

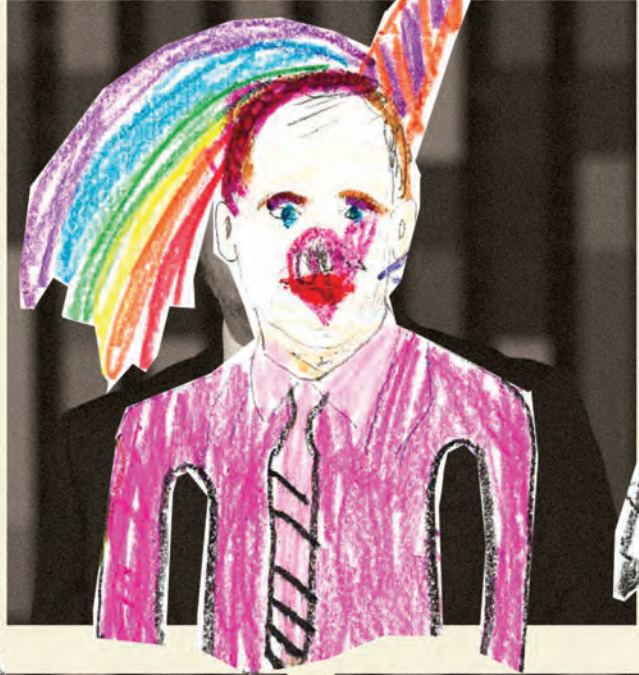
FALL/WINTER 2024

GDS  
3rd grade  
artists in  
2018

# GEORGETOWN DAYS

**DRAWING ON  
DIFFERENT  
POINTS  
OF VIEW**

**CIVIL  
DISCOURSE**



**IN THIS ISSUE**

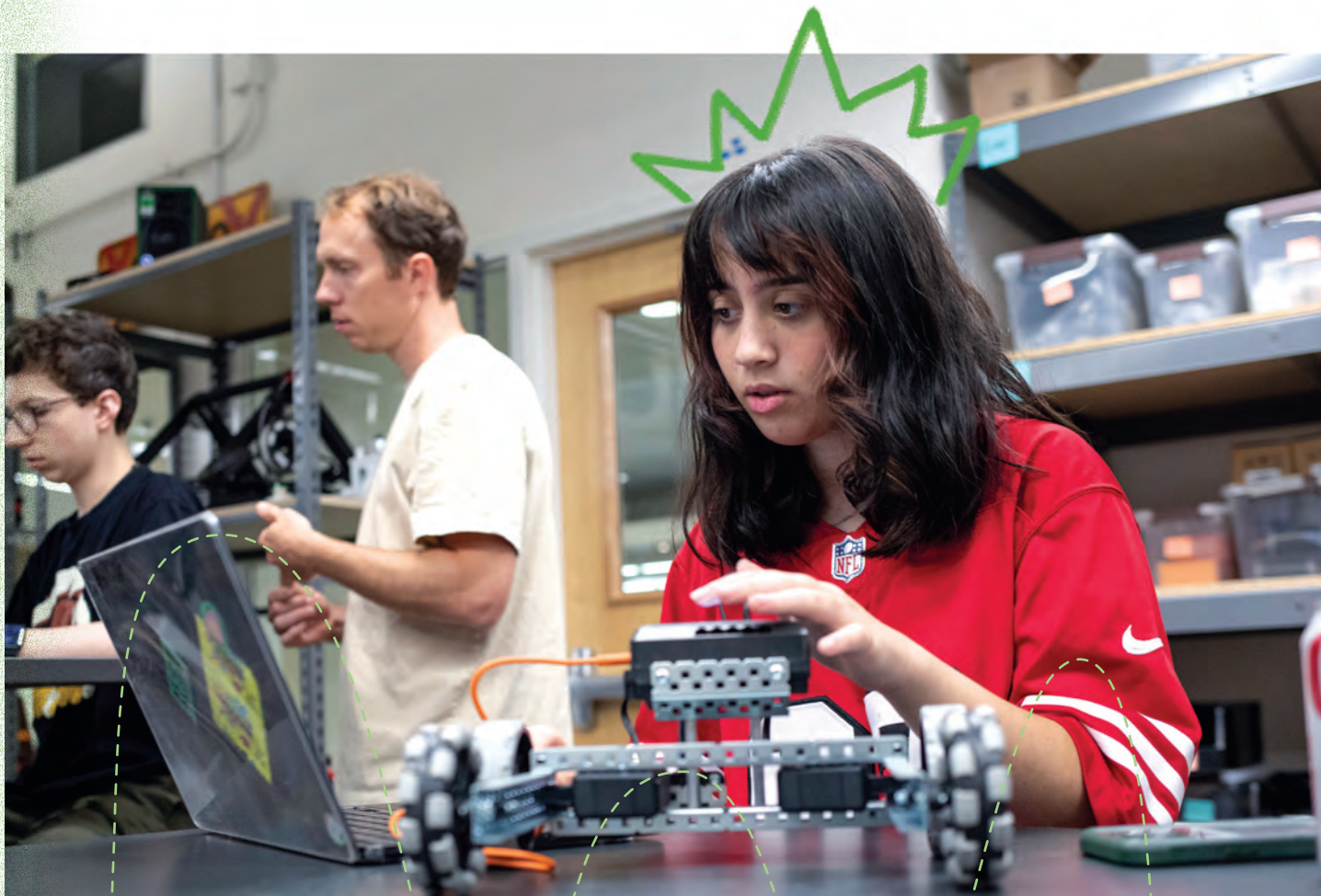
p. 8 **TALKING ACROSS DIFFERENCES**

p. 62 **JOHN BURGHARDT RETIRES**

**FEATURE**

**GIVING REPORT  
AND POLICY INSTITUTE  
EXPANDS**





Jason Putsché

# OUR MISSION DRIVES ALL THAT WE DO

**GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL** honors the integrity and worth of each individual within a diverse school community. GDS is dedicated to providing a supportive educational atmosphere in which teachers challenge the intellectual, creative, and physical abilities of our students and foster strength of character and concern for others. From the earliest grades, we encourage our students to wonder, to inquire, and to be self-reliant, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning.



Jason Putsché

**We welcome submissions for Georgetown Days magazine from all GDS community members.**

Please contact [dina@gds.org](mailto:dina@gds.org) to learn more.

Alumni are encouraged to send their news with photos to [alumni@gds.org](mailto:alumni@gds.org).



WHERE STUDENTS  
LOVE TO LEARN & LEARN TO CHANGE  
THE WORLD

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*Editor's Note: The magazine lists only first name and graduation year for Lower School students.*

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# FROM WHERE I STAND



Russell Shaw,  
Head of School

**IN MY WELCOME-BACK TALK FOR FACULTY THIS YEAR,** I highlighted the work of American political scientist Robert Putnam, best known for his seminal book *Bowling Alone*. Putnam reports on the decline of community in America and explores social capital, the web of relationships that helps a society to function. He describes two kinds of social capital, bonding and bridging. Bonding is connecting with people who are similar to you, bridging to people who are different. Putnam argues that while both are important, in this polarized moment, we’re doing more bonding than bridging, and this is threatening the health of our democracy and society.

GDS’s creation was an act of bridging—our founders believed that by bringing together young people of different races, backgrounds, religions, and life experiences, we would create the conditions for a thriving school and ultimately for a better world. Teaching our students to build bridges is as vital in 2024 as it was in 1945. In our classrooms and corridors, we strive to develop bridge-building capacities for our students, including listening, critical thinking, curiosity, open-mindedness, empathy, and perspective-taking.

GDS is, and must be, a non-partisan institution. We do not align ourselves with individual parties or candidates. And yet, while we are a non-partisan institution, we are not a values-free institution. The first line of our mission reads, “Georgetown Day School honors the integrity and worth of each individual within a diverse school community.” Our GDS Statement of Philosophy calls us to cultivate in our students “an abhorrence of bigotry and intolerance.” From the youngest ages, we teach students the value of respect for others, and we make this value visible through conversations in classrooms, assemblies, and a very intentional celebration of the richness that comes from difference.

Students bonding, building bridges,  
and preparing for engaged citizenship.



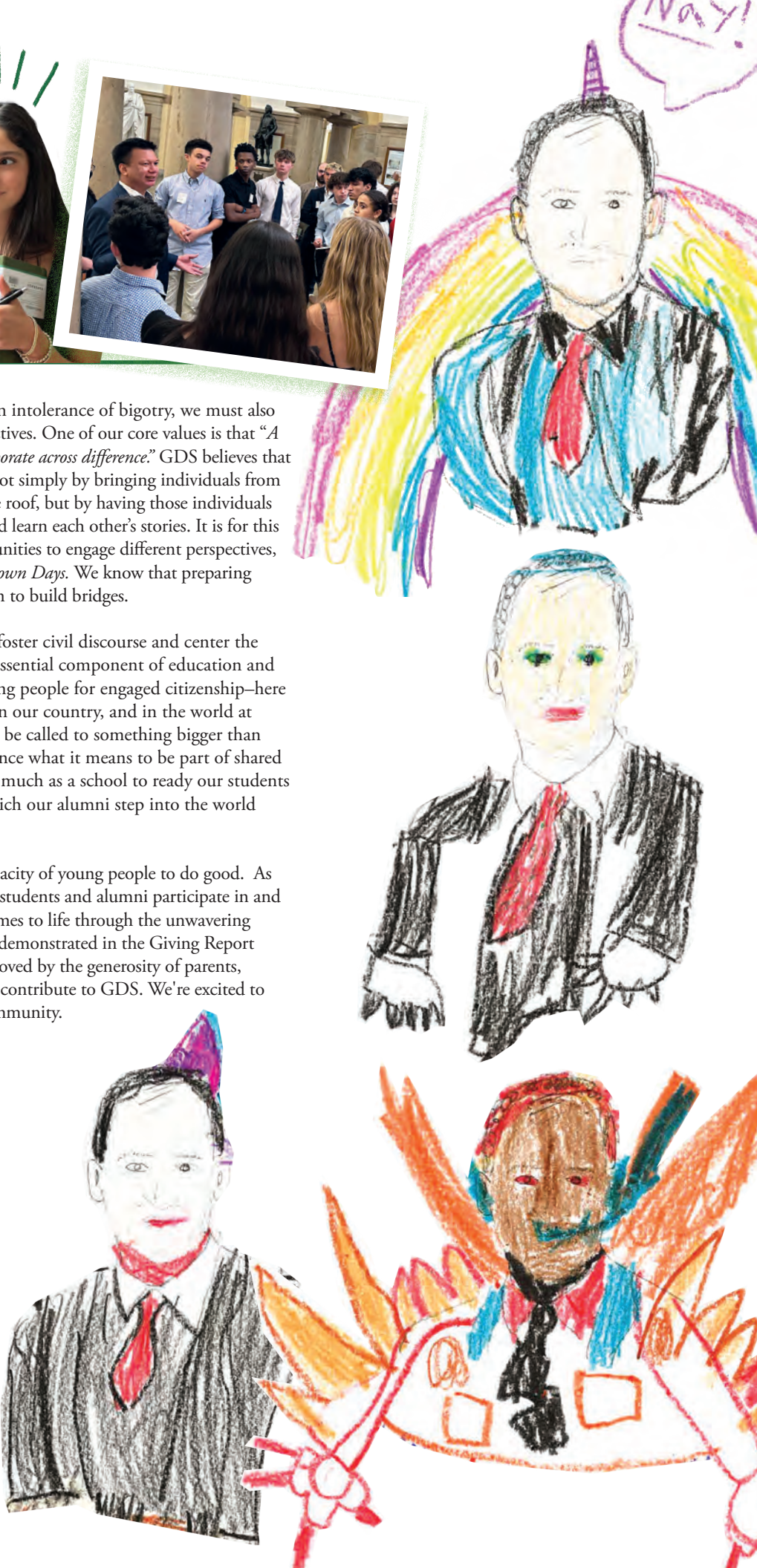
Just as it is vital to model for our students an intolerance of bigotry, we must also demonstrate an openness to different perspectives. One of our core values is that “*A GDS Student Will...build networks and collaborate across difference.*” GDS believes that we can create a more just and healed world not simply by bringing individuals from diverse backgrounds together under the same roof, but by having those individuals learn together, work together, collaborate, and learn each other’s stories. It is for this reason that we intentionally seek out opportunities to engage different perspectives, as you will read about in this issue of *Georgetown Days*. We know that preparing young people to thrive means preparing them to build bridges.

In these pages, you will read about how we foster civil discourse and center the student as citizen. We see citizenship as an essential component of education and take seriously our obligation to prepare young people for engaged citizenship—here at GDS, in their communities, in our city, in our country, and in the world at large. We believe that young people want to be called to something bigger than themselves. We believe they want to experience what it means to be part of shared work and shared purpose. We already do so much as a school to ready our students for citizenship. I’m proud of the ways in which our alumni step into the world with purpose, prepared to have an impact.

GDS has always believed in the powerful capacity of young people to do good. As educators, we bet on a future in which GDS students and alumni participate in and support a thriving democracy. This vision comes to life through the unwavering philanthropic support of our community, as demonstrated in the Giving Report published in this magazine. Each year, I’m moved by the generosity of parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and even students who contribute to GDS. We’re excited to realize our vision in partnership with our community.

Russell

**COVER ART**  
The Georgetown Days magazine cover features the drawings of second grade students from a few years back, who were asked to draw Russell’s outfits for the day. The project demonstrates (at Russell’s expense) how people can hold different perspectives on the same topic, and all can be valid. More masterpieces to the right.





"AS THEY GET CLOSER TO VOTING AGE, WE WANT STUDENTS TO START THINKING ABOUT BEING FULLY ENGAGED CITIZENS IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY."

# THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES



At the Heritage Foundation, some students met with Simon Hankinson, a Senior Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation and former Director of College Preparedness for DC Public Schools.

**IN THE CLASSROOMS** of history teachers Jazzmin Cox-Cáceres and Erika Carlson, 8th grade students are examining the societal impact of key Constitutional issues as they deepen their understanding of what it means to be an active and responsible citizen.

The Constitutional Issues Project allows each student to explore the concepts of liberty, justice, and equality by analyzing one of the following topics or "tracks": the Second Amendment, access to education, criminal justice, economic inequality, environmental justice, freedom of speech, immigration, and reproductive rights.

For the better part of the school year, the students study their chosen issues in the classroom and the real world. They delve into research and meet with lawmakers, journalists, and activists to produce a paper that stakes out a policy position based on what they have learned.

"That's the citizenship skill we're trying to build," Jazzmin said. "As they get closer to voting age, we want them to start thinking about being fully engaged citizens in a global community."

While the project was initially designed to expose students to both sides of an issue, Erika said the focus has recently shifted to encourage a search for common ground and a more nuanced understanding of divisive issues.

"For instance, you can argue the right to bear arms from the perspective of the [National Rifle Association]," Erika added. "But you can also argue that from the perspective of the Black Panthers, and they have very different thoughts."

## More than "just a paper"

The project begins in September when students explore library resources, learn the finer points of digging for information, and start writing the first portion



of a research paper based on the facts they've gathered. The process helps them prepare for the next stage: meetings with experts in the field.

In February, they embark on "Hill Day," an off-campus experience during which students fan out across Washington to meet with Capitol Hill lawmakers, nonprofit groups, and federal officials to gather as many perspectives as possible on the issue they're studying. The outing, arranged by the Community Engagement and Experiential Learning (CEEL) office, enables them to flesh out their research paper, form a policy position, and defend it in writing.

A lot of preparation goes into Hill Day. Journalists speak to the 8th graders about how to ask probing questions in a respectful manner. GDS High School students who have previously taken part in Hill Day talk to their younger peers about the experience. And teachers discuss the historical context of the issues that the students are exploring leading up to the Hill Day visits, which dovetails with the U.S. History curriculum.

"It's a really long process," Jazzmin said. "That's why I say it's not just a paper."

## Digging into issues

For each track, students typically pursue a broad topic that appeals to them and then refine it as they learn more. Last year, one of Erika's students wrote a paper on whether the

(Above) On Hill Day 2023, Jazzmin Cox-Cáceres (far right) joined students at the Heritage Foundation as part of the Access to Education track.

Students in the Reproductive Justice track met with the Gender Policy Council at the White House. In the afternoon, they spoke with the Director of Life Issues from the Archdiocese of Greater Washington.

federal government should raise the minimum wage as part of the economic inequality track. This year, some students are writing about fracking as part of the climate justice track.

When she was in 8th grade, Emma Renigar '26 chose to explore the reproductive justice track, specifically sex education. Initially, she focused on which states require sex education and found that the requirements varied wildly in states that offered a curriculum. "I dove into more detailed content of *what* was taught, and explored the question of how effective is sex education if it's not complete," Emma said.

Anjali Martin-Shanker '26 wrote a paper during her 8th grade year proposing that the federal government enact a national sex education curriculum instead of having each state adopt its own courses piecemeal. Now that she's taking the American Government class in 11th grade, she recognizes that the Constitutional Issues Project was a valuable building block in her education.

"I took a ton away from it," Anjali said. "I think it laid a really interesting foundation for what I would be learning later."



# COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

(from left) Executive Vice President of Race Forward Eric Ward, CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs Amy Spitalnick, *Daily Beast* columnist Wajahat Ali, and GDS Assistant Head for Equity and Inclusion Marlo Thomas discussed how to combat antisemitism and Islamophobia in education.



**ERIC WARD**, a nationally recognized expert on hate crimes and political violence, posed this question at a GDS gathering for parents this year: Has anyone attempted an intense conversation while in the middle of packing and moving homes?

“How’d it go?” Ward asked. “Not so good, right?”

Now imagine making space for civil conversation about emotionally fraught social justice issues when the nation is still reeling from years of anxiety and political tensions. The COVID-19 pandemic. The January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. The war in Ukraine. Hamas’s deadly October 7 attack in Israel and the bloodshed that followed. Polarizing presidential elections. These events have taken a toll on the American psyche, straining our ability to engage in constructive dialogue and exacerbating a toxic intolerance that has led to a sharp rise in hate and bigotry.

“We’re highly stressed,” said Ward, executive vice president of Race Forward, a nonprofit racial justice organization. “We are in our emotional self, which makes it hard to have a rational conversation. We also have to admit that we did not do the work of building the relationships that were necessary to have these types of intensive conversations.”

GDS invited Ward along with Amy Spitalnick (CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs) and Wajahat Ali (columnist for *The Daily Beast*) to campus for a discussion on how to counter antisemitism and Islamophobia in education—bringing together activists in the Black, Jewish, and Muslim communities, respectively, to share their perspectives.

The panelists took part in two moderated discussions, one for parents and another for students, each led by GDS Assistant Head for Equity and Inclusion Marlo Thomas. The talks kicked off the School’s annual Social Justice Teach-In, a two-day program in February that offers dozens of on-campus workshops for HS and MS students.

The offerings organized by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion office featured a workshop for students on the rich history of Muslim-Jewish relationships and a session for faculty on how to talk about Israel/Palestine in the classroom. Both were led by Dr. Sara Jay, a teacher and lecturer in St. Louis, Missouri specializing in Jewish, Islamic, and Middle Eastern studies. This year’s teach-in days theme was weaving a hate-free legacy through constructive dialogue.

## Your kids are watching you

During the evening discussion with parents, the panelists agreed that parents often project their anxieties and fears onto their children, who then carry this emotional baggage with them to school.

“They are looking not just at the things we [parents] say, but the things we do, who we are with, who we aren’t with, who we lean into, who we lean away from,” Ward said. “We need to consciously reset what we are modeling for kids. ... Our kids are not proxies for our emotional state.”

We also need to listen to what the youth have to say, said Ali, author of the memoir, *Go Back to Where You Came From*. Ask yourself, he said: Why is my kid, who is not Arab or Jewish, protesting for a ceasefire? Why is a Jewish grandfather contributing to AIPAC while his grandson identifies as pro-Palestinian? Lean in with curiosity and allow students the opportunity to practice talking about sensitive topics, he added.

