

PennCharter

THE MAGAZINE OF WILLIAM PENN CHARTER SCHOOL

SPRING/SUMMER 2024



ADVANCING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

PORTRAIT OF A PENN CHARTER LEARNER

The Portrait of a Penn Charter Learner articulates the skills, attitudes and competencies Penn Charter seeks to nurture in our Lower, Middle and Upper School students.

THE PORTRAIT HAS FOUR CORE DOMAINS: COURAGEOUS LEARNER

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATOR

A Penn Charter learner communicates effectively and responsively to seek, share, and gain knowledge, while actively listening to others.

A Penn Charter learner incorporates data and evidence to inform assertions and convey ideas. Constructive communication and silent reflection enable a Penn Charter learner to participate meaningfully in discourse, problem-solving, and positive change.

CHANGE CULTIVATOR

COMPASSIONATE FRIEND

Read more about the Portrait of a PC Learner at penncharter.com/portrait.



Quaker Youth Leadership Conference

Over 140 students in grades 9-12 from 22 schools across the United States and Canada convened at Penn Charter in January for the Quaker Youth Leadership Conference—an annual event aimed at providing a space for Quaker youth to engage in discussions, workshops and activities that promote leadership development, community building and spiritual growth.

The three-day conference, hosted by Penn Charter in partnership with Germantown Friends School, focused on understanding and exploring the past, present and future of Quakerism. Participants had the opportunity to delve into Quaker values, principles and practices while discussing issues relevant to their lives and communities. Sessions covered topics such as peace and social justice, environmental sustainability, and other themes approached through a Quaker lens.



QYLC guest speakers, with Aly Goodner (right): Caroline Braun OPC '05, assistant principal at the School District of Philadelphia and Kamal Marrell OPC '06, executive director of The Monkey & The Elephant, a nonprofit coffee shop employing and supporting former foster youth.

"I was truly inspired by our student leaders who designed and implemented every aspect of the weekend," said Alyson Goodner OPC '96, director of the Center for Public Purpose and faculty advisor for the QYLC host team. "I am in awe of their creativity, flexibility, organization, collaboration and commitment. They have been models of the Portrait of the PC Learner at every stage."

The conference commenced on the evening of Thursday, Jan. 25, with students gathering in the Meeting Room for welcome remarks from Head of School Karen Warren Coleman. Penn Charter last hosted the conference in

2004, during the tenure of former head of school Darryl J. Ford, who rejoined the conference this year to share his reflections as a leader of the world's oldest Quaker School for 16 years.

The weekend's agenda was packed, with participants embarking on various community excursions, including visits to the African American Museum, Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, Eastern State Penitentiary, Germantown Historical Society, Historic Rittenhouse Town, Whosoever Gospel Mission, Independence Hall and WHYY headquarters. Each day's events were punctuated by visits to Quaker meeting houses throughout the area, including Arch Street Meeting, Chestnut Hill Meeting, Abington Meeting and Germantown Friends Meeting (pictured above), where students settled into the familiar space of silent reflection in the manner of Friends.

"My biggest takeaway from QYLC was the emphasis on Quaker values as a way of life, rather than solely a religious practice," said PC junior Ava Gonnella. "Each school uniquely implements Quakerism, but what unites each of them is their commitment to enacting Quaker values throughout their practices and lives. Being able to host QYLC at Penn Charter this year has made me appreciate how Quaker values profoundly impact and bind our community together."

QYLC 2025 will be hosted at Carolina Friends School in North Carolina. [PC](#)

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(Photo: Michael Branscom)

OPENING THOUGHTS

From the Head of School



As I reflect on my first year as head of school, I am struck by the immense privilege of this role. From my very first day on the job, I recognized that Penn Charter was special. As a seasoned educator, I sensed Penn Charter's distinctions were intentionally designed to lift up and nurture every aspect of the student experience: academic, spiritual and emotional. My instincts proved right.

This year, I have witnessed firsthand the Quaker values that are woven through the fabric of Penn Charter, from the Class of 2033's partnership with Upper School students to establish the Friends Fridge for

our community neighbors, to the hard work and self-examination in which PC engaged over the last four years on issues of race & equity and gender & sexuality. Additionally, it has been a joy to witness the many opportunities students have and the way they develop and balance their interests in the art room, in the classroom, on the stage and on the playing fields, from this year's all-school art show, VIEWPOINTS, to *Shrek the Musical* to Inter-Ac championships. And I have been energized by our entire community's collective spirit on display from my first PC/GA Day to my first Color Day.

I have seen the Portrait of a Penn Charter Learner in thought and action, whether it be in Advanced Studies: Experimental Biology, or fourth and fifth grade's study of the Bill of Rights and participation in the Rendell Project Citizenship Challenge. Of course, these are just a few of the ambitions our students have undertaken this year with the support of deeply committed faculty and staff. I am proud of the commitment that our teachers have to continually reevaluate how best to prepare our students "not only for college but for life in a complex and changing world."

I also continue to learn about the love and dedication that alumni have to this old school, a reflection of their own experiences as students and their belief in our mission. The OPCs I have met have touched my heart with their stories of Old Penn Charter. Conversations with recent graduates fill me with pride as they embody what it looks like to live lives that make a difference. Our OPCs' support and partnership serve as a beacon to everything we do.

I am honored to lead this community and to work beside such a truly remarkable faculty and staff. Whether you are a new parent or a longtime OPC, a grandparent or a friend, I hope this magazine fills you with pride as you glimpse the impact Penn Charter has on each student.

As we look ahead, we will continue to cherish and nurture each student's unique journey, celebrate the diversity that defines us, and strengthen the bonds of understanding and respect that unite us.

Thank you for being an integral part of the Penn Charter community.

Warmly,

Karen Warren Coleman

Penn Charter

THE MAGAZINE OF WILLIAM PENN CHARTER SCHOOL

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and indicate which freedom you think is most important and why.

CAMPUS CURRENTS



At the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, fifth grade students performed their presentation in a contest held by the Rendell Center for Civics and Civic Engagement, winning second place.

EMPOWERING YOUNG MINDS WITH THE FIRST AMENDMENT

“Which pillar of freedom, protected by the First Amendment, is most important to you and why?”

This question was the main focus of a new fourth and fifth grade project-based learning study. Students learned about the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment, the cornerstone of American democracy that protects freedom of speech, the press, religion, assembly and the right to petition the government. Through presentations from local community members such as City Councilmember Nina Ahmad, an OPC parent, students explored the amendment’s historical significance and practical application in their everyday lives. Students contemplated and articulated which pillar of freedom holds the most personal importance, igniting critical thinking and introspection. As a result, the fifth grade class, in pairs and trios, wrote essays addressing the challenge question above.

While learning, students considered several freedom scenario prompts, such as “Students at the local public school feel like their lunch prices are too high for the food to be so gross. They decided to stage a walkout of classes through the halls with signs about their protest. Do these students have the right?”

Students assumed various roles throughout the project. They became historians, delving into the origins of the First Amendment. As independent thinkers, they formed opinions about the pillars of freedom. Acting as educators, they shared their knowledge with peers and fostered dialogue with students in different grade levels.

After students wrote their group essays, they collectively crafted an all-class essay on the importance of the First Amendment and submitted it to the Rendell Project Citizenship Challenge. An excerpt from the class essay cites what the students consider the most famous example of the use of freedom of speech: “March on Washington in 1963. Roughly 400,000



to over a million people marched up and down the streets of Washington, D.C. to demand an end to segregation and for fair pay and equality for all people regardless of skin color.” The students then creatively presented their opinions before a panel of judges at the National Constitution Center, ultimately winning second place.

“It was inspiring to see our students fully immerse themselves in this challenge,” said fifth grade teacher Raichl Davenport. “Through the entire process of writing essays, writing a script, and performing the skit, it was clear that they were passionate about the idea that every person in society should be able to speak up for what they believe in. Through the Rendell Project Citizenship Challenge, they were not just writing and talking about First Amendment rights, but they were also experiencing and expressing those rights in a creative and impactful way. PC

FRIENDS MULTICULTURAL DAY

Upper School students—and a few teachers—led 32 workshops on identities and experiences for their peers on Friends Multicultural Day in March. The annual event allows students to showcase their passions and interests while celebrating inclusivity and stewardship.

Kimberly McGlenn, an advocate for sustainability and social justice, was the keynote speaker. The CEO and founder of the manufacturing start-up Grant Blvd and the thrift/vintage concept Blk Ivy also led her own workshop titled “Embracing Your Story, Owning Your Voice.”

Several themes emerged from the workshops. Many focused on culture such as music and food: the history of Korean kimchi; Jewish foods and holidays; Irish dance; dumpling varieties from Polish pierogies to Syrian falafel; the impact of Black musicians; the Indian celebration of Holi.

In Music from Around the World, junior London Marshall created an interactive presentation of bilingual karaoke. To prepare, she chose popular songs and asked some friends to translate the lyrics into Swedish, Korean, Spanish and Amharic, an Ethiopian language. In her presentation, she displayed those lyrics on a screen, karaoke-style, and asked for volunteers to sing foreign-language lyrics to familiar tunes.

“It did take a little bit to help people find the courage,” London said, “but there’s always that one person who will brave it out and set a good example. After one person does it, it starts a chain reaction.”



London Marshall (right), a member of Quakers Dozen, Girls a Cappella and Symphonic Band, led a session on world music. “Being able to share not only music but also other cultures was a really great experience for me,” she said.

Other presentations focused on societal issues: incarceration in America; wealth inequality; cultural assimilation at Indian boarding schools. Some workshops featured trailblazers and changemakers: women in medicine and environmental science; members of the LGBTQ community who challenged norms; queer artists; Philadelphia scientists of color. Environmental issues explored included a sixth mass extinction that some scientists believe we are experiencing, and how to increase sustainability on PC’s campus. Hands-on workshops taught students hair braiding and how to make pasta dough from scratch and turn it into spaghetti or farfalle.

The day concluded with musical performances by students in the Graham. [PC](#)



See more photos of Friends Multicultural Day at [flickr.com/penncharter/sets](https://www.flickr.com/photos/penncharter/sets/).



