lane in 2013 to discover the stories behind the people who lived and worked there.



Flourishing in the Age of Climate Change
William M. Throop '71

Flourishing in the Age of Climate Change explores skills needed to successfully navigate the environmental, social, and economic challenges of the 21st century. Drawing on research from environmental science, ethics, psychology, sociology, and educational theory, Throop shows why cultivating under-developed skills involved in collaboration, humility, frugality, and systems thinking can enable flourishing within our context.



Alpenglow: Outdoor Celebrations for Every Season
Lisa Flood '85 (Photographer), Hillary Munro (Author)

Alpenglow is a coffee table book that celebrates creative outdoor entertaining in the high Mountain West and the joy of engaging in seasonal rituals. The book is filled with creative parties and fun country activities throughout the four seasons and features over 200 photographs. The stories and scenes are set in the high mountain valley of Jackson Hole, Wyoming—but the gatherings could take place anywhere. ■

Taft BULLETIN

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Preston Yow '27 was the "Lights" theme winner in the Taft Photography Club's 2024 Photography Challenge.

PRESTON YOW '27