“I think this kind of intellectual humility allows space, for both parents and kids, to say: ‘Let’s learn this together; let’s have a conversation,’” said Ali, who often writes about America’s complicated relationship with Muslims, immigrants, and people of color.

## Staying at the table

Spitalnick told the audience that building the muscle needed to have tough conversations requires seeing each other’s humanity and breaking through “false binaries,” the zero-sum mentality that the safety and rights of one community come at the expense of another.

But she’s witnessed Jewish and Muslim groups retreat and put up walls instead of engaging in constructive dialogue with one another and identifying shared goals and values. Many figure that nobody showed up for them on October 7 or its aftermath, she said, so why should they keep showing up?

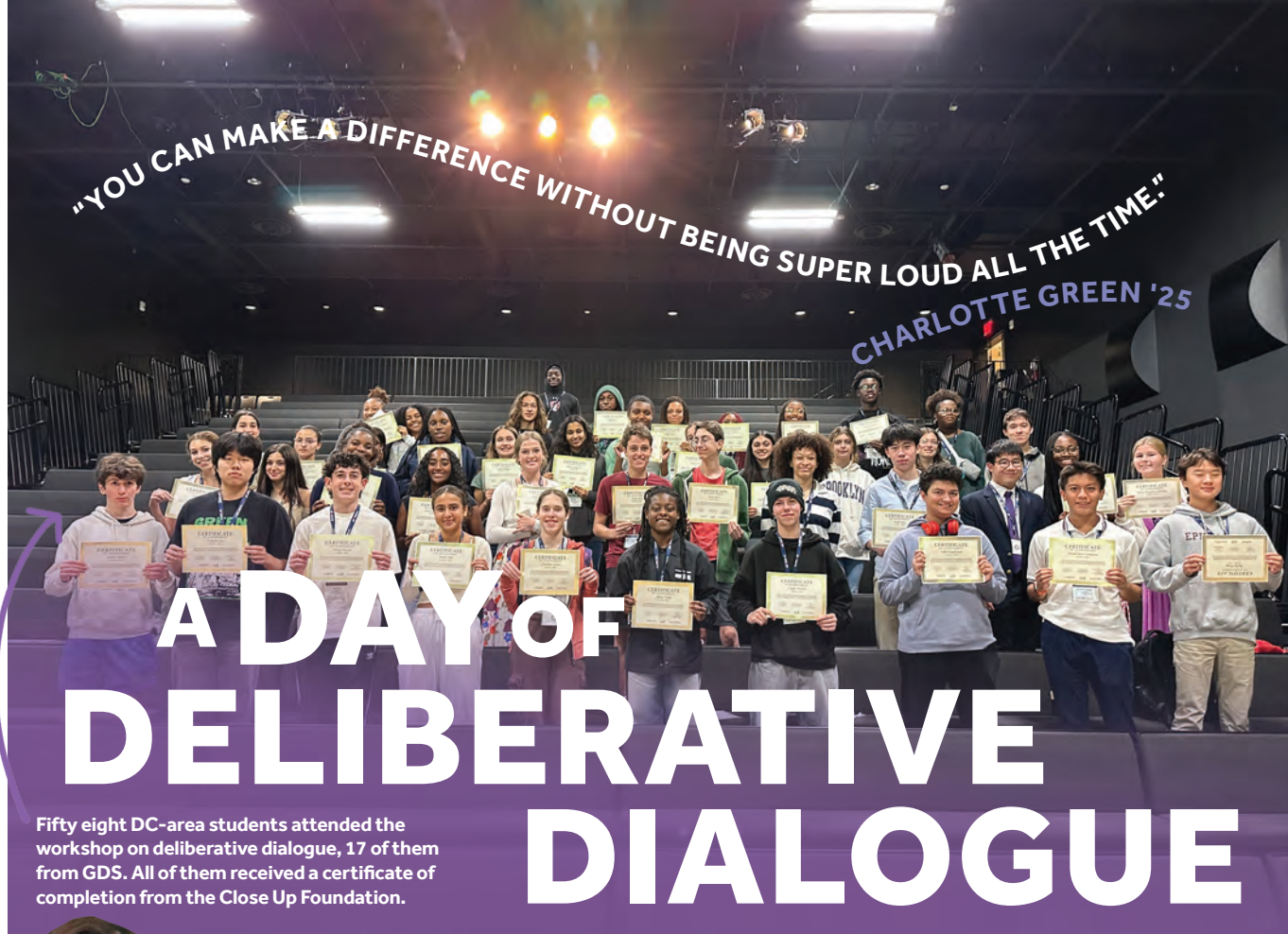
“The only people that [mentality] serves are the very white nationalists, white supremacists, and anti-democratic fascists who are seeking to drive wedges between our communities and prevent us from building the coalitions we need at this moment,” said Spitalnick, who led a successful lawsuit against organizers of the 2017 neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville during her previous role as Executive Director of Integrity First for America.

Spitalnick, the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, acknowledged the generational trauma inflicted on Jews by the Hamas terror attack and her personal boundaries. For instance, engaging with people who celebrated October 7 as an act of resistance is “probably a red line for some conversations,” she said.

But overall, communities that are vulnerable to hate must recognize that their safety and interests are intertwined, which is why it’s so important to search for common ground. That’s a model, she said, that serves children well and combats hate and bigotry.

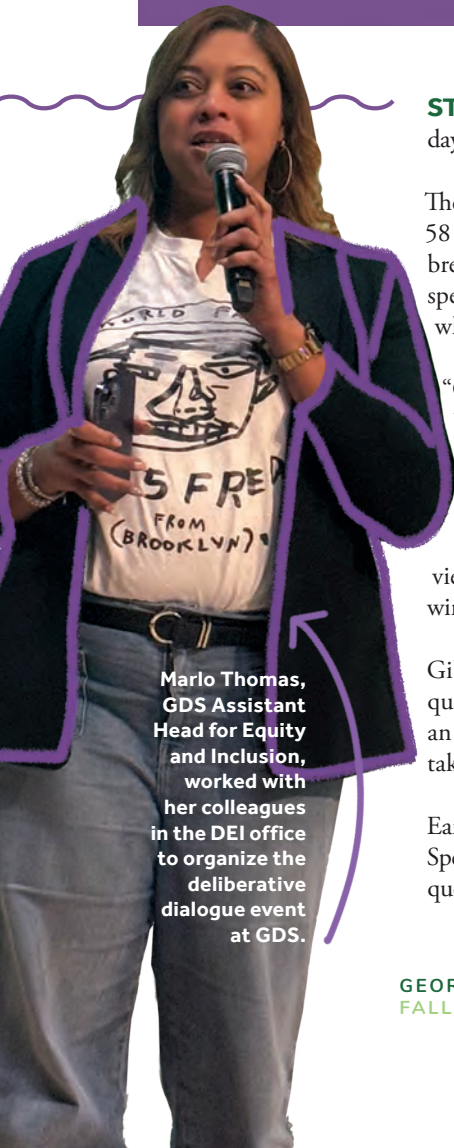
“The only way to push back,” Spitalnick said, “is to stay at the table with one another.”





# A DAY OF DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE

Fifty eight DC-area students attended the workshop on deliberative dialogue, 17 of them from GDS. All of them received a certificate of completion from the Close Up Foundation.



Marlo Thomas, GDS Assistant Head for Equity and Inclusion, worked with her colleagues in the DEI office to organize the deliberative dialogue event at GDS.

**STUDENTS FROM HALF A DOZEN AREA SCHOOLS** gathered at GDS in October for a one-day workshop designed to sharpen their civil discourse skills, specifically the art of deliberative dialogue.

The weekend workshop, co-organized by GDS and the nonprofit Close Up Foundation, attracted 58 students who received a primer on the distinction between “debate” and “deliberation” before breaking out into smaller groups to put the latter into practice. With guidance from Close Up specialists, each group applied consensus-building techniques to address policy questions, such as whether cell phones should be banned in the classroom.

“Our mission is to prepare students to engage in the great conversations of life,” said Marlo Thomas, GDS Assistant Head for Equity and Inclusion. “The deliberation process allows more perspectives to enter a conversation, which is an important part of a thriving democracy.”

During the day’s opening remarks, Close Up’s Director of Curriculum Emily Gibson explained that deliberation is a collaborative decision-making method in which individuals share their views on an issue to reach a common understanding or decision. By contrast, debate is framed as a win-lose situation, which serves a different purpose.

Gibson detailed how finding common ground entails gaining a clear understanding of the question at hand, brainstorming potential options, and assessing the trade-offs for each to reach an informed collective decision. “Deliberation can be challenging,” Gibson told the students. “It takes time. It takes patience. It takes empathy.”

Early in the day, all the cohorts tackled the cell phone issue. But before diving in, Close Up Coaching Specialist Kevin Gomes divided his cohort into smaller groups and assigned them ice-breaker questions, such as where they would travel if they could go anywhere in the world. The students



(from left) Maya Tyson '27 and Logan Brown '27 take a lunch break at the High School.

rotated among groups with each new question Gomes presented, a strategy designed to have them center on each other’s humanity.

“It’s important to develop a sense of community and have them see each other as people before engaging in deliberation,” Gomes said. “That way, the first thing they say in deliberation is not the first time they’re hearing something they agree or disagree with from the other person.”

Once the deliberation started, none of the students opposed a cell phone ban. But they generated nearly a dozen ideas on what it might encompass. They eventually eliminated many proposals, such as prohibiting cell use throughout the day. Instead, they agreed to allow usage during designated breaks and permit incoming calls all day from emergency contact numbers.

Charlotte Green '25 said that her group did not hold wildly divergent views during the morning session or the afternoon meeting, when they tackled more controversial issues related to the national economy. But she appreciated that both deliberations were organized with clear rules on how to proceed and a coach who wrote all the discussion points on a whiteboard in real-time.

“I’m generally a person who likes structure,” Charlotte said. “I find that when people have disagreements, they usually talk at each other, and nothing gets done. Structure helps people stay focused.”

The exercise also reinforced for her that activism takes shape in different forms. It doesn’t necessarily mean taking part in protests and “being loud,” she said. “We need to open space for all sorts of activism because different people want to get involved in different ways,” Charlotte added. “You can make a difference without being super loud all the time.”

The day closed with a panel of speakers from across the political spectrum—Kyle Ross of the Center for American Progress, Helder Toste of the LIBRE Initiative, and Emily Wielk of the Bipartisan Policy Center. The panelists shared

## LEARN TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Charlotte Green '25 (middle) speaking to her peers during the workshop’s morning session.



Emily Gibson (not pictured) of the Close Up Foundation moderated a panel featuring (from left) Helder Toste of the LIBRE Initiative, Emily Wielk of the Bipartisan Policy Center, and Kyle Ross of the Center for American Progress.



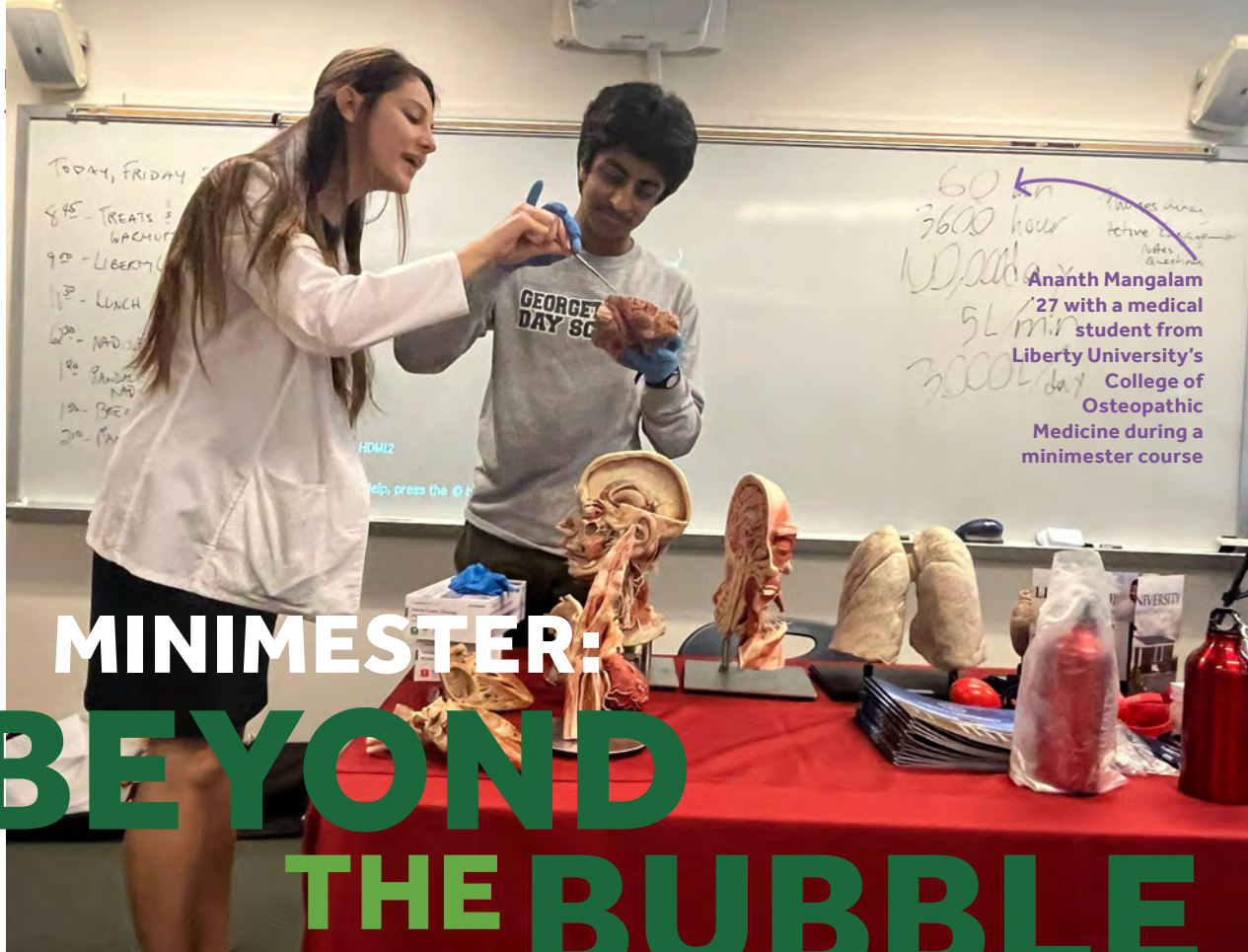
their views on various economic issues, everything from income inequality to childcare.

Maya Tyson '27 noticed how the panelists pushed back when they disagreed with each other, but not aggressively. “It didn’t rise to the level of an argument, which was good,” Maya said. “Sometimes, I feel that conversations get really heated and people talk past each other.”

The exchange provided a fresh break from the political sniping that frustrated Maya leading up to this year’s presidential election. “I’m not old enough to vote, so sometimes I feel I don’t have a say in the political process,” added Maya, who is working with the GDS Student Action Committee to create an initiative that educates Middle School students about criminal justice reform. “That’s why I like to come to [workshops] and gather ideas on how to get things done.”



# MINIMESTER: BEYOND THE BUBBLE



**WHEN SAM GROSS '27** heard that medical students from Liberty University would be speaking at a GDS course he was attending, he admits he had preconceived notions about them based on what he'd read about the evangelical Christian university on social media and in the press. Perhaps they would be agitators, he thought, or maybe just wildly misinformed.

"But none of that was true," Sam said. "Each person I interacted with was educated and genuine in their beliefs. They were eager to have conversations with us and share their perspectives."

That course, "A View From the Other Side," was one of roughly three dozen offered to students during last year's minimester, a three-day break from the usual High School schedule when students can engage in a range of immersive experiences curated by faculty and staff. The course, led by HS history teachers Lisa Rauschart and Sue Ikenberry, has been offered every year since the minimester program was launched in 2018. It is built around the School's view that a great education requires students to engage in constructive discourse across differences.

The medical students from Liberty University's College of Osteopathic Medicine spoke about their belief that the human body is so complex that it could not have evolved without God's intervention, in keeping with what's known as the "intelligent design" theory. Lisa, who invited the students and one of their professors, said she wanted to expose the minimester class to a perspective they are not likely to encounter at GDS.

"I don't think any of our students changed their minds about intelligent design," Lisa said. "But minimester is not about changing anyone's orientation on a specific topic. It's about helping students recognize the humanity in others. To me, that's in keeping with the School's mission to honor the integrity and worth of every individual. Realizing that vision means doing the work inside and outside of GDS."



Jacob Alan Cook, Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics at Eastern Mennonite University, spoke to students about the theology of identity, theories of nonviolence, and formation for peacemaking.

As part of the course, students heard from *New York Times* Columnist Thomas Edsall (parent '85) and Fox News Senior Political Analyst Juan Williams (parent '99) about upcoming congressional races and the presidential election. They met via Zoom with legal scholars Randall Kennedy of Harvard Law School and past ACLU president Nadine Strossen of New York Law School to discuss free speech within schools—thanks to Leo Johnson-Goldfrank '26, who enrolled for the course and invited the speakers. (He had volunteered to reach out to potential lecturers.) The students also traveled outside the Beltway to Eastern Mennonite University, a Christian liberal arts school in Harrisonburg, Virginia, to meet with students and learn about Christian nationalism from Professor Jacob Cook.

Ananth Mangalam '27 said that the opportunity to freely exchange ideas with people of different backgrounds or life experiences was useful, even if he didn't necessarily agree with what he was hearing. For instance, he had never heard of the intelligent design concept until he met the Liberty students. "So I was just asking what do you think about this or how do you feel about that," Ananth said. "It wasn't an argument. It was mostly an exchange of information. It was an opportunity to see how different people see the world, which is a good thing in and of itself."

Sam said his favorite memory of the course was a conversation he had with one of the Liberty medical students after the formal presentation. The face-to-face exchange gave them both a chance to ask follow-up questions, clarify their positions, and dig into the nuances of each point—bypassing the often inflammatory rhetoric they see on social media or in the press.

"We had a really honest conversation about his religious views and how they conflict with my views on the world," Sam said. "It wasn't a debate, just a very calm and collected conversation. He didn't have an agenda. We weren't trying to convince each other of anything. We were just two people sharing our lives and our thoughts."

## MINIMESTER FUN FACTS

"A View from the Other Side" was among the dozens of courses offered by faculty in the 2024 minimester, which was organized by the School's Community Engagement and Experiential Learning (CEEL) team.

Here are some takeaways:

**35**  
COURSES

**07**  
OVERNIGHT  
TRIPS TAKEN

**47**  
LOCAL  
BUSINESSES  
SUPPORTED

**398**  
MILES IS THE  
FURTHEST TRAVELED  
TO COLUMBUS, OHIO  
(road trip for  
Minimester Minitour!)

**FLYING  
TRAPEZE**  
THE MOST UNIQUE  
EXPERIENCE IN THE  
"TRY NEW THINGS" COURSE







Some had to reach extra high for the high five.



A sea of green captured the GDS spirit.

# SONG AND DANCE AT THE ALL-SCHOOL SPIRIT ASSEMBLY!



Fans lined up for a high five with the Hopper.

**GDS STAFFERS STUNNED** students with a surprise dance performance at the All-School Spirit Assembly on September 20. They swayed and shuffled to the tune of Chappell Roan's cheer-inspired "Hot to Go." But they did the Hopper-style version: "Hop to Go"—a number organized and choreographed by HS Health and Wellness Teacher Caitlin Hutcheon, with assists from consulting dance teachers Joan Ayap and Aleny Serna. Joining the fun was none other than The Hopper, who roared onto the field in the sidecar of a 1960 BMW motorcycle driven by its owner, LMS Innovation and Computer Science teacher Chris Coogan. The crowd went wild!



The Hopper arrived on a 1960 BMW, chauffeured by LMS Innovation and Computer Science Teacher Chris Coogan.



Seniors created a pool noodle tunnel for all to greet the Hopper

Teachers and staff performed the "Hop to Go" dance.



A tip of the hat to HS Health and Wellness teacher Caitlin Hutcheon's couture look!