A Colorful Celebration



On a bright spring day on the field in front of the Graham Athletics & Wellness Center, puffs of color mingled with jubilant children. Classmates ran and jumped on the field as clouds of blue, white, yellow and pink floated all around them.

The joyful scene was Penn Charter's April 15 celebration of Holi, an annual Hindu festival in which celebrants throw gulal, or colored powders, to mark the beginning of spring and the opportunity for renewal. Students conceived of the idea for a school-wide celebration of Holi and planned the event and community education, including visits to Lower School classes to share the meaning behind the customs and traditions.

"One of the loveliest elements of this whole experience was the initiative, collaboration and student leadership from all three divisions," said faculty member Naveena Bembry, who helped organize the event. Sophomore Eva Kothari (pictured above, middle), eighth grader Nema Kothari and third grader Leila Puri spearheaded the effort.



"It was an amazing experience to lead with the help of numerous students, parents, faculty and staff that were so engaged in making it happen," Eva said.

While Holi was officially observed on March 25 this year, Penn Charter was on spring break. The delayed PC celebration was a success, with scores of PC community members joining together not only to toss gulal but also to enjoy cultural food and music—a new, educational and colorful experience on campus.

"The day itself was filled with colors, happiness and community," Eva said.

"It was truly incredible to see the Penn Charter community showing up and celebrating an aspect of my culture." [PC](#)

AQUAPONICS

For a whole school year, the seventh grade science classroom and lab is home to an ecosystem of two dozen tilapia, raised from tiny fingerlings to large adults, that help fertilize two pools of aquaponic kale, basil and other crops.

In this symbiotic relationship, the plants naturally purify the water that flows from the fish tank, and the newly-cleaned water flows back into the tank to support the fish. Not only that, but the kale and basil can in turn feed the fish—as well as students, faculty and staff in the PC dining hall. That's right: The basil from that tomato-mozzarella wrap or the greens on the salad bar may have originated in science teacher Dave Martina's classroom.

In seventh grade science, students learn about the diversity of life on Earth and the importance of biodiversity for our planet's health and sustainability. "With this aquaponics system, the Penn Charter learner has the opportunity to be hands-on with a sustainable farming practice while also providing food to our school community," said Martina OPC '10. In addition to the greens, the tilapia will be harvested in the future for a teacher and student cookout.

In March, when PC's campus was affected by a PECO power outage, Martina, in his first year of teaching at Penn Charter, grew nervous as he watched the tilapia begin to gulp for air. Without the electric air-stone filters that add oxygen to the water, the fish would suffocate. First, Martina alternated between blowing air through a hose and dumping water into the tank from high above to create air bubbles. But when he realized the power outage might last through the night, he went to the nearest aquarium store and bought their last four battery-powered oxygen pumps. He monitored the tank, he said, "until I realized the pumps were working well enough and the fish weren't as stressed. I came back to school in the morning, and the fish were healthy and safe."

Thanks for saving the seventh grade ecosystem, Mr. Martina! [PC](#)



FRIENDS FRIDGES:

Addressing Food Insecurity in Philadelphia

What started as a second grade project-based learning initiative last year has become an ongoing partnership that will support the community well into the future.

“How can we make the world a better place?”

In 2022-23, when second grade students considered this question, their interests led them to study food insecurity in communities near Penn Charter. This prompted a yearlong collaboration among the Class of 2033, the Penn Charter Food Security Club, the Center for Public Purpose, Mt. Airy Presbyterian Church and St. James School. The result? The opening of the Friends Fridge—a place for people to gather in community, get what they need and give what they can. Its mission is for every person to have access to healthy food.

Partnering with Share Food Program early on, students learned about the causes of food insecurity, such as low wages, lack of nearby supermarkets, and high costs of housing and healthcare. They explored poverty in our city, asked questions about food justice, and met regularly with Upper School Food Security Club students to read books together and share information about food access in Philadelphia.

“Working with the second graders allowed me to look at the world through a new lens where possibilities were endless,” said Marleigh Jackson, a 10th grader and clerk of Food Security Club. “They were so curious and always open to new information. They had no fear about connecting with new people and thinking creatively about ways to address this really challenging issue in our city.”



Friends Fridge ribbon cutting: PC Class of 2033, Aly Goodner (right) and Tiana Jones, food sharing coordinator at St. James School.



Food Security Club clerks Jacob Kestenbaum and Jaden Black with Aly Goodner.



PC students make sandwiches and salads for the fridge, while students from St. James stock it with fruits, vegetables and other goods.

With the support of Mt. Airy Presbyterian Church, students received a \$3,000 grant to address food security in our community, which led to the creation of a new community fridge in the Allegheny West neighborhood.

They wrote persuasive essays to businesses, securing a discounted refrigerator from P.C. Richard & Son; met with local restaurants to establish ongoing partnerships for food donations; designed the pantry and enclosure for the fridge; and worked closely with Penn Charter's longtime partner,

St. James School, which offered to be the new home for the fridge in Allegheny West.

Over the summer of 2023, Food Security Club clerks Marleigh Jackson, Jaden Black, a sophomore, and Jacob Kestenbaum, a senior, continued to work on the project, finalized permits and logistics for the Friends Fridge, and secured a Philly Service Award of \$1,000 to fund the development of a website for the fridge and other structures to support volunteer efforts. (Visit friendsfridgephilly.com.)

In February, the collective group's vision came to fruition, and PC helped celebrate the opening of the Friends Fridge. “The fridge joins a network of community fridges across our city that are open 24/7, so people give what they can and take what they need at any time,” said Alyson Goodner OPC '96, director of the Center for Public Purpose. “It's a simple concept with a profound impact.”

“This project exemplified the difference between community service and community engagement,” said Meg Merline, second grade teacher. “The students' deep learning transcended the classroom and the school year, and I have been inspired to see our change cultivators continue to steward Friends Fridge as third graders! When students get to choose what they learn about, engagement is one hundred percent. We are able to teach skills like cause and effect and persuasive writing in meaningful ways.” PC



AROUND CAMPUS

With Head of School Karen Warren Coleman

For the past year, Karen Warren Coleman has immersed herself in Penn Charter's culture—listening, learning, serving and celebrating with the community.

These photos merely scratch the surface of her first year as head of school.

1. It's a Great Day, especially when you're in the pre-K! 2. Service with alumni on Martin Luther King Jr. Day 3. Celebrating World Reading Day in Lower School 4. A Color Day moment 5. Touring the All-School Art Show with AP Studio Art students 6. A decisive win for the softball team! 7. Victorious on PC/GA Day! 8. Members of the Parent and Caregiver Community on Great Day 9. Center for Public Purpose 10. Middle School softball team scavenger hunt. Mission: find the year of the oldest charter in the head of school's office. 11. April 8 solar eclipse





THE GREAT POWER OF COMMUNITY:

STEWARDSHIP EXCELLENCE AT PENN CHARTER

The spirit of giving soared to new heights this year on PC's annual day of giving, Great Day to Be a Quaker.

By the time the clock tower chimed at 7 a.m. on March 7, the campus was already buzzing with students, families, faculty and staff as they celebrated milestone breakfasts for the fifth, eighth and 12th grade classes. The morning of fun, reflection and school spirit kicked off Great Day to Be a Quaker, Penn Charter's annual day of giving, when our community gives to make a positive impact on students' education and experiences.

After the breakfasts, the Middle School Jazz Band performed in the school's lobby, its lively music reflecting the spirit of the day. All parents and caregivers were invited to learn more about Penn Charter's history

and beloved traditions from former longtime history teacher and caretaker of the archives, John Burkhart OPC '72.

During the day, students enjoyed cotton candy and posed playfully at photo booths. In the evening, at the Great Day happy hour, OPCs, faculty and staff gathered as Alumni Society President Michelle Chait OPC '00 presented Head of School Karen Warren Coleman with a ceremonial \$10,000 check to the Annual Fund. This matching gift challenge was reached when faculty and staff giving topped \$10,000, further highlighting PC's commitment to students.



Together, we raised over **\$650,000**, surpassing expectations and exceeding all matching goals. One notable achievement was the record-high participation from grandparents, whose involvement underscored the intergenerational spirit of generosity that defines our community. This year also witnessed the highest amount raised by current parents and caregivers, highlighting their commitment to our institution's mission of educating students to live lives that make a difference.

"We are grateful to every OPC, family member and friend who made it a *great day!*" said Emma Rowan, director of the Annual Fund. "The countless ways in which so many across our community continue to show up for our students and teachers—whether through volunteering, building connections or giving—is truly what sets Penn Charter apart."

Revisit the excitement at penncharter.com/greatday.

ADVANCED STUDIES:

Moving Beyond AP

by Rebecca Luzi

It's August 1968. The Democratic National Convention in Chicago is getting underway, with delegates, protestors and reporters all in attendance—Sen. Eugene McCarthy, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer, Mayor Richard Daley, Abbie Hoffman, Bobby Seale and Dan Rather, among others.

With nervous energy, they walk among each other, review their prepared remarks, take their places.

But this isn't Chicago, and it isn't really 1968. It's modern-day Penn Charter, and this cast of characters is actually a roomful of juniors enrolled in the Advanced Studies: Modern American History course. Embodying the characters they have been assigned, the students are re-creating a pivotal event in the nation's political turmoil grounded in the Vietnam War.

Catherine Murray, assistant director of Upper School and teacher of Advanced Studies: Modern American History, employs in her curriculum interactive games called Reacting to the Past (RTTP). Described as “an active learning pedagogy of role-playing games designed for higher education,” RTTP is developed by a consortium of colleges and universities to promote engagement and to improve intellectual and academic skills. Murray was excited to bring this innovative approach to teaching history to Penn Charter after first using Reacting to the Past—*Greenwich Village, 1913: Suffrage, Labor and the New Woman*—in the Modern American history course she taught at Ursinus College.



Junior Louella Whitaker (right) describes the nature of her Advanced Studies class as “more a guided conversation than a lecture.”

This year, Murray used two games in her PC course: *Greenwich Village, 1913* and *Chicago 1968: Policy and Protest at the Democratic National Convention*. “Both allow students to immerse themselves in critical issues facing America,” Murray said. “At Penn Charter we aim to foster students who are empathetic, courageous learners, as well as constructive communicators. Participation in RTTP supports these goals. Specifically, protesting the Democratic Convention of 1968 is not unlike what these



In *Advanced Studies: Modern American History*, Catherine Murray assigns to each student the role of a key historical figure in the interactive game *Chicago 1968: Policy and Protest at the Democratic National Convention*.

students have witnessed with Black Lives Matter as well as recent protests on college campuses. Therefore, they've been able to draw connections with the process of political engagement.”

Louella Whitaker, a junior, found that Murray’s *Advanced Studies* course—with its role-playing, interactive games—gave her a richer understanding of history because she could explore it “on an everyday level, through deeper personal experiences and perspective.”

Through the arc of the *Chicago 1968* game, students use primary and scholarly secondary sources to research the politics, people and history leading up to the 1968 election. Within their individual roles of delegates, protesters and journalists, they influence policies for the domestic platform for the Democratic Party and also set the course for the future of the Vietnam War. In other words, each class has the agency to affect the outcome of the game.

In May 2021, Penn Charter, after a two-year self-study, announced that the Upper School would be moving beyond the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) program to develop its own rigorous advanced courses that would provide for innovative teaching and deeper exploration of content areas. *Advanced Studies* courses better align with the school’s Strategic Vision of thinking differently about how to prepare students for life in a complex and changing world.

The Class of 2025 will be the last students offered AP courses at Penn Charter. As the school continues adding to its own advanced courses, the transition from Advanced Placement to *Advanced Studies* will be complete in 2025-26.



Penn Charter juniors embody key players from the Vietnam War era.

“The AP program was developed in the 1950s,” Murray said, “during a time when America was trying to address some serious concerns related to U.S. education during the Cold War. So it served its purpose at one time, and then it really hasn’t grown in a way that has shown innovation in teaching and learning.”

Unlike *Advanced Studies: Modern American History*, Murray describes AP U.S. History, or APUSH, as “racing to the finish line.” She doesn’t feel able

continued on next page

to tap into student interests or to react to something happening in the world currently because she must guide students through the sweeping, prescribed content on which the AP exam is based.

“In the APUSH classroom,” she said, “by the nature of the curriculum and the goal of the test, there isn’t as much ‘let’s take this journey together.’ It’s more, ‘I am your guide, and I am going to get you to the finish line. Buckle up and let’s go!’ But in Advanced Studies, I am able to create a learning community in which I develop curriculum related to student interests, while also maintaining the same standards I employed while teaching at Ursinus. Ultimately, with this model, students are willing to take risks that they haven’t taken before.”

In 2022-23, Murray’s first year of teaching the Advanced Studies course, she saw such growth from students early on that when they were studying the civil rights movement, she asked how they wanted to be assessed. “I never would have asked that in APUSH,” Murray said, “because I know how I have to assess them; the AP Exam is explicit in the types of questions students will be expected to answer. But here I asked. And in that conversation, we decided together that we would do a civil rights forum.”

Murray assigned each of the 19 students a civil rights leader. They researched their roles and held a debate. “And we developed the rubric together of how we would assess,” she said.

Even when students are not researching and embodying a historical figure, the course is more guided conversation than lecture and includes group projects, presentations and graded discussions.

This underscores the ways in which Advanced Studies is different from AP, as Murray sees it, because it’s a collaboration between teacher and students—and students can take ownership and self-direct their learning.

“I feel like there’s a lot of room to breathe and to find your own interests in this course,” Louella said.

David Nichols teaches Advanced Studies: Experimental Biology. As the name suggests, it is heavy on experimentation.

“It’s very much about the action of science,” Nichols said. “It’s really a chance for students to be able to turn more of the class into action—for them to apply things that they’re most interested in.”

After students interview each other to build a research team of three to five, Nichols assigns them readings from textbooks and scientific articles that support their research interest. With a research question and testable hypothesis in mind, they begin to design an experiment, writing a proposal that is much like a research grant. Rejection of a proposal by Nichols may be expected—and it provides important experience in revising and resubmitting. After the group presents the revised proposal to their peers to evaluate, they budget for materials and begin.



“It’s very much about the action of science,” said David Nichols of his Advanced Studies: Experimental Biology course. “It’s really a chance for students to be able to turn more of the class into action—for them to apply things that they’re most interested in.”

With feedback in hand, Nichols said, “they know they have to make sure that it’s a controlled experiment and that it meets the requirements of the statistical design. And so even the conversations happening in class are interesting because they’re speaking from experience now, rather than just exploring the topic.”

Nichols’ course is grounded in his experience both teaching and designing courses at West Virginia University and Drexel University. “A big part of my job at Drexel,” he said, “was evaluating lab-based courses and figuring out ways to give students more ownership over their projects.” He and his colleagues in the science department had an idea: “Maybe we should just let the students decide what they want to do. And as soon as that happened, it made the class more interesting to them.”

Advanced Studies Courses Offered in 2024-25

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Computer Programming: Python
Computer Programming: Java

ENGLISH

American Literature

SCIENCE

Environmental Science
Experimental Biology
Engineering

HISTORY

American Political History
East Asian Studies
African American Studies
Modern American History
Psychology
Art History

RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy



Junior Jake West and seniors Lauren Pachter & Adelia Wallace study the effects of microplastics on the behavior of zebrafish in Advanced Studies: Experimental Biology.

In the first semester of 2023-24, one group studied the effects of a sunscreen ingredient—zinc oxide—on an algae species that's a symbiote to coral. In other words, one can't survive without the other. The algae in the experiment didn't fare well with the changes in chemistry—that is, with the addition of zinc oxide to the water. “And so what the students showed with their study,” Nichols said, “is that what is advertised as a safer alternative for humans is not necessarily a safer alternative for the coral.”

In the second semester, a different research team studied the effects of microplastics on the behavior of zebrafish. The fish were raised in the same environment and trained in the same 3-D printed maze. Later, in a two-factor design, they were put into two different treatments: one a change in setting, and the other a change in the chemistry of the water that mimicked the effect of microplastics with, essentially, an endocrine disruptor. Finally, the zebra fish were returned to the same maze to see which fish were able to solve it.

“A cool thing for the students,” Nichols said, “is that they learn each other's strengths and feel comfortable letting each other take the lead on different pieces of the experiment. In that group, one student was more interested in the technological aspect of it, and she designed the mazes with CAD software. Another student is really interested in psychology, so she looked at how to use the data from the animal behavior study to relate that to humans. And then the third student is really into marine studies, and so he was more interested in the direct effect on the fish.”

One of senior James Langham's group experiments was determining how large maturing tree species influence the soil ecosystem in which they grow. What did he learn besides the influence on the ecosystem? Creativity and problem-solving skills. “You're creating your own experiment,” he said. “You don't know what kind of troubles you're going to run into. So there are a lot of things that we had to troubleshoot after our initial thought process.”

More so than particular facts that he learned, James said, “I feel like I'm going to remember the challenges from this year in Experimental Biology and the workarounds that we did.”

In contrast to AP Biology, Advanced Studies: Experimental Biology has no tests or quizzes. Students are graded—both independently and as a group—primarily on proposals, research presentations and a final manuscript detailing their experiment.

“I think they're being challenged in different ways in this course,” Nichols said. “And I feel like our goal as teachers really should be to create interest in how science really works.” **PC**

To learn more about Penn Charter's move “beyond AP,” visit: penncharter.com/beyondAP.

RESTORATION AS CONTINUING REVELATION:

The Work and Outcomes of Penn Charter's Task Forces on Race, Equity, Gender and Sexuality

by Michael Petitti

In the summer of 2020, Penn Charter leadership, faculty and staff, students, OPCs, parents and caregivers joined together to begin a thoughtful discussion and examination of the school's culture, practices, policies and procedures as they relate to race, equity, gender, sexuality and consent, and how these foundational aspects of identity impact the learning environment.

Over three years, these individuals—grouped into a Race & Equity (R&E) Task Force and a Gender Equity, Sexuality & Consent (GESC) Task Force—undertook a process grounded in Quaker values that has enhanced the school's curriculum, community expectations and the student experience.

Mere months into a global pandemic, amid mounting anguish from the ongoing Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, the murder of George Floyd shook an already destabilized society. High school and college students across the country were turning to social media to raise their voices and concerns.

“There was a wave of our peer schools and schools on the Main Line and in Philadelphia creating these Instagram accounts,” said Emelia Malhotra OPC '23, a member of the GESC Task Force. The accounts, which grew pervasive throughout the country during the spring of 2020, sought to bring attention to heavy issues concerning race, gender, sexuality and

harassment in schools, and were often created and managed by a school's current students or alumni. Penn Charter was not immune.

“There was so much happening in the country, in the city, and then we had the Instagram messages from our students and alums,” said R&E Task Force member Naveena Bembry, coordinator of both Lower School diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and the Independent School Teaching Fellows Program of Greater Philadelphia.

Some of the stories were difficult to hear. “But Penn Charter did not take a defensive stance,” said Ben Robinson OPC '82, member of the Board of Trustees and co-clerk of the R&E Task

Force. “We actively engaged in the learning and inquiry process.”

In this spirit, on May 29, 2020, a group of more than 100 Penn Charter students, faculty and staff joined a virtual Meeting for Worship. In a subsequent email to the community, then-head of school Darryl J. Ford reflected on the Meeting, writing that “consistent messages from students expressed fear, disappointment ... and a desire for additional allies to be part of the difficult conversations and education.”

Ford's message concluded with, “I am reminded of the Quaker testimony of equality, which calls us to see that of God in every person.”

At the end of July 2020, the school announced the formation of the task forces.

Listening and Learning

To ensure that a wide swath of perspectives were heard as the school considered the actions to take in response to the concerns, both task forces included dozens of school stakeholders. Each task force, which convened from July 2020 through the summer of 2023, was co-clerked by senior administrators and a member of the Board of Trustees. Members



Teacher and chair of the Health, Wellness and Sexuality Department Emma Cohen-Westbrooke works with ninth graders. Penn Charter's Health, Wellness and Sexuality Department was launched in 2022 following recommendations from the GESC Task Force.

were students, faculty, staff, OPCs, parents and caregivers, and board members.