## LET'S DO (AUTHOR'S) BRUNCH!

**FOR MAY'S ANNUAL AUTHOR'S BRUNCH**, each 1st grader shared an essay they'd written during their year-long creative writing program with an audience of peers and family. Students devoted hours to working on their drafts, fine-tuning them based on teacher and peer feedback, exploring essential elements of storytelling, and creating colorful illustrations for their final copies.



## HAVING A FIELD DAY

**THERE IS NO BETTER WAY** to celebrate the last few days of the school year than the annual Lower School Field Day! A little rain didn't stop the students from enjoying sack races, "fill the bucket," balloon toss, and other games.



## JOY ON JUICE BOX DAY

**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS** unleashed a day of fun in April for the second annual Juice Box Day, handing out juice boxes at morning car line and hiding a few of them throughout the High School for a treasure hunt. The day also featured a petting zoo for the entire GDS community to enjoy.



Goats, and bunnies, and chicks, oh my! (top, clockwise) Abby Orseck '28, Ivie Previna '31, and Max Perl '30 frolicked and cuddled with their new petting zoo friends.



Tessa Bash '29 and Marlowe Mulvihill '29 had their hands full. Not pictured, the miniature horse and calf that were part of the petting zoo brood.



(from left) Juice Box Day organizers and volunteers Lismeyri Encarnacion Ruiz '24, Jocelyn Torres '24, and Morgan Pearson '24 handed out juice boxes in the morning.







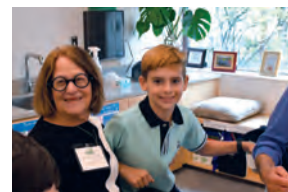
Michael Rogan and Susan Schaffer spent quality time in the classroom with grandchild Aileen '35 (left) and sibling Ella Farrell '37. Ella and Aileen come from a long line of Hoppers, including their mother Beth Rogan '01, their aunt Sarah Rogan '00, and their uncle Matt Rogan '04.

# A SPECIAL DAY FOR SPECIAL FRIENDS

**MORE THAN 400 GUESTS** attended Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day at the Lower/Middle School in April 2024, where they got a glimpse into daily student life and a little entertainment to boot. Guests traveled from near and far, even from overseas, for the event. They visited classrooms, listened to musical performances, and played games with students. For some, the occasion marked their first time inside the new LMS building.



Avery '32 sported salmon pink family group T's with her Grandma Patricia Avery (left) and Nana Rosemary Rice. Avery's friend Mia '32 joined the group photo.



Fox '32 with his grandmother Leslie Cherkis



Pre-K and kindergarten students' sang Barney the Dinosaur's "If All The Raindrops."



Bill and Elaine Miller crisscrossed the LMS visiting their five grandchildren. (Left) Bill is being interviewed by one of them, Liv Friedman '34. The Millers also stopped in to see Liv's siblings (Lawson '29 and Stella '31 Friedman) and her cousins (Jackson Miller '36 and Brody Miller '38.)



Sharon and Shem Saul with their grandson Christopher '32



Melanie Smith Guillaume and Alfred Guillaume Jr. met up in the classroom for activities with their grandchild, Michelle '33.



Sanjay '33 said he enjoyed having his grandmother Sakunthala Ramiah and his grandfather Ramiah Muthuvijayan at school. Apathaa and Thaatha (as Sanjay refers to them, respectively, in their native Tamil language) have attended every GPSF Day since he joined the School in second grade. "I love that they can see us perform, and I can show them all the projects and work I worked on," Sanjay said.



Carter '33 with his grandmother Linda Taylor

(below) Sandra Read Hill said her granddaughter Ayla '34 was "very proud to show me her work and accomplishments." As a longtime dermatologist, Sandra said she was especially pleased to see a dedicated science room for the students when she walked the hallways with Ayla—whose mother, Andrea Hugill '99, was a GDS lifer.



Pam and Doug Dolan played the Headbanz guessing card game with their grandson Ben '34.



# ROPES AND HOPES

High School overnights in August lay the foundation for the year and help create lasting bonds between students.



## 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

The 10th Grade went to NorthBay Adventure Camp in North East, Maryland, where they engaged in team-building exercises, leadership activities, ropes courses, zip lines, and kayaking. They enjoyed a bonfire on the beach at night and found time for a round of beach volleyball!



## 11<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

Eleventh graders gathered for fellowship and adventure—particularly urban adventure. They headed first to The Adventure Park at Sandy Spring for ropes courses and fun, then to Baltimore for a class meeting and an Orioles game! They stayed overnight on Baltimore's Inner Harbor and then communed with the fish at the renowned National Aquarium the next morning.





# HAPPENINGS AT HS HOPPER HOLIDAY!

**EVERY YEAR,** High Schoolers take a short break from studies in May and gather in several places around campus for fun-filled activities. Hopper Holiday 2024 included air hockey, ice skating, ultimate frisbee, roundnet, and ice hockey foosball. The faculty even made snow cones!



Lower School Learning Specialist Jenna Clifton and LS PE teacher Peg Schultz grooved to the music.



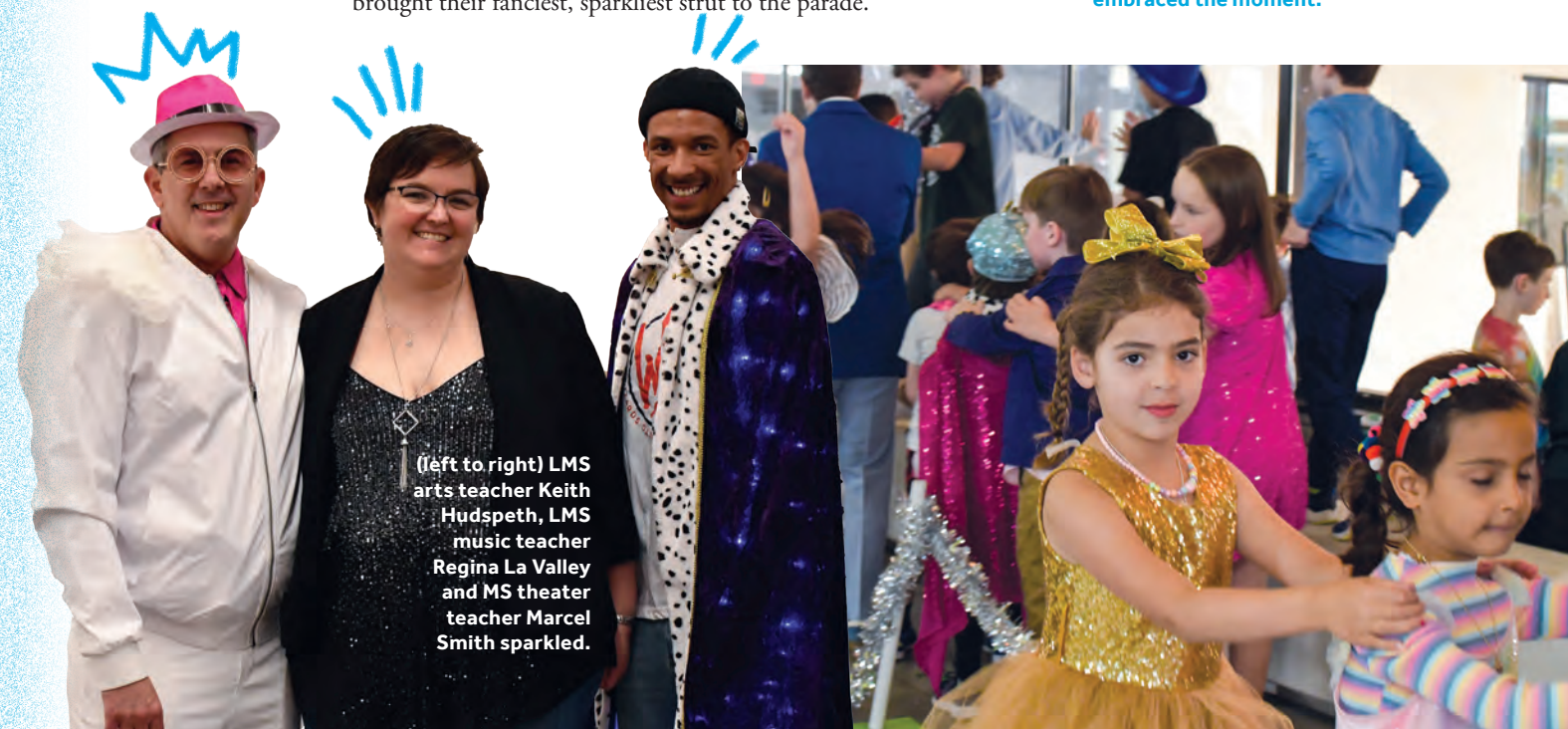
(from left) Zuri '34 and Quinn '34 joined the fun!

## GET READY TO SPARKLE!

**FANCY SPARKLY DAY** is quickly becoming a GDS fan favorite. Students and faculty alike were encouraged to show up wearing whatever shined, glittered, or made them feel beautiful. The idea was sparked by several 3rd grade students in Spring 2023. Their teacher, Todd Carter, helped them plan and dream big. The glittery event was such a hit that it was back by popular demand in May 2024. Although it rained during the event, everyone brought their fanciest, sparkliest strut to the parade.



Claire (left) and Celine embraced the moment.



(left to right) LMS arts teacher Keith Hudspeth, LMS music teacher Regina La Valley and MS theater teacher Marcel Smith sparkled.



# GIVE ME STEAM!

**THE ANNUAL LOWER/MIDDLE SCHOOL STEAM DAY** in April featured workshops and activities for all LMS students. The fun involved building LEGO Smart Cities, coding, the construction of flashlights and pullback cars, ROBOT battles, a planetarium, and much, much more. Students ended the day with a car race in the gym with their newly created design-challenge cars!



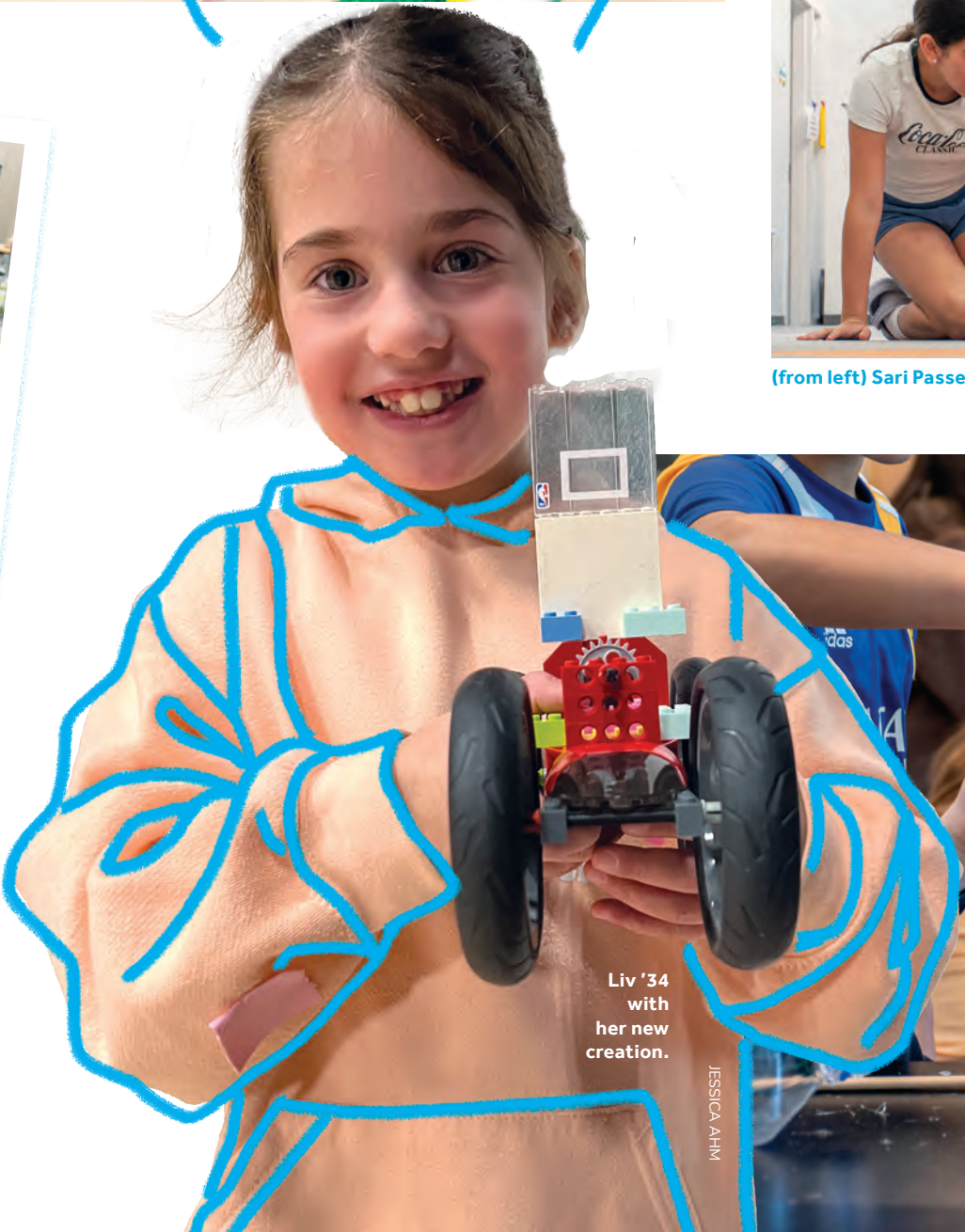
(from left) Sari Passer '30, Isa Wible '30, and Flora Kepnis '30 on GDS Steam Day.



Elena '34 assembling a LEGO car



Jason Saferstein '31 arm-in-arm with a robot he learned to program and control.



Liv '34 with her new creation.



Aidan Howe '31 works on his design project.



5TH GRADE TRAVELING BIOGRAPHIES

# A NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

**FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS** embodied an influential or historical figure of their choice for their Traveling Biographies project in May, each dressing up in costumes to present a monologue about the person they were portraying. They visited various GDS classrooms to present their characters and then the LMS Flex Space, where their families and faculty were gathered. For the audience, it was a game of “guess who” as they tried to figure out each student’s alternate persona. The students didn’t just act a part; the project called on them to flex their research muscles, practice note-taking, and translate what they learned into effective and engaging speeches.

Ajay Singh '31, dressed as Leonardo da Vinci, in the LMS Flex Space with his father and sister



Ella Lohuis '31 as RuPaul



Ricky Silvers '31 as abolitionist Levi Coffin



(from left) Jaxon Narcisse '31, Jasper Wise '31, James Livelli '31, and Aidan Howe '31



Amalia Vieira '31 as Harriet Tubman with her mother Deneen Howell (left) and her grandmother



Elina Sundaram '31 as Malala Yousafzai



CORY ROYSTER

## KICKING OFF SPORTS SATURDAY

**GDS ATHLETICS** celebrated the Fall season with a round of soccer games for Sports Saturday, where fans were treated to three games. The Varsity Men's team tied with St James 1-1, the Varsity Women's team beat School Without Walls 6-0, and the JV Men's team beat St. James 3-0.



CORY ROYSTER



CORY ROYSTER



# NO SHUT-EYE AT LOCK-IN

**THE ANNUAL 9TH-GRADE LOCK-IN**, a tradition designed to enhance bonding among the newest HS students, was an all-night fun fest. Students were kept under lock and key in the High School building from 8 pm on Friday, September 13 until 8 am the following day. They sang karaoke and danced their hearts out; worked together to (nearly) finish a 1,000-piece puzzle; and packed into the new “GDS Spa” for manicures and face masks. Very few got any sleep. Thank you to the nearly two dozen faculty and staff who showed up in the middle of the night with smiles on their faces to chaperone the event.







PHOTO CREDITS JASON PUTSCHÉ

## 4TH GRADE PROMOTION

### FAMILIES, FRIENDS, AND LS FACULTY MEMBERS

commemorated the Class of 2032 at the fourth grade promotion ceremony in June. Head of School Russell Shaw spoke to the students about community. Russell encouraged them to care about the well-being of those around them, stressing that compassion is an attribute that is fostered at GDS. The fourth grade gifted a tree (potted on the second floor) to the School, memorializing their time in the Lower School as they prepared to become Middle Schoolers. The tree was decorated for a time with wooden grasshoppers, each with affirming thoughts, such as “be you” and “help others.”



PHOTO CREDITS JASON PUTSCHÉ

## 8TH GRADE CLOSING CEREMONY

**EIGHTH GRADERS CELEBRATED** their closing ceremony in the LMS gym at the Davenport Street campus, a new venue for the milestone occasion. Middle School Principal Kelsey Twist Schroeder wished the students well as they “moved on up” (and across the street) to the next phase of their lives.

Eighth graders Cia Carr, Ella Maas, Noah Jansen, and Maceo Lindsey spoke at the ceremony and celebrated the class’s camaraderie. Good luck Class of 2028 as you forge ahead!





# CLASS OF 2024 WALKS THE WALK

(from left) Talia Berger '24, Ila Dohrmann '24, and Victoria Agerskov-Townsend '24



**IT'S THE EVENT THAT HIGHLIGHTS** all the greatness that comes from being on one campus: our annual Senior Walk! On their last day of classes, seniors formed a stately but joyful parade around the entire campus to cheers and hugs from fellow students and faculty. From Lower School congratulatory signs to a faculty-held arched tunnel of pool noodles at the High School, seniors were fêted and appreciated by all.



(from left) Priya Grab '24, Sophia Newkirk '24, Joey Wasserman '24, and Julian "Juju" Jinich '24



(from left) Olivia Brown '24 and Avery Brown '24





Departures / /  
09 JUNE 2024



John Burghardt

HS English Teacher, Faculty Speaker

“Understanding isn’t approval, or even compassion—which can make its way through a blur of tears. ...Understanding is as clear and sturdy as our most rigorous thinking. We owe it to each other because of the ways in which we are all entangled in circumstance and in this brilliant, error-prone human form. We seek understanding because it may protect us, most of all from ourselves.”

PHOTOS BY MATT RYB PICTURES



# The 2024 commencement ceremony

took place on June 9 in GDS’s LMS gymnasium. This location change marks the start of a new tradition at the School, which hopes to host future graduation celebrations on campus, where students have the greatest connection to each other and to their GDS experience.

The underpinning of that experience came through in the graduation day speeches. In his address, Head of School Russell Shaw urged students to blaze trails and approach the world with curiosity and empathy as they embark on their life’s journey beyond GDS.

“Seniors, I hope you take with you from GDS the ability to appreciate the humanity in those who are different from you,” Russell said. “It’s what can save us as a species. It’s what will help you to solve complex problems that you encounter in your life, and it will make your life immeasurably richer, more interesting, and more meaningful.”

While the venue of the celebration was new (except for the one on-campus ceremony during the COVID-19 pandemic), the rituals surrounding it were not. In the days leading up to the ceremony, the seniors presented their Senior Quest projects with gusto, the entire School celebrated them with the Senior Walk, and Russell gifted each of them a book. This year’s pick: *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride. In return, the seniors handed Russell “24 carat gold” coins as their graduation gift to him (as they were the Class of ’24).

On the big day, as is customary, seniors also heard from the High School Principal (Yom Fox); a faculty member (HS English teacher John Burghardt); a parent speaker (Sarah Rosen Wartell, President of the Urban Institute), and two class speakers (Benjamin Fitzpayne ’24 and Joseph Stocker ’24), chosen by the senior class. GDS musicians and singers helped make the event extra special.

And then, with their diplomas finally in hand, they were off ...



Russell Shaw

Head of School

“Seniors, I hope you take with you from GDS the ability to appreciate the humanity in those who are different from you.”



Yom Fox

High School Principal

“Remember the friends you made here, your teachers who enriched you, the dreams and passions that shaped who you are and who you are working to become. It may feel like the past, but those people and experiences are the foundation that will power you through your future.”





WHAT

WILL

THEY

TAKE

WITH THEM

FROM GDS?

GRADUATION

CONNECTION



"I will take the kindness I experienced at GDS, a loving positive community of people who help each other whenever possible."