"The goal was to have representation across every constituent group," said Naté Hall, PC's director of enrollment management and former interim director of diversity, equity and inclusion, who co-clerked the GESC Task Force. "It was very intentional that it wasn't just a schoolhouse effort."

Having broad community representation, said Marcy Sosa, assistant head of school and a member of the R&E Task Force, "provided a lens for us to think about the different stakeholders in our community, and the importance of all of these voices to be included."

Many of those who expressed concerns with issues related to race and gender at PC were asked to serve on the task forces. "I think they were a little surprised that our response was, we're inviting you in," said Mark Hecker OPC '99, a trustee who co-clerked the GESC Task Force. "Many responded really positively. They were thoughtful, they were engaged."

Among other responsibilities, the groups were tasked with examining the school's curriculum, particularly as it related to health, human sexuality and consent; identifying professional development opportunities for faculty, staff and students; considering how the school received and responded to incidents of reported bias and other Community Code infractions to ensure accountability and restoration; and reviewing hiring and enrollment practices.

"The creation of the task forces was one all-encompassing step toward the goals we all knew we had to pursue," Bembry said.

Before any goal could be achieved, both task forces knew that listening to and learning from PC community members was an integral place to start for a school grounded in Quaker values.

"The idea of starting by listening to understand was really step one," Hecker said. "Leaning into Quaker processes that involve slowing down and discerning and seeking consensus—those things really work."

"One of the things I love most about Penn Charter is this concept of continuing revelation, of standing alongside one another, naming what we're doing well, but also where we could do better, and then doing the work together," said Alyson Goodner OPC '96, director of the Center for Public Purpose, who co-clerked the GESC Task Force with Hall and Hecker.

With guidance and training from external organizations and professionals, each task force developed methods for gathering the thoughts and feelings of PC community members. Members of the R&E Task Force conducted empathy interviews; individuals serving on the GESC Task Force facilitated listening circles.

"The process of having people connect was as important as the data we collected," Bembry said. The diversity of the participants was invaluable to the process. "I loved hearing all those

different perspectives," said senior Grace Neuwirth, a member of the GESC Task Force her sophomore and junior years. "I feel like I learned so much about what was going on in the school that I wasn't aware of."

"We had a very diverse group," Robinson said. "Hearing from OPCs from the '60s about their experiences compared to those of today was eye-opening. The more we listened, the more we learned."

The listening circles and empathy interviews conducted by the task forces were part of the discovery phase of the groups' three years of work. These strategies joined other outreach efforts, such as stakeholder surveys and focus groups. More than 30 virtual and in-person listening circles with more than 160 PC community members were conducted by the GESC Task Force. The R&E Task Force conducted 50 empathy interviews and obtained more than 600 responses through other engagement methods, including more than 320 survey responses from students.

"All the adults really wanted to know what school was like from a student perspective," said Merrill Gadsden OPC '23, a member of the GESC Task Force. "Student voices were valued in the task force meetings."

The groups had assistance from external experts such as Deborah Roffman, a nationally renowned human sexuality educator and consultant, and Leadership + Design, a nonprofit collaborative that helps schools build

continued on next page

leadership capacity and create conversations that lead to action. Task force members also attended related conferences and events, such as the Georgetown Day School Summit on Sexual Assault and Consent.

“The GDS Summit was something that really shaped how I move through the world,” said Leilani Bacchus OPC ’23, a member of the GESC Task Force who presented about her experience at the summit at PC’s 2023 Friends Multicultural Day. “It helped me figure out how to take stock in my friendships and how to set boundaries.”

Recommendations in Action

During the task forces’ discussions, it quickly became clear that Penn Charter would benefit from an enhanced pre-K to 12 human sexuality curriculum centered on students’ understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

“I really wanted the health and human sexuality curriculum at PC to be more current, student-oriented, and more expansive,” Merrill said.

Penn Charter was responsive to the feedback received from various sources and hired Emma Cohen-Westbrooke as PC’s first health, wellness and sexuality educator in the spring of 2021.

Initially, Cohen-Westbrooke taught seventh and ninth grade health and worked with the Middle and Upper School counselors to ensure alignment with what was being taught in eighth and 10th grade health. She also joined the GESC Task Force.

“My first year goal was to learn what work was happening on the task force and then begin to make recommendations and build out my role,” Cohen-Westbrooke said. She also met frequently with Roffman to support her assessment of Penn Charter’s sexuality curriculum.

“One of the first things we observed was a need for sexuality educators teaching in the three divisions,” Cohen-Westbrooke said.

In 2022, Hannah Horton and Wayne Grinwis joined Penn Charter as health, wellness and sexuality teachers in Middle and Lower School, respectively, thus launching a Health, Wellness and Sexuality Department with Cohen-Westbrooke as the chair.

“Because we now have a department in the school that specifically focuses on this topic, we have a voice in the room in a lot of conversations that are happening in divisional spaces,” Cohen-Westbrooke said. “We are able to be subject matter experts who have organic and natural relationships with colleagues in order to support collaboration.”

Walking Toward the Good

“Part of a Penn Charter education is helping students be their best selves,” Goodner said. “In certain moments, this is hard, and inevitably we all have times where we do not lean toward the best in us. We need to be reminded of who we want to be, and as a school we need to help students walk toward the good.”

The Upper School’s Community Council helps students both walk toward the good and gain an increased voice in school decision-making. The council maintains the Upper School Community Code—a set of behavioral and academic expectations by which students agree to conduct themselves. Community Code expectations include “I will honor the Light in all individuals,” “I will interact honestly and respectfully with all members of the school community,” and “I will resolve all conflicts peacefully.”

Community Council hears cases dealing with alleged violations of the Community Code and makes recommendations to administration. The council also periodically reviews the code and can convene to offer the Upper School Student Council its perspective on general school issues. Since the work of task forces began, additional opportunities for student participation on Community Council have been created.

“Community Council offers connections, both for faculty and for students, and enables students to have more of a voice while also supporting and growing faculty,” Director of Upper School Kim Berndt said.

Michael LoStracco, chair of the Religious Studies and Philosophy Department, served as Community Council’s clerk during the 2023-24 school year. Teachers were invited through peer recommendation, and two students per grade were selected through an application and interview process.

“Through a unity process, in the style of Quaker Meeting for Business, we try to come together around a response to student behavior that isn’t punitive, but instead ensures accountability and the integrity of the Community Code,” LoStracco said. “We also want to promote student learning and growth.”

“The work of the Community Council has been extensive,” said Liz Jones, Upper School holistic restorative coordinator. Jones’ position, new in the 2023-24 school year, was created in part to aid and support students who have committed an infraction as they complete the process of community restoration, while ensuring those who were harmed are prioritized and cared for. In this capacity, Jones attends Community Council hearings as



Students attended the Georgetown Day School Summit on Sexual Assault and Consent in fall 2023, following in the footsteps of Leilani Bacchus OPC ’23, who spoke about her experience at the 2022 event during Friends Multicultural Day.



The new home of the Center of Public Purpose provides a casual, student-centered space for community and relationship building.

a listening member, and subsequently meets with the involved students to provide support.

“My role in listening is to see the person,” Jones said. “I find a way to connect with the student so the lesson isn’t a finger wag, but a guided redirection to reignite their flame.”

A Strengthened Community

The work of the task forces inspired the creation of more consistent and transparent systems to build trust within the community. The Bias Response Protocol, for example, formalized the process for reporting possible infractions to the Community Code. Individuals who experience or witness a possible code violation can access an online reporting form to initiate the protocol.

In an effort to develop strong student and teacher relationships and help each student feel a sense of belonging, each Middle and Upper School student engages regularly in an Advisory curriculum. In the Upper School, advisors used this time to facilitate student discussions that supported the recommendations of the task forces.

“It was cool to see in Advisory the implementation of the task force work and to have these conversations be more commonplace in the classroom,” Leilani said.

“I’ve seen students having conversations, sharing experiences, and it makes it feel more

unified,” Grace said. “I think a ton of students are open to new perspectives.”

Further Advisory enhancements are a focus for Upper School this summer.

“I’ve asked two students to clerk an Advisory Council to help develop a more effective and engaging Advisory program from the student perspective,” Berndt said. “We are gathering other students to be involved as well. The goal is for the council to ensure student voice and perspective on Advisory curriculum and programming.”

In Middle School, the School Inclusion Committee made up of Middle School staff, including the school’s diversity, equity and inclusion coordinators, has a role in reviewing reported infractions and their consequences.

“We ask students questions like, ‘How can I be more connected to my communities?’ ‘How can I be a good neighbor?’ ‘How can I be a good steward?’” Director of Middle School Wilson Felter said. “These are profound and transformative questions for middle schoolers to consider.”

Lower School launched affinity groups to support students who may wish to share their thoughts and experiences with others who identify as members of the group. The groups have a set time and place to meet, and are facilitated by teachers and staff. Initial affinity groups include Allergies and Food Sensitivities, All Kinds of Families, and Neurodiversity.

“We talked with other lower schools who’ve held affinity groups for over 20 years,” Sosa said.

“We may read a book or pose a query to the students, and allow space for our students to shape the conversations in ways that are most meaningful for them, and then there are games and activities for them to be in community.”

From Upper to Lower School, and across the schoolhouse, the impact of the task forces’ work has grown and strengthened the community, both through specific initiatives and programs and through a general increase in awareness, responsibility and accountability, with students, faculty and staff as partners.

“I hope students are seeing that we’re using feedback and we’re trying to include them more,” Berndt said. “It’s developing relationships with students.”

“I think steps have been taken in the right direction to make the school a more open environment for having important conversations,” Merrill said. “From student to student, student to faculty, student to administration, faculty to administration, across all levels of the school.”

There are always improvements to be made and listening and learning to do. “The work is not fully done, but people are leaning in and they are willing,” Sosa said. “The impact of this work on our children, on all of our children, on our community—it’s in these moments that we are living out our Quaker values.” **PC**



SHREK

The Musical





Close to 100 students in grades 4-12 accepted the ambitious challenge of presenting *Shrek the Musical* on stage Feb. 23 to 25 in the Kurtz Center for the Performing Arts.

All three sold-out shows of the family-friendly production received standing ovations from the audience as fourth and fifth grade performers came off stage and danced in the aisles.

Students, faculty, staff and even OPCs participated in set construction, stage and running crew, costume crew, wardrobe, makeup, pit orchestra and the production team.

"It was amazing to see so many students collaborate in the different aspects of the show and create one unifying piece," director Michael Roche said. "From the costumes to the speedy set changes, everyone worked as a team. Most importantly, a lot of heart went into the production, and you could feel that love of the show in the audience."

The musical blended playful humor—from "What's Up, Duloc," sung by the villainous Lord Farquaad, to touching moments like "Who I'd Be," with Shrek imagining the person he could become if his life were different, while Fiona and Donkey shared their dreams and uncertainties. It concluded with the popular song "I'm a Believer," which got the audience on their feet, clapping along.

The last all-school musical, *Disney's My Son Pinocchio: Geppetto's Musical Tale*, was in 2019. [PC](#)



See more photos at [flickr.com/penncharter/sets](https://www.flickr.com/photos/penncharter/sets).





VIEWPOINTS

VIEWPOINTS, this year's all-school art show, featured work from Lower, Middle and Upper School students. The variety of media included ceramics, costume design, drawing, graphic design, mixed media, painting, photography, documentary films and sculpture. Visual Arts & Design teachers transformed the Kurtz Center into a vibrant gallery that showcased the creativity of student artists and the diversity of their viewpoints.



Athletics Achievements

WINTER SEASON HIGHLIGHTS



BOYS BASKETBALL

The Quakers clinched their third consecutive Inter-Ac championship and first outright league title since 2004! Junior center **Matt Gilhool**, one of four new starters, was named Inter-Ac MVP after averaging 15.6 points per game in league contests, including a season-high 28 in a win over Episcopal. He also scored his 1,000th career point. Junior **Jake West** made First Team All-League selection and scored 22 points in the league clincher, while junior **Kai Shinholster**, earned Second Team honors. Junior **Jamal Hicks** had countless offensive moments that contributed to the team's championship win. The best part? The starting five will be back next season, in which the Quakers will attempt to win their fourth straight league title, a feat that hasn't been accomplished since the 1960s.



GIRLS BASKETBALL

The girls team also celebrated a third consecutive league title in 2024, sharing it with Germantown Academy and Notre Dame. Junior guard **Kaylinn Bethea** crossed the 1,000-point milestone in the final win against Agnes Irwin. Bethea was named First Team All-League for the third consecutive season and was joined on the First Team by ninth grader **Ryan Carter**, her second all-league selection after earning Second Team honors as an eighth grader. Senior **Ashlie Johnson** earned Second Team All-League honors and posted a double-double of 10 points and 14 rebounds in her final game.

WRESTLING

The Quakers had one of their finest seasons in recent memory, winning their first 13 matches and finishing 20-2 overall and second place in the Inter-Ac. The team also had successful showings at both the state and national tournaments in the postseason, finishing in third and 18th place at the two events. Junior **Greyson Catlow-Sidler** placed eighth at Nationals, becoming the first PC All-American wrestler in almost 20 years. Catlow-Sidler earned Second Team All-League honors and was joined by teammates **Hugh Maley**, **Michael Filoon**, **Jack Bowen**, **Tristan Padgett** and **Charles English**.



SWIMMING & DIVING



The girls team won four of its five Inter-Ac dual meets and finished in second place in the league in both the regular season and at the Inter-Ac Championship meet. The Quakers capped their season with a fourth place finish out of 30 competing teams at the Eastern Prep Swimming Championship, finishing the year as one of the most talented teams in the area. Senior **Abby Steinbrook**; juniors **Eliza Black**, **Eva McIver-Jenkins** and **Ava Coombs**; sophomore **Lili DeMartinis**; and eighth grader **Nola Waldbuesser** earned All-League honors, and a large percentage of the team's core will return next season.



The boys team placed 19th out of 31 teams with 70 points at Easterns. Senior **PJ Duffy** earned All-League honors, and he and the rest of the team continued to push and support each other throughout a challenging season against some of the most accomplished boys swimming programs in the area while fielding the smallest roster in the Inter-Ac.

ATHLETICS ACHIEVEMENTS

GIRLS SQUASH

The Quakers enjoyed one of their best seasons in recent memory, winning seven of their matches and ending with a second place finish. **Alex Jaffe** earned the league MVP title this year after her twin sister, Sam, nabbed the award a season ago. **Sam Jaffe** joined Alex on the All-League First Team, while senior **Frances Guenther** earned Second Team honors. The Quakers were seeded among the top 16 teams in the country at Nationals to end the season.



BOYS SQUASH



The team went 2-2 at Nationals to close out the season, knocking off schools from Rhode Island and Connecticut while coming up just short in a 4-3 loss to Springside Chestnut Hill Academy in the year's final match. Seniors **Grant Roshkoff** and **Marco Vucetic** earned Second Team All-League honors. Those two, along with **Griffin Yeatman** and **Jacob Kestenbaum**, served as exemplary leaders for eighth grader **James Killinger**, who played in the top half of the lineup.

GIRLS INDOOR TRACK & FIELD



seniors **Zady Hasse** and **Haley Lewinski** got to finish their final indoor season on an impressive note by placing 16th in the 4x400 relay.

Junior **Alli DeLisi** capped off a stellar indoor season by finishing her 800-meter run in the Pennsylvania Track and Field Coaches Association State Championship with a nationally best time of 2:07.84 to capture the state title on Feb. 25. Sophomore **Michaela Poland** punctuated a strong year with a 13th place finish in the 200-meter at States, and

BOYS INDOOR TRACK & FIELD

The strong junior class finished off its season on a positive note, with **TJ Zwall** and **Luis Rincon** each nabbing a pair of top-20 finishes at the state championship on Feb. 25. Zwall finished 14th in the one-mile run with a season-best time of 4:21.51 in the mile, while Rincon placed 19th in the pole vault.



SPRING SEASON HIGHLIGHTS



SOFTBALL

The girls had an impressive season with an overall record of 11-7, and competed in the 2024 PAISAA championship game. They started strong against Springside Chestnut Hill Academy with a 4-0 lead, but ultimately, the Blue Devils turned the game around, securing a 10-6 victory. Senior **Macie Bergmann** was named First Team All-League after batting .456 and leading the team with 26 hits and 23 RBIs. Senior **Ryan Hatty** joined Bergmann on the First Team as a two-way player, hitting .404 with a team-leading 25 runs while going 6-3 in the pitching circle with a 3.58 ERA and 70 strikeouts in 60 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. Junior **Lauren Gedraitis** and sophomore **Maddie Bergmann** were named to the Second Team.

BASEBALL



The boys endured a tough losing streak late in their season, but the Quakers had a 4-3 victory over Friends' Central in the opening round of the PAISAA Tournament. Junior **Garrett Mathias** was selected as First Team All-League. PC graduated its top two pitchers, **Will Vieira** and **Christian Clauss**, yet **Cole Stocks** stepped up and will be counted on as one of the team's top starting pitchers next year. The Quakers finished 8-20 overall and 2-8 in league play.

GIRLS LACROSSE



The Quakers finished 16-8 overall and 7-3 in league play. After falling to Agnes Irwin in the PAISAA championship game in 2023, the Quakers were again tripped up by the Owls in this year's tournament, falling 12-9 in the semifinals. PC reached the semis following a 16-6 win over Notre Dame in the quarterfinals. Senior **Aditi Foster** was named

Inter-Ac MVP after an incredible two-season run in which she became one of the most dominant scorers in the area. In addition to Foster, seniors **Grace Walter** and **Nora Maione** also earned spots on the Inter-Ac's First Team, while sophomores **Molly Dougherty** and **Maeve Magarity** scored Second Team honors.



BOYS LACROSSE

While the Quakers faced some difficult losses this season, the team won its final two regular season contests heading into the PAISAA Tournament and went 3-5 over its last eight games.

After compiling more than 200 points in his PC career, **Gavin Michener** was the team's lone All-League selection.

BOYS TENNIS



Penn Charter competed in the inaugural boys tennis PAISAA Tournament to close out its season, knocking off Mercersburg Academy in the first round before being eliminated by eventual champion Germantown Friends. The Quakers finished their 2024 campaign with a 5-10 overall record and a 3-7 Inter-Ac

mark. Junior **Nate Arnold** was named Inter-Ac MVP for the second consecutive season while earning First Team All-League honors for the third time in as many years. **Simon Zoldan** earned First Team All-League honors as a ninth grader, while seniors **Justin Gantz** and **Griffin Yeatman** were selected to the Second Team.



GIRLS TRACK & FIELD

The Quakers ended their season with a third-place finish out of 17 teams at the PAISAA Championship. **Alli DeLisi** won the 800-meter run, finishing with a time of 2:11.46. DeLisi also picked up second-place finishes in the 1600-meter run (4:58.71) and as a member of the 4x400 relay team (4:01.52), along with **Alex Jaffe**, **Sam Jaffe** and **Logan Lloyd**. PC's other victory was the 4x800 relay team of **Zady Hasse**, **Grace Neuwirth** and the Jaffe sisters, who completed the race in 9:54.21. To wrap up the season, six PC student-athletes were named to the First Team All-League: DeLisi, Hasse, **Michaela Poland**, Neuwirth, Sam Jaffe and Alex Jaffe.

BOYS TRACK & FIELD



The boys finished eighth out of 18 schools competing at the PAISAA Championship. The 4x100 relay team of **Christian Downs**, **Chima Auguste**, **Nate Keller** and **Zahir Kalam Id-Din** won with a time of 43.85. The 4x800 relay squad of **Lamir**

Calloway, **Matthew Dunn**, **Nate Johnson** and **TJ Zwall** also won their race, doing so in 8:00.35. The team also nabbed two fifth place finishes on the day: Kalam Id-Din in the 100-meter dash (11.15) and **Eddie Kennedy** in the 110-meter hurdles (15.82). Zwall, Johnson, **Peyton Burnett** and Calloway were all named First Team All-League, while Auguste, Kalam Id-Din, Downs and **Jaxon Adams** earned Second Team honors.