ROBERT KOUKIOS  
'24



"I've made lasting friendships. ...GDS has so many pockets where you can find people, and they're all happy to be found. It's a special spirit and attitude, one which I will take with me."

ANNABEL HILZENRATH  
'24



"My GDS teachers taught me that instead of shying away from the big questions, we should revel in the confusion that comes from unpacking complicated ideas; we should find excitement in the unknown because that's often where the most meaningful discoveries lie. Time and again, my teachers have heightened my intellectual curiosity and ignited a passion for literature, history, law, and even sometimes math. I'm thankful for each teacher who pushed me to become a more thoughtful, fearless presence in the world."

ANNA SHESOL  
'24



"From the Student Action Committee and spoken Word club, I learned to extend my arm outward even when I felt vulnerable. When battling for the MAC banner in track, I put my body on the line when I wasn't sure whether my personal race would impact our team's standing. When I asked [HS Track & Field Coach] Anthony Belber for life advice during the DC state track championships, he said that you will always be most motivated when you are for something bigger than yourself."

NAVIN DESAI  
'24



"I will take from GDS a love for sitting down and starting a conversation with whoever happens to be next to me, a love for curious and open-minded people, and a desire to keep connecting, relating, and learning."

CLARA YU  
'24



"I remember the debate that used to explode around the time of the Passover Assembly every year because of the song we sang, which featured the infamous line: 'Nobody's different from me!' How could we claim that nobody was different from anyone else when the GDS we knew spent so much time championing the importance of recognizing and celebrating differences, from different family structures to different skin colors to different genders? I remember a bunch of us complaining about the line in class and our teacher [explained] ... that just as much as we emphasized difference at our school, we also emphasized that our similarities transcended our differences. ... At GDS, we learn that we can criticize something and love it just the same."

AVRAM SHAPIRO  
'24

KINDNESS

CURIOSITY

FRIENDSHIP

PERSPECTIVE

INSPIRATION







Joseph Stocker '24

Class Speaker

“Last year, I had the privilege of speaking with a fellow Hopper, Congressman Jamie Raskin. In speaking about his own time at GDS and the friends he’d made, he quoted Thomas Jefferson, saying: ‘I find as I grow older, I love those most, whom I loved first.’ ... Even when we go off and meet amazing people in the future, we will always have a safe harbor of our friendships here at GDS.”

// CLASS OF 2024



Sarah Rosen Wartell

Parent Speaker, mother of Clara Wartell '24, and President of the Urban Institute

“Americans have sorted ourselves into like-minded communities: where we live; where we go to school; the media we consume; and even the sports that we follow. ...But to make lasting change, you have to bring at least some people along with you. You need to find that common interest with others who are unsure. Find that story or experience that opens the door and gives you a chance to persuade.”



Malaya Aileen Cruz-Hubbard

Nicholas Václav David-Fox

Katherine Rose Davies

Maya De

Matthew Joseph Del Guercio

Navin Tharmaratnam Desai

Shaan Tharmaratnam Desai

Ila Dohrmann

Catherine Elizabeth Dooley

Cecelia Elizabeth Olivia Dyson

Abel Elias

Lismeyri Michele Encarnación Ruiz

Jack William Anthony Farrell

Lina Fawaz

Luke Stephen Fedorchak

Zoe Mina Ferguson

Joseph Samuel Finkelstein

Benjamin Morningstar Fitzpayne

Anna Keiko Ford

Max Fitzgerald Froomkin

Caroline McCabe Garland

Alion Maasai Glover

Priya Grab

Nico Alexander Greene

Malcolm Curtis Griffith

Sofia Helene Grunwaldt

Darwin Shangyuan Gu

Ella Elizabeth Heist

Sala Jazmine Higgins

Annabel Rose Hilzenrath

Kate Rose Hlinko

Lucy Elizabeth Holley

Amelia Sage Holmwood

Aaliyah Sanaa Howell

Cole Yang Huh

Mario Bane Imbroscio

Juanita Sabrina Irving-Pettyjohn Jr.

Indira Timurkyzy Issatayeva

Sotiria Eugenie Jackson

Jacob David Jameson

Henry Stuart Jeffress

Julian Jinich

Matthew Kelly Jones

Laura Belle Kaufman

Ellie Alma Kessler

Robert Kihwan Koukios

Zachary Jennings Kovner

Bea Myerberg Lazerow

Ava Reynolds Lewis

Leah Junzhe Li

William Liu

Margaret Rose LoCascio

Avery Elizabeth Ludlow

Ella Emerson Lynn

Tess Blake Madnick

Alexander Roger Marchand

Luis Dennis Martinez Jr.

Isabella L. Martorana

Geo Nefeli Maur-Batsaki

Madison Welete McDaniel

Marna Delaney McDermott

Anissa Keara McGinnis

Nathaniel Aron Mintzer

Henry Peter Mitchell

Julian Adiv Montes-Sharp

Madisyn Taylor Moore-Nicholson

Aidan Franklin Mostashari

Sophia Ruth Newkirk

Jessica Gee Nowak

Thomas Ariba Ogada II

Jacob Noah Orenstein

Mark Cameron Choi Orr

Amelia Oscherwitz

Curan Palmer

Morgan Kiara Pearson

Nicholas Bassett Petricone

Rand Schroder Poellnitz

Ewan Naren Porter

Iansã Nairobi Powell

Jordan Arenson Quint

Alexandra Mary Rabasco

Roam Margaret Redington

Ajay Reed

Joshua Caleb Reynolds

Nathaniel Ervin Romine

Rian Russell



Benjamin Fitzpayne '24

Class Speaker

“In our community, a tremendously powerful trust exists. I see it every time I set foot on campus, and I especially see it in the class of 2024. As we go forward, that’s the piece of the GDS community I hope every single person takes with them. In our community, this trust allows for kindness, safety, and a uniquely GDS joy.”







DEPARTURES  
GDS  
DESTINATIONS  
THE WORLD



(from left) Kovan Smith '24, Nathaniel Mintzer '24, Nathaniel Romine '24, and Will Babcock '24 (pictured with Coach William Miezan) ran the 4x100 relay race and broke the GDS record set at last year's MAC championship.



Audrey Leff '25 (left) and Shira Wenthe '27 fought for valuable points in the grueling 3200 meter run.

ROBERT LATCHFORD @RL PHOTO



KAIDEN YU '23



# TRACK & FIELD: A CHAMPIONSHIP WEEK

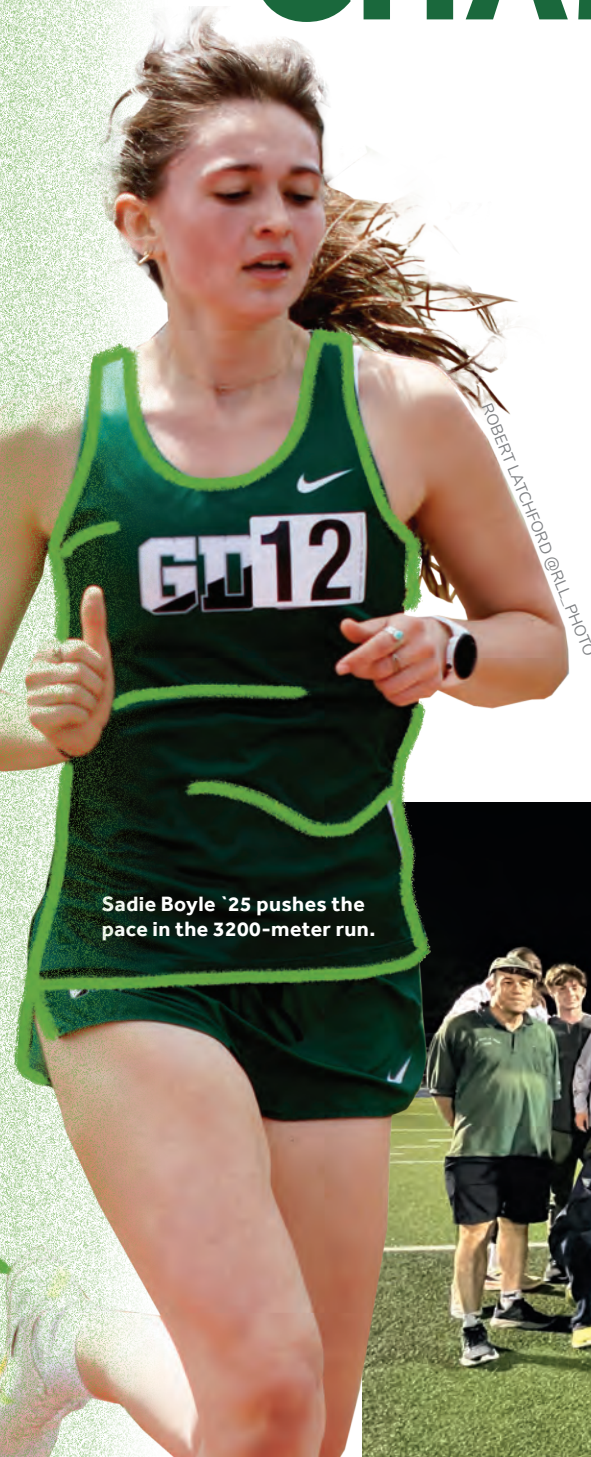
**GDS MEN'S VARSITY TRACK AND FIELD** won the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Conference (MAC) championship in May, beating six other teams to secure a banner and topping off an outstanding spring season for the School's track and field program.

The two-day event at Potomac's Bullis School also featured the Independent School League (ISL) championship, where the GDS Women's Varsity Track and Field team finished in fifth place, a strong showing in a crowded field of 15 teams.

A few days earlier, the Hoppers pulled off impressive performances at the Varsity B Track and Field competitions at Episcopal High School. The GDS men's team won that MAC banner by an 89-point margin. The women's team, with four athletes competing, landed in sixth place in the ISL. Many of the program's athletes—sprinters, distance runners, jumpers, hurdlers, and throwers—set their personal best marks of the year.

Track and field coach Anthony Belber attributed GDS's performance to the program's depth. The Hoppers do not rely on a few stars to rack up points for the team, Anthony said. "Every one of our athletes fights for every point, from the first race to the end of the day," he added. "Our scrappiness and teamwork make all the difference for us."

GDS Men's Varsity Track and Field won a second consecutive MAC banner.



Sadie Boyle '25 pushes the pace in the 3200-meter run.

There were many stand-out moments during what Anthony dubbed "championship week." On the men's Varsity A team, Nico Greene '24 won the 110-meter hurdles. Nathaniel Romine '24, Will Babcock '24, Kovan Smith '24, and Nathaniel Mintzer '24 finished the 4x100 relay race with the top performance, breaking the School record set at last year's MAC meet.

During the Varsity B competitions, siblings Emi '26 and James '27 Fitzgibbons each won three events. GDS shot put and discus throwers Finley Meyer '26, Darwin Gu '24, and Jacob Contee '26 all threw massive personal bests. And in the mid-distance races, Max Froomkin '24, Jake Jameson '24, Rand Poelnitz '24, and Ewan Porter '24 also set personal bests.

"From the most novice to the most decorated veterans, the full team ended the season with performances that spoke to the students' investment, dedication, and achievements," Anthony said.

The baton passes from Naomi Borek '25 to Paloma Evans '27 in the final event of the day, the 4x400 meter relay.



Paloma Evans '27 quickly mastered the triple jump in her freshman year!



## SPRINTING AND STROLLING WITH ALUMNI

GDS alumni gathered at Fletcher's Boathouse this summer to race along Washington's C&O Canal with their former coaches, teachers, and current track team members—marking the 22nd year of the cherished Two-Mile Alumni Run/Walk, created and organized by Cross Country and Track and Field Coach Anthony Belber.

Roughly 80 people participated in the August 17 competition, which attracted mostly former and current GDS runners. A few came with their dogs and kids in tow, undeterred by the humidity. Some dashed around the course; others jogged or walked. Teachers, staff, and family members cheered them on. The winners were rewarded with a variety of GDS running paraphernalia from the coveted "prize box."

"It's a great opportunity for the alumni and the current [running] team members to connect with one another and recognize that they are all part of a long tradition of running at this School," said Anthony, a 27-year GDS veteran who was a third-grade teacher for many years before turning to teach HS history. "It's always a good-natured competition that allows people to hang out and have a good time."

The race pitted alumni against current runners, with men and women scoring separately. The alumni teams—led by Jon Ettinger '03 (a former sprinter) and Simone Zehren '10 (competing in her first alumni run)—bested the current GDS cross-country team. Among the student runners, Andrew Leopold '26 and Nura Idriss '26 had impressive showings, even as they held back to preserve their strength and stamina for a heavy week of training, which started two days later at the annual cross-country away camp.

Another noteworthy performance came from Head of School Russell Shaw, a regular event participant, who lowered his personal best on the course to 13:57.



# MEET MIKE BROOKS



## New Athletic Director Dishes Details

**MIKE BROOKS**, the new athletic director, is no stranger to the Washington area or GDS. He grew up in Frederick, Maryland and graduated from Saint James School in Hagerstown, which has long competed in the Mid-Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAC) alongside the GDS men's athletic teams. After college, Mike returned to Saint James to serve as the head boys varsity basketball coach, assistant dean of students, and then athletics director.

"I've watched GDS from the opposing side, and I've seen how much it's grown," Mike said. "My goal is to continue to elevate the program and build upon its success."

After launching his career at Saint James, Mike moved to New York to lead the athletics department and coach the men's basketball team at Cazenovia College, his other alma mater. More recently, he served as director of athletics at William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia.

## HERE ARE A FEW MORE FACTS AND ANECDOTES ABOUT THE NEWLY MINTED GDS HOPPER.



## HALL-OF-FAMER

A four-year college basketball player, Mike was inducted into Cazenovia's Wildcats Athletics Hall of Fame in 2009. He was three-time captain of his team, a two-time MVP, and the program's career-scoring leader by the time he graduated in 2001. As a senior, Mike led the program to its first winning season and helped the Wildcats beat nationally ranked Cortland State (where Mike later earned a master's degree in sport management.)



## FAVE COACHING MOMENT

It happened during a face-off between Saint James and the Potomac School's formidable boys basketball team. The Saints, clearly the underdogs, stunned the crowd by pulling two points ahead of Potomac. The Saints' captain then stole the ball with a chance to ice the game but missed the layup. Potomac called a time-out. "We huddled. I looked at [the captain]; he looked at me, and I said: 'Seriously? Off the front of the rim?'" The whole team cracked up laughing," Mike said. "We got back in the game and won. I'll never forget it. We came together, lifted each other up, and created a great memory."



## NEWEST OBSESSION

Frisbee golf, played with a disc instead of a ball. His daughter, Madison, and her boyfriend introduced Mike to the game when they were in town this summer for a visit. "They kicked my butt," he said. Mike also enjoys playing golf (the traditional kind) with his son, Charlie '26, (right) who joined GDS this year.



## SOFTBALL DAD

Mike spent a good portion of his summer on the sidelines watching, Madison (top), play softball for a 23U travel team. Like dad, Madison is also a collegiate athlete. She plays center field on the women's softball team at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

## RECENT MILESTONE

Mike and his wife, Erica (left), celebrated their 20th anniversary last year. They met in Martinsburg, West Virginia, where his parents lived at the time. He was home from college when they were introduced to one another by a mutual friend. "It was love at first sight, and we've spent every day together ever since," Mike said.



## TEAM LOYALTIES

While he remains a diehard fan of the Washington Commanders, the Orioles, and University of Maryland basketball, Mike developed a soft spot for the 76ers and Phillies during his time in the City of Brotherly Love.





# MOVING ON UP

The class of 2024 produced the largest group of collegiate athletes in GDS memory. Best of luck to all these Hoppers as they take their athletic prowess to the next level!

## Class of 2024 Collegiate Athletes:

(back row, from left): Adriano Arioti, Curan Palmer, Tommy Antonipillai, Nathaniel Mintzer, Julian Jinich, Malcolm Griffith  
(front row, from left): Aaliyah Howell, Jocelyn Torres, Clara Yu, Ellie Kessler, Indira Issatayeva, Roam Reddington, and Madi Moore-Nicolson



## BASKETBALL

Malcolm Griffith hit the hardwood at Juniata College.



## BASKETBALL

Madi Moore-Nicolson isn't too far away. Watch her play basketball at American University!



## VOLLEYBALL

Playing Division I volleyball: (from left) Clara Yu for Columbia University, Jocelyn Torres for the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and Aaliyah Howell for Hofstra University. Under their leadership, the GDS Women's Varsity volleyball team won the DSCAA championship title in 2022 and 2023.

## SWIMMINGS

Buddies Adriano Arioti (left) and Curan Palmer (right) are swimming at Harvard and Princeton, respectively.



## TRACK

Ellie Kessler, one of GDS's top distance runners for the past four years, took her talents to Colorado College's track and cross country squads.

Nathaniel Mintzer, a top sprinter recruit for Tulane University's Division I track team, left GDS holding the 55-, 100-, and 200-meter school records.



## SOCCER

Roam Reddington is tending goal at Oberlin College.



## GYMNASTICS

Indira Issatayeva, an elite level 9 rhythmic gymnast (even after entering the sport at the relatively late age of 14), joined George Washington University's Revolutionaries.



## BASEBALL

Tommy Antonipillai, ready to play ball at Denison University!



## SQUASH

Squash was just a friendly family rivalry for Juju Jinich—until his passion for the sport grew, leading to success in competitive squash and a spot on Brown University's Men's Squash team.



## OLYMPIC MOMENT

So what if she didn't make it to the Olympic podium? In addition to competing at the Olympic Games (no small feat!), Tatiana Nazlymov '23, a member of the USA sabre fencing squad, met Snoo Dogg in Paris! "He showed up at the Team USA High Performance Center when we were training," Tatiana said. "I got a selfie with him, and it's now my most prized possession." With the heady Olympic days behind her, Tatiana plans to cut back on her fencing schedule a bit and focus on her sophomore year at Princeton. As for Los Angeles in 2028: "I don't know if I'm going for that yet," she said. "I'll revisit it later."





# WOMEN'S VARSITY VOLLEYBALL WINS DCSAA CHAMPIONSHIP

Team climbs rankings in stunning 25-1 season record

The Women's Varsity Volleyball team surrounded by fans after winning a third consecutive DCSAA title

**THE GDS WOMEN'S VARSITY VOLLEYBALL** team won its third consecutive DCSAA State Championship in November, crushing St. John's in a three-set win and capping off a phenomenal season that attracted national recognition.

Hopper fans turned out in force at the University of the District of Columbia to watch the team win the state title in a 25-14, 25-15, 25-10 sweep. The early parts of each set were close, but at the midpoint of each one, the Hoppers pulled away. Jada Aksu '24, who has committed to playing volleyball at Lafayette College, was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player, ending her high school volleyball career on a high note after consistently putting in great performances in four championship games.

"Everyone played incredibly well, and we really handled them," said Head Coach Brandon Wiest, who was named Mid-Atlantic Coach of the Year by the American Volleyball Coaches Association in December. "The state championship match was one of the best volleyball games I've been a part of. We played an all-around great game."

Early in the season, the Hoppers made their mark by defeating Flint Hill 2-0 in a best-of-three match at September's Endless Summer Women's Varsity Volleyball Tournament in Virginia Beach. With this victory, GDS

became the first Independent School League team in more than a decade to beat the Huskies in volleyball.

The win immediately thrust the team into the national spotlight. GDS debuted at number 20 on the *Sports Illustrated* Top 25 National Girls High School Volleyball ranking that week. The team also topped *The Washington Post* All-Met volleyball rankings for the first time in School history and remained there for the rest of the season having amassed a 25-1 record.

The only loss of the season came in October, when GDS fell to Bullis at the ISL AA title game, a hard fought four-set match. But given GDS's impressive winning streak, the Hoppers recently secured second place in *USA Today's* rankings of teams in the Mid-Atlantic region—just after Pope John Paul II High School in Pennsylvania and ahead of Bullis, which ranked fourth.