CREW

PC crew completed its season with the Stotesbury Cup Regatta on the Schuylkill River and the Scholastic Rowing Association of America Nationals on the Cooper River in Pennsauken, N.J.

At Stotesbury, the Quakers had 11 boats, with six advancing to the semifinal round and two making it to the finals. At Nationals, the team had two boats compete against other top schools from across the U.S. and Canada. **Jack Davey** and **Ross Lee** finished eighth in their event. **Zoe Page** and **Grace Magee** advanced to the finals, ultimately placing third in their event.



Profiles

Melissa Knight Atkins OPC '01

BY MARK F. BERNSTEIN OPC '79

As sometimes happens, life has come full circle for Melissa Knight Atkins OPC '01.



As an Upper School student, Atkins volunteered at the Whosoever Gospel Mission in Germantown, a longtime PC community partner, under the guidance of Jim Ballengee Hon. 1689, founder of the Center for Public Purpose. “I liked the guys at Whosoever,” she said. “They were trying to get their lives together and were just good people.”

Now, as a partner at the law firm Obermayer Rebmann Maxwell

& Hippel LLP, Atkins has chosen to commit her pro bono hours to providing free legal advice to Whosoever, which provides food, shelter, clothing, education and counseling to men in need.

Giving back and helping others was ingrained into Atkins and her sister by their parents. Her father worked for the Philadelphia Housing Authority as director of tenant services, and her mother was an administrative assistant for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. “My dad, especially, always had us involved in service,” Atkins recalled.

As a three-sport athlete, Atkins’ high school years were already crowded. She played soccer and lacrosse, switching to track her senior year, but where she really stood out was on the basketball court. The girls varsity basketball program was not as well established as it is today. The team used the Old Gym, relied heavily on parent and caregiver volunteers, and played a much shorter schedule. Nevertheless, they won the Inter-Ac Championship in 1997-98, Atkins’s freshman year, and she co-captained the team as a senior, averaging 24 points, 10 rebounds and four assists per game. Atkins graduated as PC’s all-time leading girls scorer with 1,535 points. (She now ranks third.)

A First-Team All-State selection, Atkins received a full athletic scholarship to the University of Miami, where she started more games than any other freshman. A Miami media guide called her “an extremely gifted shooter” and “one of the best defensive players on the roster.” Despite setbacks caused by two serious knee injuries, Atkins had perhaps her best game for the Hurricanes as a senior, when she scored 23 points and shot 5-6 from behind the three-point line in a win at Clemson.

After considering the possibility of playing basketball professionally overseas, Atkins decided instead to attend law school at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala. She returned to Philadelphia and private practice for two years but said that a turning point in her career came in 2013, when she joined the Philadelphia City Solicitor’s Office.

“It was life-changing for me to go there,” Atkins recalled. “It teaches you how to be an attorney.” What she means is that while law school may train students on technical points of the law and how to analyze a case, it does not teach them how to be an effective advocate or think on their feet. “In the city solicitor’s office, it’s sink or swim,” Atkins laughed. “On my first day, they handed me dozens of cases and I thought, okay, I’ve got to figure this out.” For more than five years, Atkins worked first in the Health and Adult Services Unit and then in the Labor and Employment Unit.

In 2018, Atkins moved in-house to insurance firm Chubb, where she represented some of the company’s clients in employment and discrimination cases. As a partner at Obermayer since April 2021, Atkins has developed a wide-ranging practice, advising private clients on matters ranging from employment leaves and discipline to sexual harassment investigations. She also advises various municipalities around the commonwealth in labor negotiations, including Whitmarsh Township, West Chester Borough and the Montgomery County Correctional Facility, among others.

The work has earned her national recognition, and she is frequently called upon for press comment. Just this year, Atkins has been interviewed by the Wall Street Journal about corporate diversity, equity and inclusion programs, and by The Washington Post and Financial Times about labor relations. City & State Pennsylvania named her to its Black Trailblazers Power List, writing, “With an unwavering dedication to labor and employment law, Atkins fearlessly advocates for employers in a multitude of spheres.”

As part of its commitment to pro bono work, Obermayer allows all its lawyers to dedicate 50 hours of work each year to a cause or organization of their choosing. Recalling the lessons her parents instilled and her service work at PC, Atkins chose to assist Whosoever.

“‘Good instruction is better than riches,’ rings true, especially as you get older and wiser,” Atkins said. “You really do start to look at the world differently. The education and the foundation that you receive as a student at PC is invaluable as you progress in your career and in life.” PC

Justin Wineburgh OPC '90

BY MARK F. BERNSTEIN OPC '79

When a thousand zombies limp through a barren wasteland in the hit series *The Walking Dead*, only the first few are portrayed by real actors—the rest, all fake. Philadelphia-based creative content company Alkemy X provided the “Hollywood magic” to create the horde of zombies, each unique and different, through the use of computer-generated imagery.



Similarly, when Midge Maisel performed her standup routine before a packed USO audience in the third season opener of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, the majority of excited United States servicepeople were courtesy of the computer-generated magic of Alkemy X. And locally, in the Mid-Atlantic region, Alkemy X creates television commercials and content for clients ranging from the Pennsylvania Lottery and Comcast, to the Philadelphia Phillies, Eagles

and Union, to the State of New Jersey Tourism. Alkemy X not only creates ads but also supplies the live-action production team that shoots them, and then handles the post-production, such as editing, color and sound.

“I’m essentially running five different companies under one roof,” said Justin Wineburgh OPC '90, Alkemy X’s president and CEO. The company calls itself a “global creative partner,” working with movie studios, television networks, independent filmmakers and some of the biggest brands in the world. They can produce a multimillion-dollar Super Bowl commercial just as easily as a spot for a local healthcare system. Their reach is global, with offices in New York, Los Angeles, Vancouver and Amsterdam, but their headquarters is in the heart of Center City Philadelphia.

While alchemists were alleged to turn base metals into gold, Alkemy X turns creative ideas and concepts into audiovisual gold, Wineburgh says. As for the X, that is filled in differently for each project. “Whatever the unknown ‘X’ may be to ensure that a project exceeds expectations, we can find and deliver it.”

There has been a bit of alchemy in Wineburgh’s own career, as he morphed from a college engineering major to partner in a law firm to head of a large entertainment company. He entered Penn Charter in sixth grade. A singer, musician and lacrosse player, his favorite memories stem from physics with Tom Katman, math with T. David Kuehn and Bill Goulding, Spanish with Chuck Cooper and Gus Puleo, and English with John Schug.

Wineburgh majored in electrical engineering at Lafayette College on the theory that unlike English or politics, it seemed like a subject he could not eventually teach himself. Inspired by a family friend who was a federal prosecutor in Miami, he turned in a different direction and decided to go to law school at Widener University, where he was an editor of the Law Review.

Early in his law career, Wineburgh handled insurance cases and commercial litigation matters for the law firm Cozen O'Connor before an old classmate turned him in yet another direction. Jeff “J.C.” Spink OPC '90, a Hollywood producer and talent manager, asked Wineburgh to handle some litigation

stemming from production of the movie *The Ring*. Wineburgh shuttled back and forth to Los Angeles for several years, eventually resolving the case favorably, but he had also stumbled upon a new line of practice. “Like many things in life,” he joked, “all you have to do is do one thing great once and you’re suddenly an expert.”

Most entertainment cases, Wineburgh notes, are just another kind of legal matter with a different gloss, whether that be negotiating a contract, settling an employment dispute, protecting a copyright or handling a real estate transfer. Cozen O'Connor did all those things, and so, over the next decade and more, Wineburgh developed and launched the firm’s media, entertainment and sports law division. After attending the Sundance Film Festival in 2005, for example, he realized there was an underserved market advising makers of independent films. He began shuttling to Los Angeles, Florida and elsewhere—“collecting bar exams,” he laughs—expanding the firm’s practice into the geographic hubs of the entertainment industry.

One of his clients was the small post-production company that is now Alkemy X. Then called Shooters Post & Transfer, founded in 1981 in Philadelphia, it produced some of the early unscripted reality TV shows, including *Restaurant: Impossible* for the Food Network and *Dragnificent!* for TLC. As its outside counsel, one of Wineburgh’s jobs was to ensure that the production company delivered shows “free and clear” of any legal snags that might hold up distribution or otherwise give rise to liability. In 2014, Shooters Post & Transfer changed its name to Alkemy X, and a year later, after a period of shakeup in the industry, the company’s board asked Wineburgh to take over as president and CEO.

At first, he turned them down, comfortable in his law practice. But as he considered the opportunity, his thinking changed. “There’s a lot of safety in staying on a merry-go-round,” he recalled. “But there’s also a lot of exhilaration if we have the guts to put on a seatbelt and jump on a rollercoaster. The company was in trouble, and I was willing to bet on myself that I could turn it around.”

That bet has slowly paid off, as the last eight years have been disruptive for both the world as a whole, and the entertainment industry in particular. Business was only beginning to return to normal after the Covid-19 pandemic when the Hollywood Writers’ Guild strike started, followed by the Screen Actors’ Guild strike. A large backlog of projects is at last getting back into production, Wineburgh said. Beyond that, there is the ongoing challenge of learning how to make the best use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence.

If Wineburgh has a mantra for Alkemy X, it is to always exceed expectations and be at the forefront of the industry. “We have to be the absolute best we can possibly be at all times,” he said. “There’s a line of people around the block who want our jobs.” **PC**

William Penn Charter School

Then & Now



c. Early 1980s

PC teachers and staff used to volunteer at the WHYY-TV pledge drive in its studio at Independence Mall. Every person pictured was a member of the PC community. How many can you name?



2024

Today, many faculty and staff (and Upper School students!) support an annual American Red Cross Blood Drive on PC's campus.

Class Notes



Penn Charter magazine wants to hear from you, and your classmates do, too! Submit your news and photos at penncharter.com/classnote. Digital photos should be 300 dpi JPEGs.

1949

“**Carl F. Rumpp Jr.** was a leader by example,” writes Steve Rumpp of his late father. “In his many athletic field successes (soccer, basketball, tennis, baseball) and on the fields of human engagement, he made a memorable impression on everyone. Excelling in sales, he had a signature ability to see the world through the eyes of others. He loved his work because it meant meeting and interacting with people, both new and familiar, and helping resolve their challenges, often before even they themselves clearly understood them.”

1950

Whitman Cross II is enjoying working part-time as a fitness trainer, as he has done for the past 24 years. “As the years go by, I feel more and more fortunate to have so far evaded those issues that slow down and change the way we live. Charlottesville, Va., where I have lived since 1998, has found enough private funding to put together a \$23 million building where we hold over 170 programs a week on many different subjects, including how each of us over age 50 are tackling the years ahead. Anyone interested in meeting for pickleball at Hilton Head Island?”



1952

William J. McGuckin writes, “We were a really lucky class to have **F. Bruce Waechter** in it. Our class was very close, but we all appreciate that Bruce had a lot to do with it. I was really lucky because Bruce was in my class at Lehigh, and he was as deeply involved there. In every facet of Bruce's life he contributed greatly, be it driving people to the hospital, keeping the books for his church for over 35 years, and on and on. We all will miss him.”

1954

Alfred F. Bracher III writes, “Carol and I enjoyed seeing many of you this spring at the reunion; it was a big one!”

George H. McLaughlin II reports, “I am keeping busy with venture and nonprofit activities while staying warm in Florida. Charlotte and I had great fun having lunch with **William G. Hamilton III** and his wife, Nan, several weeks ago.

1959

Robert R. Matzke Jr. writes, “I am in good health, grateful for life's blessings. I skied this morning and will read a good book this afternoon. I was a history major at Brown University and continue to study history, but without exams—no pressure. We were in Mexico in January at my daughter's condo to celebrate my 82nd birthday. I ski in winter and sail in summer. I am slowing down, but I'm still active. At our 60th class reunion, I was glad to see classmates, including Stephen Day, who had made a special trip.”

1961

David L. Geyer shares, “I am having a fun, healthy, happy year. I had my 80th birthday party with my family in New York. Was in Paris with friends for Christmas and Kiawah for winter beach walks and golf.”



1963

Robert E. Brickley writes, “**Thomas B.M. Porter III, Richard J. Gilkeson, Jay V. White** and I traveled to Seattle to attend the memorial service for Nan Little, remarkable wife of **Doug S. Little**. As you can see, we all didn't look much different than the day we graduated!” Pictured, from left: Jay, Dick, Doug, Tom and Bob.

“It was with heavy hearts that we learned of the passing of **James T. Dimond** in February. Class leader. Accomplished PC athlete. Lots of ‘windshield’ time ahead, Class of '63! Let's be sure we all ‘run through the tape!’”



Richard J. Gilkeson reports, “**Doug S. Little** and I both hosted Suzy and **Charles Williams** on their recent trip west that included Seattle and Portland. The Portland stopover, pictured, included the trolls that decorate the old railroad trestle that crosses over the road I live on. We would both enjoy hosting more PC classmates who plan visits to the Northwest.”

Dick also shared that he and classmates attended the January service to remember Doug's late wife, Nan Little, “who led a very accomplished life and who always greatly enjoyed attending Penn Charter reunions.”



1964



Jonathan D. Stanley writes, “My wife, Dorothy, and I continue to live in Allyn, a small town in western Washington. Last year had its ups and

downs, the high point (literally) being my ascent, at the end of March, of Nevado de Toluca, which, at 15,354 feet, is Mexico's fourth highest peak. The low point was a freak accident in June in which I fractured my pelvis. Still on crutches, I very much enjoyed a summer reunion with all our descendants (sons Thomas and Peter and our three grandchildren). I have recovered since then and, despite the usual aches and pains of aging, have continued most activities, including playing my violin in the local community orchestra.”

1965

Chuck Bauer shares, “I recently moved into a 100-resident retirement home in Madison, Wis., with my disabled husband of 55 years, Chuck. We adjusted in about five minutes. Turns out, this often-inevitable change of residence is nothing to be afraid of and carries the unexpected benefits of being around others with life stories, and sometimes losses, more challenging than one's own. At this time in life, reinforcement of wise viewpoints, positive outlooks and the universal lessons of varied biographies cannot be overvalued.”

1966



John W. Braxton writes, “After 40-plus years of teaching at Community College of Philadelphia, I have officially retired! I continue my lifelong Quaker-inspired activism by working on a project to build union support for Congresswoman Barbara Lee's bill cutting the Pentagon spending and using the money to address human needs, including climate change. After jogging 500 miles in 2023, I'm switching to walking for exercise. Marcy and I are lucky to have our two sons and two grandchildren near us in Philadelphia, and we love being with them.”

Allen F. Steere reports, “Members of the class of 1966 met at Jasper's Backyard in Conshohocken to begin planning our 60th class reunion. Thanks to **Richard W. Holmes Jr.** for setting up this meeting. Joe, who grew up four blocks from Jaspers, remembers taking the train to East Falls station, then walking the mile or so to get to the PC campus.” From left: **Robert W. Ulmer, James Q. Stevens, Donald A. Noveau, Stephen A. Bonnie, Allen F. Steere, Randal J. McDowell** and **Joseph J. Salvia**.



1968

Bruce C. Gill reports that the classmates who attended their 55th reunion in May of 2023 missed those who weren't able to make it. "We had the reunion dinner at my house in Haverford and enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. Retired U.S. Army Col. **J. Craig (Tank) Walsh Jr.** sent greetings and flowers for the table, and **Stephen A. Bonnie OPC '66** joined us, bringing humor to the table.

"I lost my wife, Jill, to Alzheimer's and was terminated at work about two and a half years ago. I received support and encouragement during a very difficult time from several PC classmates, and I want to remind each of you that the relationships, friendships and experiences we had 55+ years ago remain with us. I was remarried last summer to my high school girlfriend, Martha Wikoff-Waddell, and it was she who made supper and handmade desserts for the reunion dinner. Life is good again."

Pictured, front: **David J. Borns, Richard E. Stanley, Thomas R. Rosenau**; middle: **Joe M. Hoeffel III, Timothy A. Rice, Dale P. Van Wieren, Peter E. Helmetag**; back: **Robert H. Kellner, Bruce C. Gill, Preston C. (Chip) Bassett Jr., Harry (Trip) Kahn III, Gary W. McDowell.**



Robert H. Kellner reports, "After selling American Petrolog LLC to KAG Logistics, I'm now owner and coach of Sisu Strength Club LLC. Hard-core gym, no frills. Sisu is a Finnish word roughly translated as gritty tenacity rising from our inner core."

Edwin S. Skinner Jr. writes, "In January, Pam and I took our next adventure. We started in Nashville to visit Andrew Jackson's Hermitage and tour the grounds. We then landed in Palm Coast, Fla., with great access to the Atlantic Ocean, and visited the Kennedy Space Center. Next, we went to Fort Myers Beach on the gulf shore. A side day trip to the Everglades saw an airboat tour of alligators and snakes, and a boat tour of small islands dotting the area. We even had a chance to hold an alligator! Weather was great while Ohio was really cold (8 degrees), but when we arrived home it was 50 degrees! It was a great three-week trip."



1969

James P. Harbison traveled to Hiroshima, Japan, in May to sing in a pair of joint concerts of the Harvard Glee Club Alumni and the Kyoto University Men's Glee Club Alumni. The concerts are dedicated to world peace, held at two venues in the shadow of the site of the explosion of the first atomic bomb almost eight decades earlier.

James (Clare) Nelson writes, "I'm living in a high-desert/mountain village in southern New Mexico. It's rare to find any pickup basketball or racket sports (let alone companions for canyon scrambles) among all these old folks. I've fallen into the métier (or side hustle) of scientific journal editing since 'retiring.' That foundation of English language and composition we got from the likes of Fenander, Allen, Reinke, Schug and Perrott? Turns out a lot of professional scientists never received that. Nor this other

Class Notes

foundation: Remember Mr. Garrettson's physics lesson on quantifying uncertainty after student pairs measured the upper hallway with a meter stick? Wonder if his PC successors use that illuminating exercise."

Harry E. Nothacker Jr. writes, "We are fortunate to have been blessed with a grandson, Austin Nothacker, born this February. As a resident of Plymouth Meeting, he will be close enough to attend PC. I look forward to taking him to his first PC event."

1970

R. Craig Lefebvre shares, "I was recently named head wrangler at Cowboy Boot Camp in Sedona, Ariz., which offers immersive two-day weekend clinics in the fundamentals of horsemanship for beginners to expert riders, as well as individual instruction. They also host clinics on leadership through horsemanship for business gatherings and retreats in the Sedona area. If you are planning a trip or meeting, please feel free to look us up at cowboybootcamp.net."



Ted R. Over reports that he took on the role of a lifeguard at the Sammamish (Wash.) Community YMCA later in life, challenging the typical perception that it's a job for younger adults. "I have found the experience to be fulfilling, offering a sense of community and purpose, and believe that other retirees could also find value in this type of work. Thank you, Penn Charter, for teaching us to take part, pitch in and serve others as best we can."

1971



William D. Barker Jr. reports, "It was my great pleasure, after more than 50 years, to see and engage again in happy conversation with my former earth science teacher, **Whitman Cross OPC '50**. I had a wonderfully enlightening experience in his class; one that has followed me through life, and especially in my unusual vocation. Our photo was taken in Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson."

1974

J. Peter Davis reports that his class reunion committee enjoyed dinner at Fleming's Steakhouse in Radnor to finalize plans for their 50th, which the class celebrated in May.

From left, seated: **Thomas S. Mellon, Jeffrey C. Kenkelen**; standing: **Richard H. Lowe, Alan C. Good Jr., Steven S. Greenbaum, J. Peter Davis, Blake M. Christoph, Andrew S. Klein, Stephen G. Rhoads**.