Shiraz Benyoucef '25, co-captain with Jada and Zoe Ryu '25, said that the early win against Flint Hill—followed by a second win in October—energized the team. The momentum kept building from there. "The Flint Hill game lit a fire in us," Shiraz said. "We knew if we kept pushing and kept having a good time that we'd become something special."

# REFLECTING ON ARTISTRY

Art is a subjective construct. For GDS students, it can be a grand experiment, an escape, an expression of identity, a release, a social commentary, or a way of connecting with others. Some see it as their heartfelt contribution to the school community. It takes time, thought, and creativity. And in many cases, art provides a platform for conversation. *Georgetown Days* asked GDS artists to offer perspectives on their work and what it means to them.





## High School Spring Musical: *Cinderella*

The *Cinderella* Spring musical in April imposed modern twists on a classic fairy tale. The performance stuck to the traditional storyline, and Cinderella wore a beautiful gown to the ball. But the opening scene featured her in a hoodie pushing a shopping cart through the mall. The stage featured 10-foot moving mirrors, and the cast broke out a few break-dancing moves.

Sophia Ades '25, who played the Fairy Godmother, said she learned that being an artist is about being part of a community. "Everybody worked together every single minute," Sophia said. "Nothing could happen without everyone pitching in—tech people, stage managers, the rest of the cast." Sophia also appreciated that HS Theater Director János Szász was open to making changes based on feedback from the cast and crew—or not. "Sometimes, it's important to go with the flow," Sophia said. "Sometimes, you don't like an idea, but then you try it out, and it's cool. Having a variety of opinions made the show even better."

An added bonus: Lower School students showed up for one of the performances and joined the cast for a pre-show tea party.

(from left) The Wicked Stepmother (Henry Cohen '25) with the evil stepsisters (Ethan Farber '26 and Sosi Audain '26)



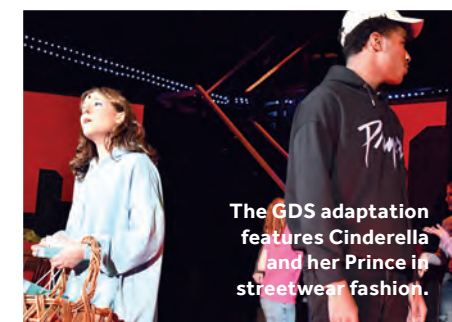
Prince Charming's parents (from left) Rachel Schneider '24 and Alessandro Alfandari '25



"EVERYBODY WORKED TOGETHER EVERY SINGLE MINUTE,"  
SOPHIA ADES '25



Cast members greet LS students at a pre-show tea party.



The GDS adaptation features Cinderella and her Prince in streetwear fashion.



Cinderella (Olivia Brown '24) and Prince Charming (Joshua Reynolds '24) share a moment.





The cast of *Our Dear Dead Druglord* (from left) Sophia Ades '25, Cai Roberson '26, Natasha Robinson '26, and Natalia Freedman '25. Not pictured: Natalia Ogden '27 and HS Spanish teacher Nico Sheets, who played "little sister" and Pablo Escobar, respectively.



"..IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT MEMORIZING LINES AND SAYING THEM; IT'S ABOUT FEELING THEM," NATALIA FREEDMAN '25

## Theater Lab: *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord*

PHOTOS BY JERI TIDWELL

Natalia Freedman's debut in theater took place in April when she starred in the GDS Theater Lab's *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord*. As Pipe, Natalia '25 played the self-assured ring leader of a secret club created by four teenage girls who are trying to summon the ghost of the late Colombian drug kingpin Pablo Escobar.

"I learned that it's not just about memorizing lines and saying them; it's about feeling them, relating to the character, and connecting to the human condition," Natalia said. "To look at a character from the outside and then become that character gives perspective. It made me realize that in my own life, I need to look at the big picture and not get caught up inside my head."

Theater Lab features diverse stories, including plays by women, who are often overlooked in the theater community, said HS dance and acting teacher Maria Watson, the Theater Lab's founder and director. Playwright Alexis Scheer, who grew up in a Jewish-Colombian household, infuses *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord* with the multiculturalism of her native Miami by featuring characters of various ethnicities and religions.

Natalia said she fell in love with theater playing Pipe. "I now understand how difficult it is to become a character and how talented people are in the GDS community," she added.



## Middle School Community Production: *Now Uploading*

*Now Uploading*, the 2024 Middle School Community Production, was a show that weaved together a series of technology-related essays, poems, stories, and short scenes written and then performed by students for the GDS community.

MS theater teacher Marcel Smith, who has been organizing the production with fresh themes for the past two years, said theater is a powerful tool that helps students understand themselves, connect with others, and discover their voices.

"It is a vital part of the human experience," said Marcel, who directed *Now Uploading* with LMS music teacher Regina La Valley. "I love bringing the world of theater into educational settings, where it empowers students to explore their creativity, work together effectively, and develop essential life skills."



(from left) Stella Rosenthal '29 and Nora Son '29 have a Yin-Yang-style friendship in the play.



The cast of *Now Uploading* is surrounded by the tech lights they designed.

Leo Moreland '29 explaining his knack for games and gadgets



James Livelli '31 carrying a device from the "Recycle Bin"



Isa Wible '30 and Roya Woods '31 are trapped in their Let's Dance video and must win to escape.



## Middle School Art Show

A year before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, John Headley was in a Hong Kong museum immersed in the work of Takashi Murakami, often called Japan's Andy Warhol. Murakami's colorful pieces—everything from paintings to sculptures to fashion—covered the walls, halls, and even the carpets of the three-level museum. Along with every other visitor, John had to slip on shoe covers to protect the art below his feet.

“So when I was home during the pandemic, I thought of the joyousness of his work. It was so over the top and unrestrained,” said John, an LMS arts teacher. “I thought about how my students would get a real kick out of going nuts like that and using so much color.”

The Murakami effect made its way into May's Middle School Art Show. John had the 8th grade students at the time create pieces with backgrounds inspired by Murakami's flat, highly stylized, anime-inspired work and a more traditional still life sketched in the forefront. The goal was to create an interplay between the two styles.

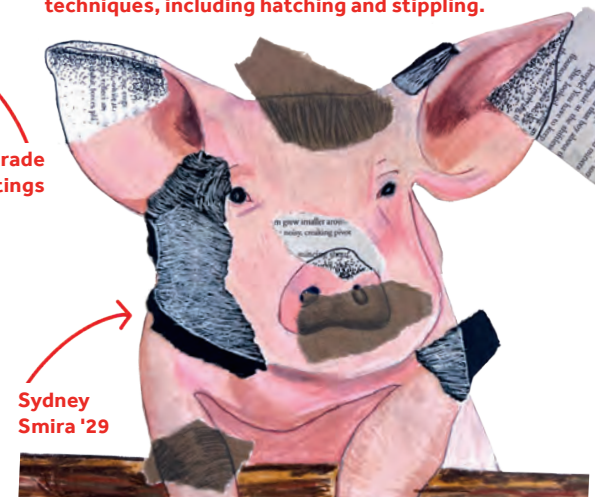
“After interacting with Murakami's work, I felt a little freer in my thinking,” John said. “It influenced my ideas in the classroom and the art I work on outside of the classroom.”



(top) Nathan Mwenje '28, Stella Kaplan '28 (left), and Thalia Grigsby '28 mixed traditional and contemporary art in creating their masterpieces.



7th grade yarn paintings



Sydney Smira '29



Alix Kennerly '28



Lilly Escola '29



Zoe Scout Wolin '28



Aiden Lohuis '29

LMS Visual Arts Teacher Ashley Ortiz guided students as they drew animals with a mix of charcoal and colored pencils using mixed mediums and various techniques, including hatching and stippling.





Lina Fawaz '24

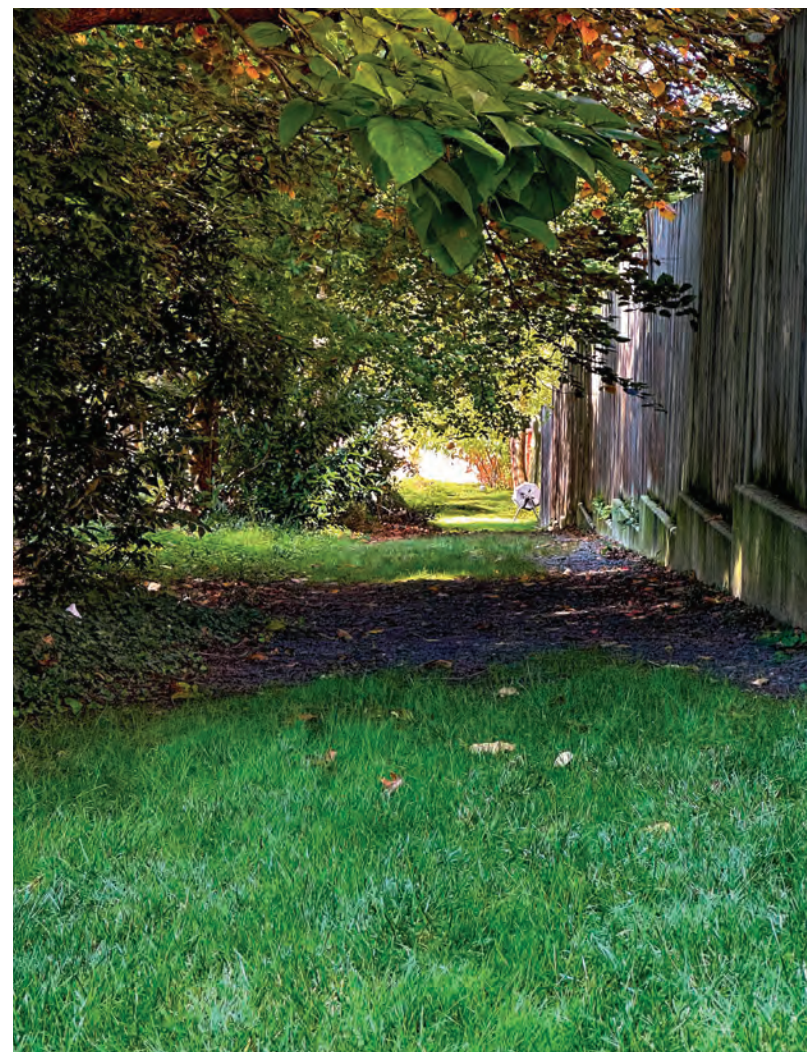


Ava Lewis '24

Molly Kurtzer-Ellenbogen '26



Jacob Contee '26



Carter Kunz '26

Tristan Fulton '26



Sara Swamy '25



Elsa Cheetam '25



Kavi Grab '25



Zoya Mghenyi '26

## High School Art Show

An artist's work is hardly finished when their piece is complete, which is what HS Studio Arts Chair Michelle Cobb conveys to students.

"Creating the art is one part," Michelle said. "But the other part is about promoting yourself and clearly communicating your ideas to others—everything from writing concise labels and captions to curating your work."

The opening reception of the Spring Art Show, which featured one piece from every student taking an HS Studio Art class, showcased the standards set for GDS artists. The show included ceramics, sculpture, digital art drawing/painting, and photography. While the work dazzled family and friends, only the artists can truly grasp the effort that went into each piece.

"There are many layers that go into the creation process. Many alterations are made during the process and a lot of reworking of ideas," Michelle said. "It can take weeks or months of revision. That's what I think is most misunderstood about the artistic process: the amount of effort that goes into it."

Naveen Joshi '27





Mad Lee '26 (far right) plays viola with the Milky Nomads at the Spring Jazz & Creative Music concert. The bandmates include (from left) Sabrina Sandhu '26, Sabine Hietko-Wood '26, Emi Fitzgibbons '26, Arohi Narayan '26, and Lina Colla '26. Not pictured: Nicole Stutson '26 and Alex Hughes '27



## Spring High School Jazz Concert

Small student-led bands selected their repertoire from favorite sources and crafted arrangements that reflected their personalities and style for the Spring Jazz & Creative Music concert.

Mad Lee '26 likes to underscore the “creative” part. Mad plays the viola, which doesn’t typically lend itself to jazz. “It’s not a conventional instrument, like piano or trumpet, in the jazz scene,” they said, “so you can make your own choices using the foundation of jazz.”

As a freshman, Mad played melodies, a role traditionally assigned to the horn section of a jazz ensemble. But in subsequent years, they started experimenting with their sound, a real luxury for someone who used to play classical music in an orchestra. In jazz, Mad said, there are no rigid rules to follow, no constraints.

“One of the things I really appreciate about jazz music, but also this program specifically, is how you can express your own individual musicality while playing alongside other people,” Mad said. “I took inspiration from everywhere, and [HS Jazz and Instrumental Music Teacher] Brad [Linde] was very supportive and open to all kinds of crazy stuff.”



Stinkbug was among the many student-led bands that performed at the HS jazz concert.

## Middle School Chorus

Keith Hudspeth surveys Middle School singers following each concert to ask which song they most enjoyed performing. After all these years, the answer still fascinates him.

“About 99 percent of the time, their favorite is never a mainstream song they already know,” said Keith, LMS arts teacher and Department Chair. “It’s usually something with substance and quality they haven’t heard before, something that speaks to them in ways they can’t explain.”

Top picks from previous concerts include Abby Betini’s “Be Like the Bird,” a canon based on French novelist Victor Hugo’s poem by the same name; “Hold Fast to Dreams,” a legato piece composed by Susan LaBarr based on a Langston Hughes poem; and “Frobisher Bay,” a lulling sea chanty referencing the Canadian Arctic (a favorite among the current 8th graders who sang it in 5th grade and asked to sing it again this year.)

Keith said he’s a big believer in the power of song and music to shape, connect, and heal. He witnessed it when his grandmother was suffering from severe dementia and early stages of Alzheimer’s. She couldn’t remember anyone, but easily recited lyrics by heart when she sang with her family. He saw it again when she died last year. At her graveside, all her family spontaneously broke out in song: the hymn, “It is Well With My Soul.”

“When you sing with the soul, it’s like therapy,” Keith said.

GDS singers from grades 7 and 8 performed in March 2024 at the Independent Schools Choral Festival at the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, led by LMS arts teacher Keith Hudspeth.



Listen to GDS singers rehearsing “Be Like the Bird” at Washington National Cathedral before performing the song at the Independent School’s Treble Festival in February 2024.







## Middle School Band Concert

As LMS music teacher Sasha Soper sees it, participating in Middle School band is like taking a combined physical education and foreign language class.

"Learning to be a musician is learning to speak the language of music while doing a physical activity," Sasha said. "The instrument is the voice. Musicians have to learn to control their voices before they can speak. By 7th or 8th grade, this concept starts to click, and the more advanced ensembles can start to tackle the intellectual part of the music."

The May Concert featured the Concert Band (5th & 6th graders) and the Symphonic Band (7th and 8th graders.) The Symphonic Band played selections from their recent Music

In The Parks Festival competition, where the band placed first and received an "excellent" rating, along with the GDS Chorus singers. Both ensembles joined together for the finale to perform Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'."

While each musician has to do their part, Sasha impresses upon students that being part of an ensemble is not about any individual player. Rather, it's about how all the players sound collectively and whether that sound resonates with listeners. At their core, he said, musicians are performers who want to connect with the audience and feed off its energy.

"Art is not a selfish thing," Sasha said. "You learn an art to share it with others."

## Fata Morgana

PHOTOS BY JERI TIDWELL

For Elena LaGuardia White '25, the student-led Fata Morgana Dance Company is a place to explore, shine, and escape when she's stressed—a place to release her creative energies and push aside her worries.

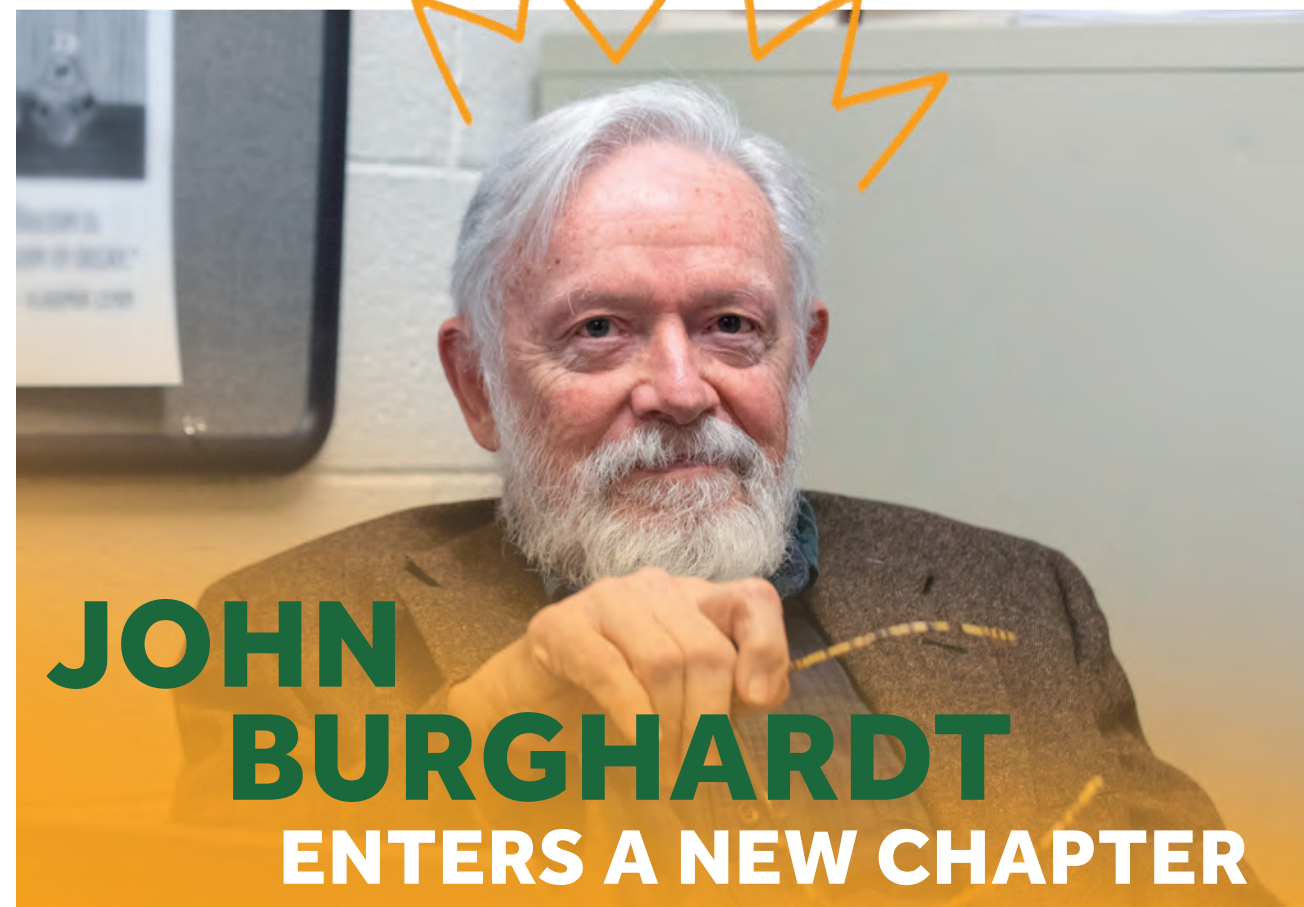
"Fata is where I contribute to the GDS community by doing what I'm really good at," said Elena, who co-heads Fata in the 2024-25 academic year with Paige Young-Woodland '25. HS dance and acting teacher Maria Watson is the group's advisor.

Elena remembers being mesmerized by the Fata dancers when she first saw one of their shows in sixth grade. Her freshman year, she joined the troupe and took a liking to jazz, hip hop—and particularly choreography.

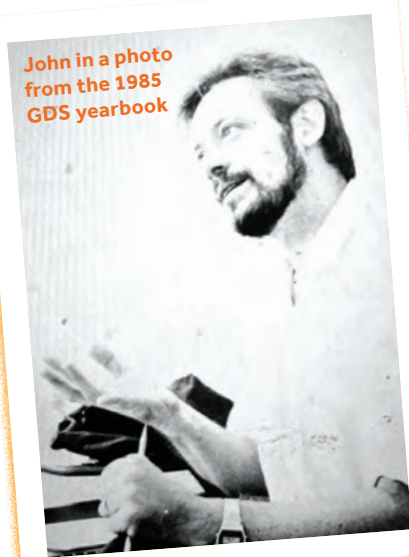
"Choreography is about me imagining what I want to see on stage," she said. "[For the May show,] we had about 36 students in Fata, and most of them were not trained dancers. So when it came to choreography, I had to think about what would be easy enough for everyone and still look good. I focused on transitions and coordinating basic moves in a cool way. I think about choreography as a way of figuring out how to shine a spotlight on everyone on the stage."







### HS ENGLISH TEACHER RETIRES AFTER NEARLY HALF A CENTURY AT GDS



**DURING THE 2024 GRADUATION CEREMONY**, John Burghardt received an honorary high school degree, a wooden plaque that Head of School Russell Shaw described as a rarity because “no retiring teacher receives a diploma from GDS except if they’ve taught masterfully and selflessly for 49 years in our School.”

John said the diploma was an “uncannily insightful” gesture because his time as a GDS English teacher was definitely an education. He received the plaque after delivering remarks on behalf of the faculty, his fourth or fifth time in that role—and his last. The speech marked the beginning of his official retirement.

Looking back, John realizes he was probably a different person, a different kind of teacher, each time he walked up to that podium. But at every turn, he never doubted that the work he was given was worth doing, he said.

“When I started teaching at GDS, I was overwhelmed with the grading and everything else. I envied the senior teachers who had all of that behind them,” John said. “But every 10 years or so, I discovered that the difficulties would never be behind me, that it’s just a really hard job. Some parts of it became second nature, but every stage exposed me to challenges I had not thought about yet.”

#### FROM THE MOTOR CITY TO THE NATION’S CAPITAL

John grew up the oldest of five siblings in the Detroit suburbs, where he attended Catholic schools and earned a full academic scholarship that landed him in the honors program at the University of Detroit.

His family’s intellectual focus leaned toward the quantitative and logical. His father, a Navy veteran, was an accountant at General Motors. His siblings chose careers in biophysics, math, electron microscopic biochemistry, and banking. Even his son, Keith Burghardt ’08, is a computer scientist (see page 70).

“I took on the squishiest subject,” John said. He didn’t see it coming. As an undergraduate, John had his sights set on law school—until he discovered the literature curriculum. “Those classes were the ones I looked forward to, and the work wasn’t work,” he said. “It was just the pursuit of what I would have wanted to do on my own had I been capable of finding it on my own.”

Captivated by the field, John pursued a doctorate in literature at the University of Michigan, intent on becoming a college professor. While writing his dissertation, he moved to Washington with his wife at the time. She took a job at the Labor Department, and to earn some extra cash, he signed up as a substitute teacher at local private schools—a decision that changed his career trajectory.

By then, John was becoming disillusioned with the idea of a professorship having watched many talented classmates hop from one college to another as they chased after tenure-track positions. “Gypsy scholars,” he called them, all living a hand-to-mouth existence in a dismal job market while researching arcane topics.

“I realized that what most interested me was putting students in a relationship that’s responsive to great literature, and that kind of thinking seemed to be happening more in a high school setting than in the world of a college professor,” John said. “In high school, I could focus my whole brain on iconic texts and have students read them in a way that brings meaning and pleasure.”

#### “HE MADE YOU WANT TO LEARN”

With this shift in perspective, John took a full-time teaching job at Virginia’s Flint Hill School in 1974. A year later, at age 29, he joined GDS as a Middle School humanities teacher. At the time, all three divisions of the School were in a single building, now home to the River School. Having previously substituted at GDS, John was impressed by its emphasis on joyful learning—a sharp contrast to his Catholic school experience, he said, which “toughened you up but bruised you a little too.” Five years later, he transitioned to the High School.

Matt Rubenstein ’84, who was a freshman when John joined the High School, remembers him being an avid biker and a rock climbing enthusiast who was so well-liked and respected that students were constantly vying for his attention.

An earlier photo of John with his son, Keith Burghardt ’08, now a computer scientist who said his dad fueled his passion for science and taught him how to write clearly (see page 70)



“He was athletic, intellectual, iconoclastic, irreverent, and also a very demanding teacher,” added Matt, now a pianist in Berlin. “He never dumbed things down, and he had a partisan approach to literature that was very much against the grain of the perceived canon. For example, when we read *The Merchant of Venice*, he had us consider if Shylock [often cast as the villain] was the hero. So he liked to have us learn the canon and then learn not to like it. It was all very exciting.”

By the time Hayley Gordon Pivato ’88 was a senior, the High School had just moved to its current location on Davenport Street, and John was widely considered the in-house literary and writing guru. He would go on to teach English classes at every grade level, oversee the student-led *Grasslands* literary magazine, and run a popular Philosophy Club. John also taught a course on Shakespeare and a creative writing class that captured Hayley’s imagination during her last year at GDS.

Knowing that Hayley was an art lover, John encouraged her to model her senior thesis after *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of*



"WHAT MOST PROFOUNDLY SHAPED ME IN JOHN'S TEACHING IS HOW PASSIONATELY HE ADVOCATED FOR THE TEXT: THE WORD, THE SENTENCE, THE STANZA, THE STORY."

*Experience*, a collection of William Blake's illustrated poems. Together, they examined Blake's method of integrating his poems with images that he personally engraved, hand-printed, and colored.

"I taught myself to use the High School's new etching press, and I made my own etchings and poems inspired by Blake. I still have them," said Hayley, a professional artist. "I ended up majoring in printmaking at Cornell because of that experience. Etchings are not my main art form anymore, but they remain a passion of mine, along with poetry, of course, because of John."

Many former students spoke about John's knack for honoring the unique gifts of each person he taught, his eye for quality in books, songs, and other art forms, and his unusual versatility as an educator.

Andrew Weiner '90, a writer and filmmaker, said John's English classes were "electric." What surprised him, however, was discovering that John was equally adept at teaching geometry and astronomy. In geometry, he would approach the material with genuine curiosity. If the class struggled with a problem he could not solve, John would look at the teacher's answer key and work alongside them to uncover the solution, Andrew said. By the end, even students who considered themselves "bad" at math came away with a solid understanding of geometry.

"He was the best teacher I had. There was no close second," said Andrew. "I loved every one of his classes because he made you want to learn."

### FUN, IN A SERIOUS WAY

For Julia Fisher '09—an HS English teacher and GDS alumna—John's genius lay in his ability to connect ideas in ways that felt both obvious and revelatory.

Julia witnessed this firsthand as one of his English students. "I loved his tests," she said. "He would present a plausible argument and then challenge you to make a different one, and then press you to pay attention to certain words and that could change the argument again," she said. "He had this way of hinting at a destination, but how you got there was entirely up to you. I'd walk out of his tests thinking, 'Well, that was fun!'"

As his GDS colleague, Julia came to recognize another of John's distinctive features: his unwavering belief in the brilliance of his students. "He calls it grading from the inside out," she said. "He is so smart and dexterous in his thinking that he sees a tiny kernel of an idea in everything and nurtures it."

In an email responding to news of John's retirement, *Washington Post* investigative reporter Isaac Stanley-Becker '12 wrote about how studying with John always sparked philosophical questions, such as the ethics of vengeance in William Faulkner's "Barn Burning" or the nature of the soul in James Joyce's "The Dead." As a senior, Isaac wanted to explore that angle further, so he and John devised an independent study project that examined ethics, human nature, power, and personal responsibility through literary and philosophical lenses.

They read the confessional poet Anne Sexton and the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim, Isaac said. They spent hours discussing Plato's allegory of the cave. John pressed him to consider how meaning is created and communicated.



John accepted a surprise honorary high school degree from Head of School Russell Shaw at the 2024 commencement ceremony.

"I still wear John's lessons like an amulet—that meaning arises from juxtaposition, that ambiguity can be found in unexpected places, that nothing is beyond question, and that every proposition can be reframed or reconsidered," Isaac wrote. "What most profoundly shaped me in John's teaching is how passionately he advocated for the text: the word, the sentence, the stanza, the story. John convinced us that we could step inside these texts and that they would hold charismatic power that might change our life and change the world."

### CARRYING IT AROUND FOR A LIFETIME

During his college years and then again when he wrote his first novel, author Ben Dolnick '00 would reach out to John regularly for feedback on his work. John would respond with articulate, even poetic, emails, dense with surprising images and intelligent criticism boiled down to its essence, Ben said.

"I had professors who were accomplished writers, but I was much more interested in hearing from John," he added. "Even now, in my 40s, I have internalized him as my first reader. I think about what he would say. Would he find the writing honest? Or perhaps stupid? He's still in there."

As his career drew to a close, John reflected on how his relationships with students always felt personal because reading

Hayley Gordon Pivato '88 still treasures the etchings and poems she created for her senior thesis at GDS, inspired by William Blake's illustrated poetry and completed with John's encouragement.

and writing are soul-searching activities. What he tried to convey to them, he said, is that the value of literature does not unfold like a mathematical theorem that delivers neat answers.

"As an English teacher, you are introducing a text in the matrix of conversation between students in a class. They talk their way through it, explore it, ask hard, and maybe undecidable, questions," John said. "You may feel you've gained enough mastery of the material that you're entitled to some interpretive opinions. But you're never really done with the book, and the book is never done with you. You can keep it with you, maybe for a lifetime, and make it part of the way you think, not just what you think about."

*\* John returned to support the school as a long-term substitute teacher this year—and we're so happy to have him back, if even for a short period.*



## LOWER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL CHRISTY DIEFENDERFER

### TOP 10 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS

**THE GREAT OUTDOORS** and its many wonders rejuvenate Christy Diefenderfer, who was an outdoor and environmental educator immediately after graduating from the University of Pittsburgh with a biology degree.

Since then, Christy has earned a master's in elementary education from George Washington University, taught elementary school students in the District of Columbia Public Schools system, and held teaching and leadership positions during the past 16 years at Holton-Arms School. She joined GDS this summer to serve as the Lower School Principal.

Her love of the outdoors—acquired during her early days of backpacking, rock climbing, and canoeing at Girl Scout camp—aligns with her passion for engaging the minds of young learners. “Children are naturally curious about nature and want to understand how the world works,” Christy said. “By exploring, observing, and asking questions, children begin to understand the beauty and vulnerability of their environment.”

Christy suggested 10 outdoor activities parents can do with their elementary-age kids. And they're free!

#### 1. DO THEMED HIKES.

Ask kids to observe every color of the rainbow in nature, spot something for every letter of the alphabet, or engage in a number-counting game (such as counting the number of petals on a flower, leaves on a branch, or legs on an organism.)

#### 2. GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY!

Dig into the ground and soil. Notice the look, feel, and smell of the Earth. Keep a journal to compare and contrast observations in different locations.

#### 3. SPEND TIME AT STREAMS.

Let them investigate what sinks and what floats. Build natural boats out of leaves or sticks and observe their path in the stream.

#### 4. BE MINDFUL.

Have kids close their eyes and use their other senses, one at a time, to take in the world around them. What do they hear when they sit still? What do they feel when they touch their surroundings? What do they smell when they inhale?

(from left) LS Principal Christy Diefenderfer with her daughter Naomi, her son Asa, and her wife, Susan Topping, at Yellowstone National Park.



#### 5. TURN THINGS OVER (CAREFULLY).

What's underneath rocks and old logs? Observe the many organisms in those habitats. Make sure to turn these objects away from you and place everything back in its original position after exploring.

#### 6. PICK A SMALL SPOT OR A TREE.

Observe, draw, or photograph what you see. Return to that same spot once a month. What is the same? What is different?

#### 7. USE YOUR IMAGINATION.

Lay down on the grass and watch the clouds. Can you transform the shapes into characters and create stories about them?

#### 8. GROW FLOWERS OR DISSECT THEM!

Young botanists are often fascinated by Amaryllis, which are fast-growing. Get out your ruler and measure the growth of the plant daily. Children can also dissect beautiful flowers and explore their parts. Plenty of YouTube videos offer guidance.

#### 9. FREE FALLIN'

Collect leaves. How many different types can you find? What tree did they come from? Can the bark of a leafless tree help you to identify what kind of tree it is?

#### 10. BECOME A CITIZEN SCIENTIST!

There are many opportunities in the DC area to collect data about birds, water quality, and much more!



Sydney joined US Embassy Kigali USAID colleagues in Rwanda on a rural health site visit in 2018.

**THIS SUMMER, SYDNEY KAMEN '15** found herself representing the United States at a United Nations conference in Ethiopia discussing how to finance sustainable development around the world.

Sydney, a Senior Economic Advisor for the State Department, had little previous experience with the UN, her days competing on GDS's Model UN team notwithstanding. At 27 and only a few months into this latest Foreign Service assignment, she said with a laugh, “There's nothing senior about me.”

Working as a U.S. diplomat lately has felt like having to learn to swim—quickly—in challenging waters. “If you learn how to swim, you can swim anywhere,” Sydney said. “You just need to be confident in your ability to swim...I've been swimming in really choppy water lately, but I've also found a way to really love it.”

#### AN OPEN HEART AND A CURIOUS MIND

Sydney has wanted to be part of the U.S. diplomatic pool since high school, when she participated in a State Department language immersion program in India. She had absorbed the curiosity of her journalist father, Jeff

Kamen, and the caring humanity of her psychologist mother, Cynthia Putschat.

Growing up, her parents (who divorced during Sydney's high school years) used to joke that she was the family diplomat, helping to smooth over any tensions. At GDS, which she attended from pre-kindergarten through high school, she enjoyed building friendships across social groups.

“That's what I think so much of diplomacy is,” Sydney said. “It's all about relationships. It's about bringing people to the table and building understanding.”

Both GDS and Sydney's parents instilled in her a sense of compassion and service, whether it was making sandwiches in kindergarten for people dealing with food insecurity or reading with children in other DC schools. Barbara Buonora, Sydney's pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teacher at GDS, recalled her insightful questions and empathy toward other children.

“You could tell she was a deep thinker, even as a 4- and 5-year-old,” said Barbara, who retired in June after three decades at GDS and has stayed in touch with Sydney



over the years. “She asked deep questions and had an open mind. Isn’t that what a diplomat does?”

### THE TEEN WHO DID WHAT?

In high school, Sydney became keenly aware of poverty and extreme disparities around the world, particularly a lack of basic sanitation and health care, and she grew determined to do something about it.

As part of volunteer medical trips during summers and school breaks, she shadowed dentists in Haiti, volunteered in an HIV clinic in rural Uganda, and backpacked through the Himalayas as part of a traveling medical clinic.

“I went to an incredible private school in Washington, DC; I grew up in Georgetown,” Sydney said. “I had a very sheltered, privileged upbringing. It was incredible to realize that the rest of the world didn’t live the way I did. That really opened my eyes and started changing my perspective. I wanted to learn more.”

During a summer trip to Thailand after ninth grade, she first learned how many public health problems stemmed from lack of access to soap and water, which left people unable to wash germs and bacteria off their hands. She founded So Others Are Protected (SOAP), working with communities in Southeast Asia to recycle leftover bars of hotel soap for people in need. The program recycled more than 50,000 bars of soap before it shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“How do you expect people to go to school if they’re sick?” Sydney said. “How do you expect people to work and support their economy if they’re sick?”

As an adult, she’s amazed—and grateful—that her parents let her travel the world as a teenager. She remembers hearing other parents ask hers incredulously, “You’re going to let your kid do *what* by herself?”

Her parents supported anything that “benefited society or resulted in my growth and ability to serve humanity,” she said. Their courage to let her go, she said, left her feeling comfortable and confident throughout the world. And though she was “never a 4.0 student,” she said, she left GDS feeling “like I can do anything and that there’s a way to make a positive impact.”

### GOING WHERE YOU’RE MOST NEEDED

At Dartmouth College, Sydney studied geography, global health, and international development and participated in Army ROTC, among other activities. She took five and a half



years to graduate because she carved out time to study abroad and volunteer overseas while earning multiple awards.

Dr. Lisa V. Adams, Dartmouth’s Associate Dean for Global Health, remembered Sydney’s humility and her resourcefulness in digging up volunteer opportunities abroad, including in Tanzania and Rwanda.

“She always stood out but in ways that didn’t seek the spotlight,” Adams said. Sydney’s acceptance into the U.S. diplomatic corps seemed like a natural fit. “She came to us with that sense of ‘I can’t just shrug my shoulders and say: Oh, that’s how it is in these countries,’” Adams recalled. “She wanted to engage in a meaningful, sustainable way.”

After Dartmouth, Sydney earned a master’s degree in public policy and international and global affairs at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. She then joined the Foreign Service in 2022 to work on the kind of government policies that could help solve the problems she’d witnessed around the world. “I wanted to be close to, and have a hand in, those conversations,” she said.



Sydney outside the U.S. Department of State in Washington, DC soon after she was sworn in as a Foreign Service Officer in 2022.

Sydney with community members who participated in the health and hygiene training program she helped organize with community partners in Rwanda in 2019

With her deep interest in global health issues, Sydney first requested a posting in East Africa. Asia wasn’t high on her bid list because, while she speaks six languages, none of them would be of use there.

Her assignment: Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. Though disappointed at first and tasked with eight hours of daily Vietnamese language training, Sydney also began to reconsider what it meant to serve her country.

“I think there’s the romantic idea of service, where we find ways to serve exactly in the ways that we want to and are comfortable in,” Sydney said. “And then there’s the kind where you really surrender to the true notion of service and go where you’re needed.”

### GRIEVING AND GROWING

In August 2023, two weeks before she was scheduled to leave for Vietnam, Sydney’s State Department path, and her life, took a painful turn. Her mother learned that the uterine cancer she’d been battling had spread. The State Department approved Sydney’s request to remain in DC, where Sydney could help care for her.

Her mother died in April, and two weeks later Sydney started her job at the Bureau of International Organizations in the State Department’s Office of Economic and Development Affairs. She has remained in DC as she mourns her mother and oversees her estate but hopes to get back to a foreign posting soon.

Meanwhile, she meets with U.S. and foreign officials about economic issues, writes speeches for ambassadors, and represents her country at UN conferences around the world—all while deep in grief.

“Do I have really, really hard days?” Sydney said. “Yes, this has been the hardest period of my life. But I am nonetheless showing up and rising to the occasion every day... There’s a responsibility, a sense of duty. There’s a sense of honor, too, to have this job and be a part of this mission.”

The waters run deep. But Sydney keeps swimming.



## ASK AN ALUMNI

# KEITH BURGHARDT '08 ANALYZES ONLINE HATE SPEECH, EXTREMISM

**KEITH BURGHARDT '08** seeks to answer questions at the heart of a polarized world: What makes people join online extremist groups and, just as importantly, what might convince them to leave?

Keith, a computer scientist at the University of Southern California Information Sciences Institute since 2018, creates AI tools that analyze human behavior and social networks.

By analyzing messages on Reddit and X (formerly Twitter), he studies extremism and misinformation, including how people become radicalized online and how that affects their actions offline. He also examines how they might be encouraged to stop spreading extremist content, including racist or homophobic comments.

Keith said GDS fostered his love of research, while his father, John Burghardt, helped spark his interest in the STEM field. (John taught English at GDS for 49 years before retiring in June, see page 62).

*Georgetown Days* spoke with Keith about his current research. The interview has been edited for clarity and length.

**WHAT WAS IT LIKE AS A STEM KID GROWING UP WITH AN ENGLISH TEACHER DAD?** My dad is very math-focused as well. For example, he led a philosophy club at GDS, and he would raise questions such as how to interpret deep math-based philosophy like Gödel's incompleteness theorems or [the theory of] relativity. It was through my dad that I got interested in STEM, although I wanted to become anything from an archeologist to an engineer. My dad, as an English teacher, also put a lot of emphasis on making sure I could talk about complex things in layman's terms and that I could write well; for many years I was anything but a good writer. I only later appreciated how critical these skills are in STEM.

**HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN EXTREMISM AND HATE SPEECH?** It really started in 2020 with the incredible anti-vaccine backlash [early in the COVID-19



pandemic]. There's been a lot of research into why people become anti-vaccine. I worked with other researchers to create an algorithm to predict how people on social media would become anti-vaccine in the future. We found this algorithm could make surprisingly accurate predictions up to a year before people shared anti-vaccine posts. After that, we started to focus more on users at the periphery of mainstream social networks, especially people who are more likely to believe extremist viewpoints. This finally led us to study things like: What drives people to join hate groups? What was the effect of joining? And are users recruited to a harmful online group or are they self-motivated to join?

**WHY DO PEOPLE JOIN ONLINE HATE GROUPS?** That's a question we're only beginning to understand. In my research on why people become anti-vaccine, we saw people who share such posts are angrier, and they tend to believe in conspiracy theories. We suspect these intrinsic behaviors may play a role in why people also join extremist groups, such as hate groups.

Conspiracy theories drive some of the oldest types of hate, including antisemitism. Some other theories can also help explain their decisions. For example, the uncertainty-identity theory says that someone's uncertainty about what they should do or think can drive people to join these groups. The rise of Nazism in Germany is such a case study, as Hitler came into power during an economic depression in Germany. While these are risk factors, we don't know which factors are key to the very first steps along the path towards extremism, such as joining online hate groups, and how these online groups act as gateways to offline extremism, like domestic terrorism. There is some really strong evidence, however, that social media can be a driver of terrorism. So, the short answer is, I don't know. The long answer is, there could be a few different causes, and more research is critical to test them.

**WHY MIGHT SOCIAL MEDIA BE SO HOSPITABLE TO HATE SPEECH?** I think it's the low barrier to entry, as well as the anonymity. We might expect that the number of people who are truly hateful and are really out to hurt someone is relatively scattered. And most people avoid hate speech in real life due to obvious consequences. Online groups, where a lot of this hate speech spreads, are substantially easier to join than offline groups like the KKK, and you can connect with, or antagonize, anyone in the world anonymously, without as many social repercussions.



**HOW HOPEFUL ARE YOU THAT WE CAN CURTAIL ONLINE HATE?** Some people are much easier to deradicalize than others. There's evidence that countering hate speech—even just saying that what people are doing is wrong—can be effective, as can moderating social media. Making it difficult or socially costly to form these hate groups seems to be a potentially useful strategy. For example, when Reddit simply banned hateful forums, hate speech on Reddit dropped dramatically. The ability to talk in these groups makes people more hateful than they would otherwise be. Even if it's difficult to deradicalize individuals, you can at least keep them at a lower level of hate with the proper tools.

**YOU ANALYZED MESSAGES ON X AFTER ELON MUSK ACQUIRED IT IN OCTOBER 2022. WHAT DID YOU FIND CAUSED A SURGE IN HATE SPEECH?** We found hate speech roughly doubled in the month after Elon Musk bought Twitter. But we saw an increase in hate

speech even before then. My suspicion is that this increase was driven largely by people believing that they could get away with it. Why hate speech continued to be high for at least the several weeks we studied it could be due to a lack of effective moderation. While we don't completely know why it increased, I believe that more moderation can help reduce hate on the site, especially given recent posts I've read.

**HOW DOES YOUR GDS EDUCATION AFFECT YOU TODAY?** GDS really influenced how I appreciate math and physics. For example, Andy Lipps, who retired recently, didn't just teach the required math for AP Calculus but went into depth about the history of it and its various fields. This sparked my interest in math. I was also influenced by Dr. Kevin Cornell, who taught physics. He was instrumental in my decision to pursue a degree in physics after high school. I was also affected by friends from diverse backgrounds and by my father, who at one time served as a GDS diversity co-coordinator. Both my data and friends gave me a greater awareness of the harmful experiences many students faced, including what it meant to be living in an entire system that wasn't built for you.

**HOW DOES GDS INFORM WHAT YOU DO NOW?** Kevin Cornell probably informed me the most. He told me, "You can use simple math to understand the world around you." This idea really stuck with me. I can trace a direct line from his classes to my decision to get a physics PhD [at the University of Maryland]. While my main research has moved away from physics, I still write physics papers on the science of cities. I was also a high school student at GDS when social media became important. What I noticed, both good and bad, informed the research I do to this day regarding the benefits of social media, as well as its risks.

**WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED TO RESEARCH NEXT?** There's been work understanding the harms of users joining extremist groups and the potential risk factors for people joining them. But how to reduce extremism and keep people away from these groups in the long run is really unexplored. When we think about extremism, it's intuitive to ask what drove people to commit those actions. Who would believe in things that are so outlandish that they would harm other citizens to perpetuate their false beliefs? Why would they believe that? We want to find out how to drive people away from extremism, potentially with the help of new AI tools.



# ALUMNI REUNITE, LOOK BACK AT THEIR GDS YEARS



**MORE THAN 100 HOPPER ALUMNI** traveled in time, back to the GDS campus for a reunion that celebrated the classes ending in 4 and 9.

Festivities for the *Back to the Future*-themed weekend kicked off on Friday, May 17, when alumni attended off-campus parties for their respective classes. The fun continued the following day with official reunion activities, including a panel on the 2024 presidential election, a barbecue at the LMS, an alumni basketball game, and a Black Alumni happy hour. An on-campus soiree brought the reunion to a close.



CHOICE PHOTOGRAPHY



(from left) HS History teacher Richard Avidon led a panel discussion with *Politico* Senior Editor Michael Schaffer '91, Pulitzer Prize-winning Reporter Kimberly Kindy (formerly of *The Washington Post*), and *Atlantic* Staff Writer Frank Foer '92 (author of *The Last Politician: Inside Joe Biden's White House*). The panelists shared their insights on the 2024 presidential race.

The Black Alumni happy hour took place in the High School's third-floor art gallery, where attendees browsed the pieces on display for the HS spring art show and reconnected.

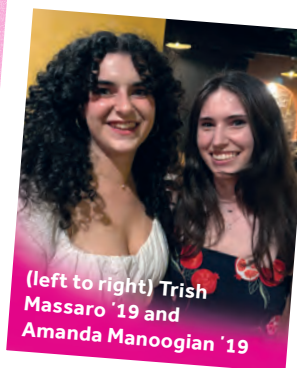


At the Saturday barbecue, attendees toasted HS Studio Arts teacher Nick Ryan and PK teacher Barbara Buonora, who retired at the end of the 2023-24 school year after 24 and 30 years at GDS, respectively.

CHOICE PHOTOGRAPHY

U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin '79 hangs out with Denise Odell '84 at the reunion's closing party.

Alumni brought their brood to the on-campus barbecue, held indoors this year. Some were seeing the new LMS building for the first time.



(left to right) Trish Massaro '19 and Amanda Manoogian '19



left to right: Danielle Soto '19 and Dylan McAfee '19

**Class of 2019**  
Guapo's Restaurant in DC



**Class of 1999**  
Cactus Cantina in DC



**Class of 1989**  
Hip Flask in Bethesda



**Class of 1984**  
Rooftop Kitchen in DC.



**Class of 1979**  
MXDC Cocina Mexicana Restaurant in DC



## ALUMNI WEEKEND 2025!

Keep an eye on your inbox for details on next year's alumni weekend, which will celebrate the classes ending in "0" and "5."

Remember, all alumni are encouraged and welcome to join, regardless of graduation year.

Email [alumni@gds.org](mailto:alumni@gds.org) to learn about how you can be involved.

As part of his bachelor party partying, Gabe Rust-Tierney '07 (the tallest of the bunch) showed up at the LMS gym to shoot hoops with (from left) Mickey Wiener '07, Erin Rust-Tierney '14 (Gabe's younger brother), Dickson Cohen '07, and Randolph Brown '07. Bobby Asher, GDS Director of Student Community Programming, joined the guys and later refereed an alumni basketball game that drew quite a crowd.





# GIVING REPORT

2023-24



## IN THIS REPORT

- 4 TREASURER'S LETTERS
- 5 DAVID GILLESPIE JOINS TEAM
- 7 POLICY INSTITUTE'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY
- 13 ALUMNI FLEX FUNDRAISING MUSCLE
- 14 DONOR LIST

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# DEAR GDS COMMUNITY,

It is with immense gratitude that I present the 2023-24 Giving Report.

This report is more than just a celebration of funds raised. It is a testament to the incredible generosity of our community—the more than 1,400 donors who believe in our mission and make an investment in Georgetown Day School.

Philanthropy provided GDS with more than \$5 million in support during the year. Through the Hopper Fund, gifts of all sizes added up to *more than \$3.3 million for operations and financial aid*. This annual support bolsters **everything, every day** at GDS—programming, facilities, faculty salaries and benefits, professional development, student activities, and so much more!

In a world that often feels uncertain, your dedication brings hope and inspiration. The collective generosity of the GDS community ensures that our School can continue to be an innovative place for teaching and learning; a place shaping the next generation of changemakers. Your support allows us to dream bigger, reach further, and impact more lives than ever before. We are deeply honored to have you as partners in this work.

Thank you for supporting our mission in action.

With appreciation,



*Jeffrey DeLozier*  
**JEFFREY DELOZIER**  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

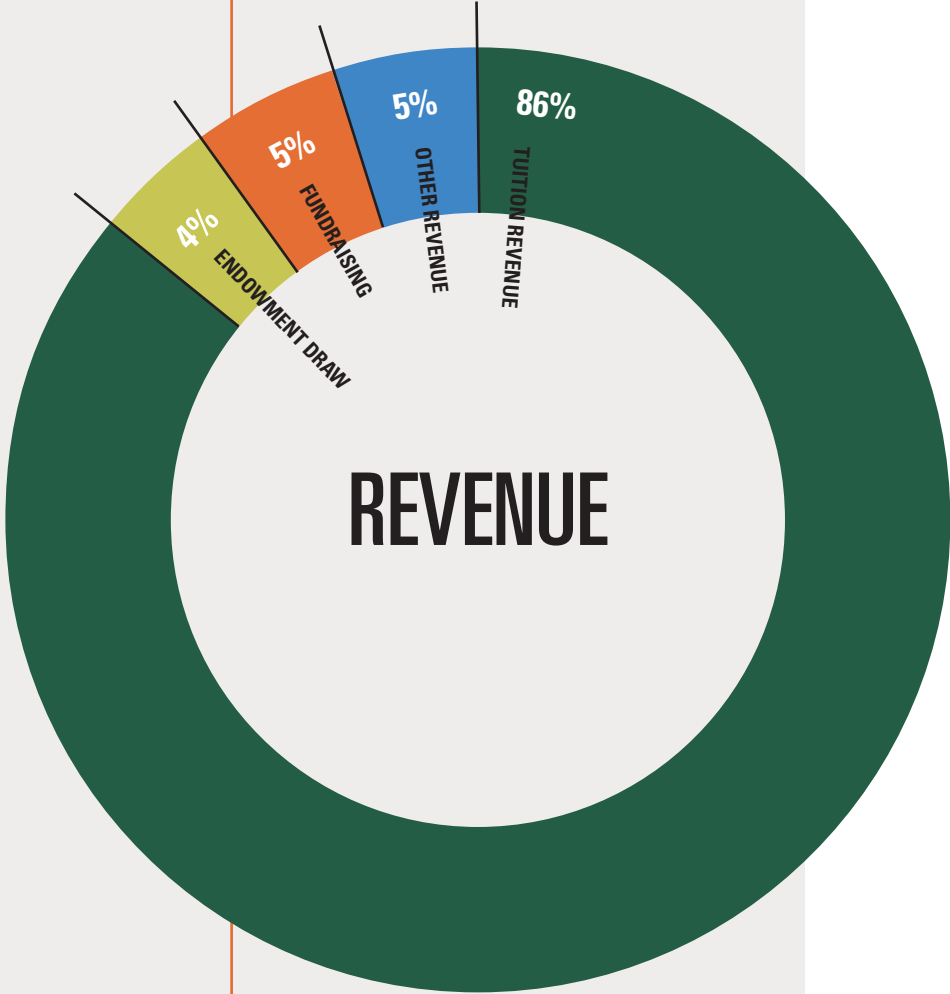


TOTAL DONATIONS RECEIVED  
**\$5,007,115**

\$3,380,764 GIVEN TO THE HOPPER FUND  
\$625,738 PLEDGE PAYMENTS TO BUILDING FUND  
\$1,000,613 RAISED FOR OTHER PURPOSES

TOTAL DONORS  
**1,420**

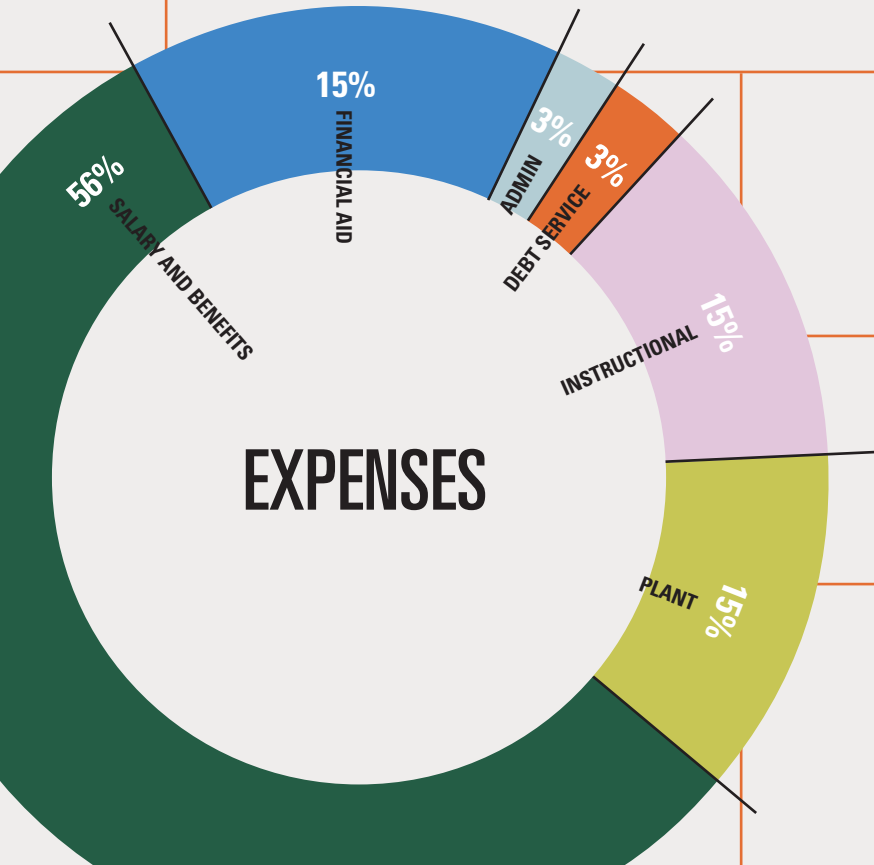
275 LEADERSHIP (\$2,500+) DONORS  
141 NEW DONORS  
363 DONORS WHO HAVE GIVEN 10+ CONSECUTIVE YEARS



**8%**  
INCREASE IN GIVING  
TO HOPPER FUND

**100%**  
TRUSTEE PARTICIPATION

**44%**  
FACULTY & STAFF  
PARTICIPATION  
(UP FROM 22% IN '22-'23)



FINANCIAL AID AWARD RANGE	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID	AVERAGE FINANCIAL AID AWARD AMOUNT	FINANCIAL AID BUDGET FROM 2012-2024
\$1,500 - \$51,225	24%	\$34,800	\$3.7M - \$9.2M

Treasurer’s Letter

DEAR GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL COMMUNITY,

As Treasurer of the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to report on our School’s financial health and stability. GDS remains in a strong financial position—allowing us to provide an exceptional student educational experience, operate within a balanced budget, and be prepared for unexpected circumstances.

This past year has been a period of careful stewardship and strategic planning. Through prudent financial management and a commitment to responsible budgeting, we have maintained a solid financial foundation and continued to uphold three organizational priorities: moderating tuition increases, ensuring competitive compensation for our faculty and staff, and increasing access through financial aid. Our endowment and quasi-endowment performed well, with an 18.69% per annum return, thanks to the work of our skilled Board Investment Committee. We collected more than \$5 million in philanthropic support because of the generosity of our community.

GDS maintains its place as a leading independent school. Last year, we saw applications, accepted students who enrolled, and student retention at some of our highest rates. As an institution, we continue to strive for socioeconomic diversity; our investment in financial aid makes GDS more accessible to a wide range of students. During the 2023-24 school year, GDS allocated financial aid to 24% of our students—with an average award of \$34,800. We remain grateful for the community’s commitment to financial aid, which allows us to continue to attract top-notch students regardless of need.

A talented and engaged faculty is foundational to the education that we provide our students. Faculty salaries, benefits, and professional development expenses represent most of the school’s operating expenses. Georgetown Day School continues to hire, grow, and retain the best faculty in a region where the cost of living is high. The School’s investment in compensation and professional development is essential to our mission of fostering an environment where every student can thrive.

As we look ahead, we will continue focusing on sound financial practices to support day-to-day operating expenses and strategic initiatives identified through last year’s strategic planning and accreditation processes. We will also continue exploring innovative ways to strengthen our revenue streams, which are essential in supporting our three organizational priorities. We are committed to ensuring that Georgetown Day School remains a leader in education, supported by a vibrant philanthropic community.

On behalf of the entire Board of Trustees, I want to express our deepest gratitude to all who have contributed to our financial well-being—current parents, alumni, parents of alumni, grandparents, faculty, staff, and friends. Your support is vital to our continued success, and we are profoundly grateful for your commitment to our School and our mission.

With appreciation,



*Marc Lindsey*  
**MARC LINDSEY**  
TREASURER, BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Parent of Maceo '28



# Former Athletic Director HOPS OVER to ADVANCEMENT TEAM

“COACHING IS  
WHAT BROUGHT  
ME TO GDS,  
AND I QUICKLY  
REALIZED THAT  
I BELONGED AT  
THE SCHOOL...”

**David Gillespie**

**DURING HIS FIVE YEARS LEADING** the GDS Athletics Department, David Gillespie witnessed how the community’s robust support of the Hopper Fund and the One GDS Campaign translated into tangible gains for students and their athletic needs: a modernized gym at the new LMS, state-of-the-art scoreboards, major renovations at the HS gym and fitness center, a new wrestling room, and so much more.

Now, David has joined the Advancement Office, stepping into the newly-created Special Gifts Officer position. In this new role, he will work to cultivate and solicit gifts at GDS—building on the relationships he’s formed with students, families, and alumni during his two decades at the School and his personal experience as a Hopper Fund supporter for 18 consecutive years.

“What I’m most excited about is working with the team to hit our philanthropic goals,” said David, who is the father of two Hoppers (Emma Gillespie ’22 and Alexa Gillespie ’24) and the brother of two alumni (Matthew Gillespie ’08 and Catherine Gillespie ’11). “I’m ready to engage with anyone who wants to know what we’re doing at the School and how they can help support what they most care about.”

A few years after graduating from Hobart and William Smith Colleges, David was working in marketing at National Geographic when he was hired to help coach GDS Middle School lacrosse on the side. The gig led to frequent substitute teaching and coaching opportunities at the School until he landed a full-time position as an LMS Physical Education teacher in 2005. He went on to coach numerous MS and HS teams and lead the Middle School Athletics Department before overseeing all aspects of the GDS Athletics program.

“Coaching is what brought me to GDS, and I quickly realized that I belonged at the School,” David said. “I have coached, taught, or supervised students in every grade since I’ve been here, and I’ve really enjoyed it. I have no doubt I’ll be crossing paths with many of those students and their families again in my new role.”



**When you make a legacy gift to Georgetown Day School, your generosity has an impact far beyond your lifetime. Your gift supports generations of students whose lives will be forever changed by their GDS experience.**

The Gladys Stern Society gratefully acknowledges benefactors whose estate gifts show that the future of GDS was close to their hearts. Anyone who notifies GDS that the School is named as the beneficiary of a gift through their estate, or through a planned gift during their lifetime, is automatically enrolled.

**By establishing a legacy gift, you join the Gladys Stern Society. Gladys served GDS for 42 years, 21 of them as our Head of School.**

**Anonymous**

**Jenny Abramson  
and Jacob Maas**

**Ciera and Trevor Ashley**

**Jeffrey M. Delozier**

**Laura Dickinson  
and Paul Berman**

**Cynthia Dunbar  
and Charlie Cerf**

**Andrea\* and James Hamos**

**Linda Jackson**

**Larry Kanarek**

**Elizabeth Lewis  
and David Fahrenthold**

**Judy and Elliott Lichtman**

**Jaclin and David Marlin**

**Betsy McIsaac\***

**Susan Schaffer  
and Michael Rogan**

**Laura Stone and Ezra Levine**

**Susan Tannenbaum  
and David Osterhaut\***

**Elizabeth Wachs\***

**\*Deceased**

## GET IN TOUCH WITH US!

**We can help you find the best way to make your gift and perhaps help you make a larger gift than you ever thought possible. Please visit [legacyplanning.gds.org](https://legacyplanning.gds.org)**



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**David Gillespie**  
Special Gifts Officer  
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# DECADE-OLD POLICY INSTITUTE EXPANDS ITS REACH

TEN YEARS,  
BY THE  
NUMBERS

352  
STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

10+  
STATES VISITED  
(TRAVEL INTRODUCED IN 2022)

40  
PROJECTS LAUNCHED

510  
FEATURED SPEAKERS/  
COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Summer program  
welcomes  
DMV-area schools



## The Policy Institute plans

to open its doors next summer to students across the DC region, GDS announced during a July celebration that marked the summer program's 10th anniversary and showcased the work of its most recent fellows.

Since its start as a pilot project, the Policy Institute has served as an incubator for inspired activism, helping GDS students deepen their understanding of social justice issues and develop the skills they need to affect change in their communities and beyond.

The one-month program—run by the Community Engagement and Experiential Learning (CEEL) office—hosts roughly 50 fellows divided among five “tracks.” Each track explores a specific topic, such as the environmental justice movement or factors perpetuating socioeconomic inequity. For the program's duration, fellows (led by GDS faculty) work alongside advocates, interact with policymakers, and travel to “ground zero” cities to learn from the people and places most affected by their focus issue.

Speaking at July's on-campus event, CEEL Director Leigh Tait urged the GDS community to consider supporting the regional expansion effort. Previously, the Policy Institute's initial funding was seeded by a multi-year anonymous donation that has since run its course. GDS helped subsidize the costs through 2023 before introducing a \$500 fee per student last summer.

“A four-week immersive experiential program that includes out-of-town travel, hundreds of speakers, supplies and food, and local transportation costs money to pull off,” Leigh said. “Any donation that's made moving forward will help ensure the participation of any student from any school who is passionate about policy, advocacy, democracy, and making meaningful and informed change in the world.”

Leigh expects each track will be capped at 12 fellows, up from 10, when the program grows to include students from local public, private, and charter schools next summer.

## Taking Informed Action

In the summer of 2024, fellows met more than 80 speakers—from policymakers in the nation's capital to food bank volunteers in New Orleans to Google representatives in San Francisco, said Michelle McKeever, CEEL's



“I hope that students get a deeper understanding of how policy gets made in this country, that they learn it experientially. I hope that they walk out with a toolkit, the ability to advocate, the ability to understand root causes of problems and design solutions to some of those problems. I hope that they see themselves increasingly as agents of change.”

RUSSELL SHAW  
HEAD OF SCHOOL

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Associate Director. “This program is the epitome of what experiential education should be, and really, education in general,” Michelle added. “Our speakers consistently reflect back that our fellows are what give them hope for the future.”

During the past decade, the number of tracks has grown from two to five or six, depending on the year. Some are mainstays that are reimagined to capture changing contexts and circumstances (such as Waging Life in the DMV, which focuses on a living wage and affordable housing). Others are new (such as AI in the Human World). But as the program wraps up, no matter what the track, each cohort of fellows designs an action project to tackle a challenge. And some of those projects take on a life of their own.

The annual GDS Summit on Sexual Assault and Consent, now entering its ninth year, originated from a track proposed by Tyce Christian ’18 during her junior year in high school. In a 2017 interview with the National Women’s Law Center, Tyce said she and her peers came up with the summit idea while brainstorming proposals for an action project as their track drew to an end.

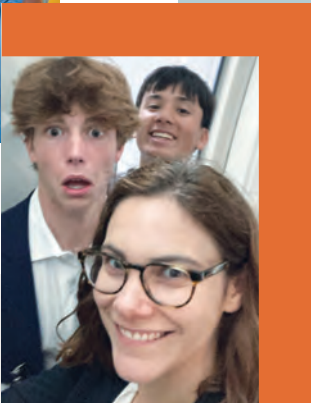
“It was a really cool opportunity, as young people, to be able to pull adults together and pull our peers together,” Tyce said at the time. “I had some of my best friends at the [first] summit. Plus, students from all over the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia region came, from all-boys schools, from all-girls schools, from Christian schools, from all types of schools, and represented a big community with all sorts of different perspectives.”

To this day, what is now known as the Bodily Autonomy and Consent track continues to be a popular draw for the Policy Institute. The summit attracted more than 430 students, parents, and teachers from across the nation in fall 2023.

Heads, Hearts, and Hands

For Margaux van Allen ’20, the Policy Institute helped her grasp the real-life implications of the housing and socioeconomic issues she was studying as part of the Waging Life in the DMV track. It was the summer of 2019, and she witnessed the indignities of poverty when she and her peers helped Thrive DC distribute food to vulnerable individuals.

“There was this one family that stayed after everybody else cleared out,” Margaux said after completing the Waging Life in the DMV track. “[The mother] had about



“[My] biggest takeaway... was probably the connections that I made with people, not only with the people on my track, but also the networking skills that I gained from talking to policymakers, and people in the government, and people on the Hill, and even just the teachers that run the tracks.”

JULIAN LUCAS '26  
ADVANCING EQUITY IN HIGHER  
EDUCATION, SUMMER 2024

four kids, and she came up to us and asked for an extra bag of oranges. We couldn’t give more to her, even though it was obvious that it probably would have helped her a lot. And that was kind of frustrating and challenging.”

Speaking at the Policy Institute’s 10th-anniversary celebration, Anoushka Chander ’21 recalled how she helped a Spanish-speaking immigrant study for the U.S. citizenship exam as part of the immigration policy track, also during the summer of 2019. She and her peers met with U.S. senators on Capitol Hill that summer to voice support for immigrant and refugee rights. And together they learned how to thoroughly research a topic so they could defend their positions.

Inspired by what she learned, Anoushka founded the GDS Student Action Committee upon returning to school her junior year. The committee continues to act as a one-stop shop designed to engage civic-minded GDS high school students who want to get involved in advocacy work.

She went on to lead her peers in an initiative to get-out-the-vote and combat voter suppression leading up to the 2020 election.

Anoushka is now a senior at Harvard College. She recently completed an internship with the House Democratic Women’s Caucus, and she’s set her sights on earning a law degree and working to secure reproductive justice for mothers of color.

As she presses forward, Anoushka said she is guided by the wisdom of one of her Policy Institute mentors: “[He] taught me that the most powerful way of engaging in advocacy is ... [to use] the head for research and logic, the heart for the emotional connection, and the hands for action.” ■

SPEAKERS

THE POLICY INSTITUTE’S 2024  
FELLOWS HEARD FROM 87  
SPEAKERS FROM VARIOUS  
INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING:

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

ANACOSTIA RIVERKEEPERS

OFFICE OF SENATOR  
SHERROD BROWN

COVENANT HOUSE DC

DC FORENSIC  
NURSE EXAMINERS

DC OFFICE OF PLANNING

DC RAPE CRISIS CENTER

FRIENDSHIP PLACE

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

GEORGE WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY

JACKSON-REED  
HIGH SCHOOL

MARTHA’S TABLE

NRA’S INSTITUTE FOR  
LEGISLATIVE ACTION

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

CONGRESSMAN  
JAMIE RASKIN

TEXAS ALLIANCE FOR LIFE

THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

US DISTRICT  
ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

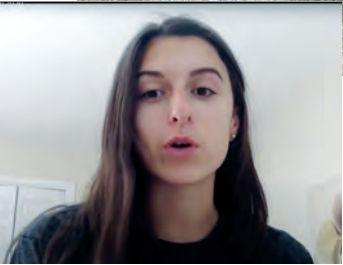
WHITE HOUSE GENDER  
POLICY COUNCIL





“Before the Policy Institute, I didn’t have a lot of experience just doing community service. Period. The Policy Institute really introduced me to a lot of different types of service. It gave me a better idea of what service can look like.”

**ADAM LEFF '22**  
WAGING LIFE IN THE DMV, SUMMER 2019



“[I heard] some speakers that I have agreed with and some speakers that I haven’t, and I feel like that diversity of opinion has definitely helped me find my position more clearly.”

**Yael Wellisch '22**  
THE GUN DEBATE, SUMMER 2020

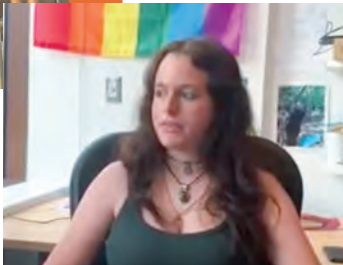


**HELP EXPAND  
THE POLICY  
INSTITUTE  
TO BUILD A  
MORE JUST  
COMMUNITY  
AND WORLD.**



“The Waging Life track merges everything that makes being in Washington, DC a unique and uniquely challenging experience and allows students to understand people who are in a very different socioeconomic status than a number of folks in the GDS Community.”

**HS HISTORY TEACHER TOPHER DUNNE**  
FACULTY LEAD OF GUN DEBATE, FACULTY LEAD OF WAGING LIFE IN THE DMV, 2024



“I was a little worried that [the Policy Institute] was going to be very classroom-based—sitting and listening to people lecture. But even when people come to speak to us, it’s very conversational.”

**RACHEL SCHNEIDER '24**  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FELLOW,  
SUMMER 2022

## THE FIVE POLICY INSTITUTE TRACKS

**ADVANCING EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION** examined the historical context and practical implications of affirmative action policies and the barriers to post-secondary education. Fellows met experts throughout the DC region and at Florida International University in Miami. **TRACK LEAD: ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING DARIUS PARDNER**

**AI IN THE HUMAN WORLD** took fellows to San Francisco to meet with Silicon Valley experts who are immersed in the artificial intelligence field. In DC, the fellows considered how a future with increased access to artificial intelligence might affect schools, communities, and society at large. **TRACK LEAD: HS ENGLISH TEACHER JULIA FISHER**

**BODILY AUTONOMY AND CONSENT** addresses issues of reproductive justice and sexual assault. Fellows traveled to Houston, Texas to meet with pro-life and pro-choice activists, gaining an inside look into a topic that continues to dominate the news cycle. **TRACK LEAD: HS INSTRUCTIONAL COACH CARA HENDERSON**

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE** explores the unfair exposure of marginalized communities to harms from hazardous waste, resource extraction, and other land uses. Fellows spent a majority of their time outdoors and gained an understanding of historic contamination in communities abutting the Anacostia River, green gentrification, climate migration, and exposure to chemical contaminants. During a visit to New Orleans, they learned about the real-life implications of climate change. **TRACK LEAD: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP & CAMPUS COMMUTING MANAGER CHRIS OSTER**

**WAGING LIFE IN THE DMV**, one of the original Policy Institute tracks, analyzes the socioeconomic conditions that contribute to inequality in the DC region by examining affordable housing, job access, and other issues. Fellows traveled to New Orleans to gain insights into how these factors play out in another region of the country. **TRACK LEAD: HS HISTORY TEACHER TOPHER DUNNE**



2023-24

# ALUMNI

## Stoke FUNDRAISING FERVOR

### MATCHING CHALLENGE

ALUMNI DONATIONS:  
**\$42,657**

VIRGINIA  
SOLOMON '99 MATCH:  
**\$17,400**

ANONYMOUS  
DONOR MATCH:  
**\$12,000**

TOTAL RAISED:  
**\$72,057**

NUMBER OF DONORS  
**66**

MEDIAN DONATION  
**\$250**

Two GDS alumni kick-started a matching gift challenge and other alumni rose to the occasion, collectively raising \$72,057 in the last six weeks of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

In a bid to bolster the GDS financial aid budget, Virginia Solomon '99 vowed to match up to \$17,400 in donations made by alumni who had not contributed to the Hopper Fund in fiscal 2024. The goal was to raise \$34,800—the amount of the average financial aid award in 2023-24.

“I wanted to engage people who had not donated that year and give them an impetus to do so,” said Virginia, an assistant professor of art history at the University of Utah. “I intensely value the educational experience I had at GDS, and I think it’s important that everyone have access to those kinds of opportunities.”

Another alumnus, who wishes to remain anonymous, was so inspired by Virginia’s generosity that he made a similar offer to the same group of potential donors; he would match dollar-for-dollar every gift they made, up to \$12,000, if alumni met Virginia’s target goal.

Alumni flexed their giving muscle and blew past both targets, raising a total of \$42,657 that climbed to \$72,057 with the matching dollars included. The challenge attracted 66 donors, including a few first-time donors and a handful of others who were drawn back to supporting GDS thanks to the nature of the campaign—and the person asking.

“There’s something exciting about a matching challenge because people know that the impact of their gift is doubled,” said GDS Director of Annual Giving Ashley Doherty, who helped organize the challenges. “But more importantly, the incredible showing we’ve seen in this fundraising effort speaks to the fact that GDS alumni are extremely supportive of each other. They feel connected in a meaningful way, so when they make an authentic ask, others in the community respond.”

# DONOR LIST

PHOTOS BY JASON PUTSCHÉ

WE EXPRESS GRATITUDE TO ALL WHO MAKE GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL A PHILANTHROPIC PRIORITY. THE SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY IN OUR COMMUNITY IS TRULY INSPIRING; COLLECTIVELY, YOUR PHILANTHROPY MAKES OUR MISSION POSSIBLE.



**DONORS WHO MAKE ANNUAL GIFTS** of \$2,500 or more are members of the 1945 Society. Named for the year in which GDS was founded, the 1945 Society was established to provide our School’s philanthropic leaders the opportunity to express their dedication and commitment to the founding families’ vision, ideals, and principles—all of which continue to be a part of the GDS spirit nearly 80 years later. Leadership gifts for the 2023-24 Giving Report range from \$2,500 to over \$100,000. Each fall, members of the 1945 Society are celebrated at a reception hosted by the Head of School and the Board of Trustees.

**THROUGH THE AGGIE O'NEIL LOYALTY CIRCLE,** we extend our deep appreciation to those who have made gifts to the School for 10 consecutive years. Aggie, the first Head of School, embodied the School’s spirit of inclusivity and joyful learning.



VIRGINIA SOLOMON '99



## GDS INTRODUCES Leadership Giving Circles

In next year's Giving Report, we will list donors by name within their giving segment. We are grateful for those who gave at these levels in 2023-24.



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**\$50,000+**



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24 DONORS GAVE  
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**\$15,000-\$24,999**



**Capitol Circle**  
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**\$5,000-\$9,999**



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White Circle**  
33 DONORS GAVE  
**10,000-\$14,999**



**Davenport  
Circle**  
96 DONORS GAVE  
**\$2,500-\$4,999**

TO LEARN MORE, EMAIL  
[annualgiving@gds.org](mailto:annualgiving@gds.org)

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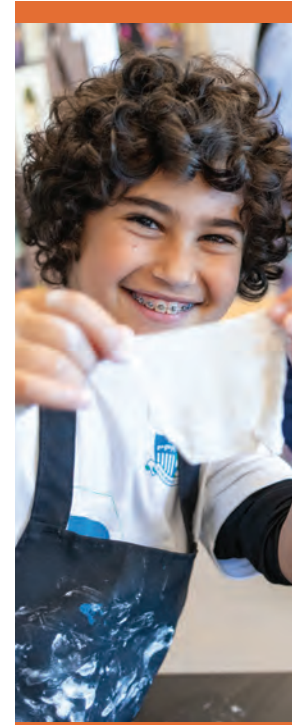
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Elizabeth Westfall  
and Scott Wiener • •  
Marti and Richard Weston •  
Lauren Wetzler  
and Stephen Fuzesi  
Annie Whatley  
Kathryn Whitfield  
and Adam Fotiades  
Nancy and Rick Whitfield



Marna and Tom Whittington  
Della Whyte  
Laura Wides-Munoz '91  
Amy Wiedemann  
and Joshua Burch  
Judith Wiesberg  
Tara and Derrick Wigglesworth  
Ellen Wild and Jonathan Young •  
Wendy Wilk Markarian  
and Tom Markarian • •  
Jill Wilkins and  
Jonathan Kaplan • •  
Suzy Willhoft  
Carolyn Williams  
Christine Williams  
Colleen and Bryan Williams •  
Tracey Williams  
Mary Jane Wilson-Bilik  
Carol and Michael Winer  
Matthew Winer '04  
Laurie Wingate  
and Mark Chandler • •  
Tina Gregg Winn '87  
Barbara Winnik • •  
Eugenia and Robert Winters •  
Megan Wirtz '15 •  
Ellis Wisner  
Kebrework Woldetsadik  
and Elias Maeza  
Daniela and Michael Wolf  
Patrice Wolfe and Jon Bazemore •  
Meredith Woocher  
and Peter Sheingold  
Carol and Russell Wood  
Katie Wood  
and Valerie Hletko • •  
Carolyn and Randy Woolridge  
Leah Wortham  
and Eric Hirschhorn

Katherine Wray  
and Michael Korn •  
Diana Wright '65 •  
Laura and Darien Wright  
Miles Wyner '18  
Shari Murphy Wynn '79  
Ian Yaffe '05  
Jenny Yang and Kil Huh  
Sharon Yang  
and Richard Chang  
Sue and Chung Shu Yang  
Zhongqin Yang  
Elizabeth Yates  
and Benjamin Ludlow  
Idil and Tolga Yaveroglu  
Cynthia Yavinsky  
Merrill Yavinsky  
Rachel Winnik Yavinsky '01  
and William Yavinsky • •  
Florrie Yee  
and Richard Kennedy  
Barbara Yellen  
and Phil West • •  
Audrey Yiadom '01  
and Kofi Appiah  
Tom Yoder  
Janice Yoo and Jovial Wong  
Rebecca York '14  
Stefanie Yoselle '03  
and Brian Vargas  
Kelli and Thomas Yu  
Judy and Harvey Zalesne  
Kinney Zalesne and Scott Siff • •  
Judith Zauderer  
Ling Zhu and Shu Yu  
Karim Zia • •  
Miriam Zimmerman •  
Gretchen and Jeremy Zucker •  
Laura Zuckerman  
and Glen Donath



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# ASK A TEACHER



**CAITLIN VANDERWOLF**  
**MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER**

## HOW DO YOU FOSTER AN APPRECIATION FOR DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

At the start of the year, we expanded the usual single-book unit to include three book options. The English Department intentionally chose books that incorporate disparate voices, perspectives, and experiences. *Darius the Great is Not Okay* is a young adult novel about an Iranian-American boy searching for his cultural identity. *Half Broke Horses* tells the story of a strong female protagonist in the early 1900s. Finally, *My Name*

*Is Asher Lev* is a coming-of-age story about a Hasidic Jewish boy. We think these books encourage openness to other points of view and discussions about shared meanings versus individual interpretations of the written word.

The students had a say in which book they would read, but they didn't know for sure until the last minute, which created a sense of mystery and excitement. They had group conversations with others who were reading the same book and classwide discussions about central themes that tie the books together.

I'm excited about the relative freedom this format allows. Offering students choices encourages them to read for enjoyment, which helps them make a habit of reading and find a natural cadence. We want them to revel in all the ups and downs of a story and the emotions it evokes.