David L. Doms shares, “I am currently in the Abacos. The Bahamas are awesome indeed. This trip I’ve been three hours on watch, then six hours off for a number of days, helping a friend. It’s work but always an adventure.”



David S. Jonas is slowly but surely nearing completion of a travel goal he set about 40 years ago: to visit all 50 states and 100 countries. He is currently at 50 states and 96 countries, but is more than happy to delay additional progress toward attaining this goal to attend the Class of 1974’s 50th class reunion in May!

1976

Brent Sherwood writes, “I retired in November, and we immediately relocated to sunny San Diego, where I’m gradually learning how not to feel obligated to do something every day. But I am consulting part-time, including in the role of space domain lead for the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.”



1978

John B. Kelly III reports, “Last spring, I took a shot at running for City Council here in Philadelphia. While the effort was unsuccessful, the experience was rewarding and the support that came from my classmates was great. Thank you! It was great to reconnect with many of you, and the extra efforts put in by **Stephen K. Robertson** and **Sterling H. Johnson III** with petitions and events was greatly appreciated.”

Walter J. Matweychuk Jr. writes, “I continue my mission to promote the practical ideas of my mentor, Albert Ellis, who pioneered modern, evidence-based psychotherapy. Every Saturday I conduct a demonstration with a volunteer on Zoom to showcase Ellis’s philosophically-based, scientific approach to emotional well-being. This weekly educational program has allowed people who may not have been able to afford psychological education to learn how to remedy self-defeating reactions to adversity, address their challenges and learn from others. Seeing the audience grow to over 160 weekly participants from every corner of the globe is gratifying. This program teaches tolerance for oneself, others and life, while striving to change what is changeable using practical strategies. The program is free of charge, and all are welcome. Write to me at rebtdoctor@gmail.com to request the link.”

John Balbus writes, “I had the honor of attending the retirement ceremony for Rear Admiral **Michael F. Iademarco** in February along with our 10th grade chemistry mentor, Richard V. Pepino, as Michael retired from his position as deputy assistant secretary for science and medicine at the Department of Health and Human Services. It was a full naval ceremony, since Michael was a senior-most leader of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. I provided

the invocation for the ceremony, where I acknowledged Mr. Pepino and Michael’s appreciation of his mentors.

“Mr. Pepino had this to add about Michael: ‘One of the Quaker beliefs that was frequently discussed at PC was the Inner Light that is the source of individual inspiration and guidance, and that it was not limited by gender, race or social status. Michael’s life and medical career reflects this Inner Light through his giving to those in need. I was so honored to be present at his retirement ceremony in Washington when his many peers told his story of giving to society in the Quaker tradition.’” From left: **John Balbus**, **Michael F. Iademarco**, Richard V. Pepino.



1979

Erik Greenberg Anjou writes, “I continue to climb the mountain as an indie filmmaker (director and writer). A Philly-generated project is atop the list. My wife, Alla, is from Saint Petersburg, Russia, and is an art historian and educator. My stepson, Gosha, is a junior at the University of Vermont’s Grossman School of Business.”

James N. Iademarco writes, “I’m using 2024 to visit family and friends around the world to get inspiration to write the next life chapter. My consulting firm, Strategic Avalanche, has been highly rewarding, helping global clients advance biotechnology

Class Notes

and develop sustainable solutions. During a California visit to a client who grows organic strawberries, I reunited with **Andy Kubiak**, who treated me to authentic Mexican cuisine, and I finally made it to the Magic Castle in Los Angeles, a lifetime dream. Lastly, Catalina and I cruised across Alaska, checking off my 50th bucket-list state.”



1980

Adam A. Jacks reports, “After more than 27 years in New Zealand, I thought it was about time to become a Kiwi. Looking forward to the next 27. Lots of golf to play.”

1984

Carl Arrigale, Neumann-Goretti longtime coach, recorded his 600th career win in March and his 300th Catholic League win, placing him fourth all-time behind William “Speedy” Morris of Roman Catholic and St. Joseph’s Preparatory School, Bill Fox of Father Judge, and Charles O’Brien of La Salle.



Douglas A. Hawkins reports, “After more than 30 years of active duty service, I retired from the U.S. Marine Corps. I live in Oceanside, Calif., with my 10-year-old daughter, Hailey, with whom I can finally enjoy spending more quality time. For now, my days are spent volunteering at Hailey’s school and catching up on all the SoCal recreational activities and travel that I didn’t have time for before I retired. I’m looking forward to traveling back East this fall to catch a Penn Charter football game—my first in 40 years! Go Quakers!”



1985

Thomas F. Burke Jr. writes, “Great news! I just became a grandfather. My daughter Sarah gave birth to Elliott Christopher on Nov. 21, 2023. Sarah went from being an adoptions case manager to a stay-at-home mom. My second daughter, Christina, was married in September. My third daughter, Mary, graduates from the University of Pittsburgh this spring with a degree in speech pathology; and my son, Thomas, is in his second year at Bucks County Community College studying computer science. Barb, my wife of 31 years, is a nurse with Patient First. I’m still teaching high school mathematics (34 years). Retirement from teaching is on the horizon.

I’m looking to publish a book this year called *I Went on a Retreat 365 Days in a Row!* You can check out a summary and more at my website, YourWillBeDone.life.”

1989

Brian M. Donaghy has recently started working for US Squash, which is headquartered in Philadelphia, and will be moving back to Philly from Buffalo with his wife, Christina, and daughter, Olive, this summer. Olive will be starting at PC in the fall and will be OPC ’27 if all goes according to plan.

Neil B. Tanner writes, “I was recently named global general counsel and member of the global executive committee for Olympus Corporation. I have offices in Center Valley, Pa., and Tokyo, Japan, but spend much of my time on the road. Lee and I were happy to host our class for our 35th reunion at our home in Flourtown, where we live with our three PC boys, **William Tanner OPC ’19**, **James Tanner OPC ’21** and **Andrew, Class of 2025**.”

1992

Aaron S. Kesselheim reports that he and his wife, Jennifer, were staying at a hotel in New York, while taking their children, Max, Sydney and Leo, to see Spamalat. At the hotel, he was excited to run into the Penn Charter boys basketball team. Small world!



Class Notes

1994

Edward H. Morris III was elected to the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners.



1998



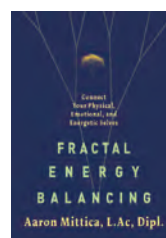
Michael B. McCrossen writes, "Our second annual Christmas karaoke party was a mini-PC reunion. From left: **Christopher M. Fox, Michael B. McCrossen, Matthew C. Kelley, Kathleen Cunningham, Matthew G. Gibbs.**

2002

Katherine (Butler) Ahrens reports, "The gang takes Punta Cana! Old friends are the best friends. We celebrated our (gasp!) 40th birthdays together in style this January." From left: **Robert Smyth, Christopher A. Lins, Katherine (Butler) Ahrens, Chelsea Erdmanis K. Greenspon, Michael Swift and Brian B. Greenspon.**



Gloria Baker writes, "When my youngest enrolled in kindergarten, I decided to focus more time on horses. I competed in my first horse show in October, taking third place and sixth overall in my division for the year. I volunteer at Ryerss Farm for Aged Equines, caring for nearly 80 retired horses, and have enrolled in my first equine anatomy course to pursue a career in bodywork." Pictured: Gloria and daughter Leighton with Gloria's riding partner, a Quarter Horse from Texas named Duke.



Aaron Mittica published his first book, *Fractal Energy Balancing*, with the help of **C.J. Mittica OPC '00**. Aaron is also moving his acupuncture practice to Conshohocken. His wife, Natalie, will join him in the endeavor.

William Pawlowsky got together with **Brittany H. Cook OPC '03** (right) and **Betsy E. Ramage OPC '00** to celebrate a friend's birthday at La Petite Plage Saint-Barthélemy in February.



Class Notes

Gerard M. Sasse was the project manager for Blastech Enterprises, Inc. (Baltimore) for the WMATA Yellow Line Tunnel and Bridge Rehabilitation Project in Washington, D.C. (pictured). For the team's work, they were awarded the Excellence in Coating Craftsmanship Award announced at the AMPP National Conference held in New Orleans in March.



2005

Eván F. Jaroff writes, "My wife and I welcomed our baby boy, Kai, in October and have been loving spending time with him. I'm also in the process of launching Chibanos, a Chinese-Cuban sandwich shop and mixed-race space with recipes rooted in the journey that my family made from China to Cuba to the U.S. I'll be planning more pop-ups in Philly in the spring and summer and hope to have a shop someday soon!"



2006



Jillian (Taylor) Roth, a trial attorney specializing in representing crime victims and sexual abuse survivors, was selected as a 2024

Lawyer on the Fast Track by The Legal Intelligencer. The award recognizes "the next generation of legal leaders." While typically representing plaintiffs, she recently made international news for her defense of clients in two defamation lawsuits. Jill was also interviewed by Newsweek about a precedent-setting decision in favor of another client, who survived sexual assaults and sex trafficking by Jeffrey Epstein. Jill is an attorney with Philadelphia-based Laffey, Bucci & Kent, LLP. Her son, Nolan, is in the PC Class of 2035.

2016



Sami Pathak writes, "I graduated in May from the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University and will begin my residency in neurosurgery at Temple University Hospital this summer."

2020



Anastasia Lewis reports, "*ASHES of Fate* is an all-original musical that I wrote and produced in collaboration with incredible composer Mark Reyes. Having

premiered in March 2024, the show highlights remarkable designs and talents of 35+ Swarthmore students as we strive to extend multimedia performing arts opportunities at the college. It is a production that encapsulates about three years of original work and collaboration, forming the first fully student-produced musical to also receive academic credit and recognition from multiple departments on campus."

2021

Julia R. Veith (left) received her national championship ring in a ceremony at Stanford University in February. Stanford women's rowing secured its place as 2023 NCAA Women's Rowing Champions in May 2023.



DEATHS

1946



George H. Kurz,
on Dec. 26, 2023.

1949



Carl F. Rumpp Jr.,
on Feb. 2, 2024.



Thomas B. Force,
on July 31, 2022.

1950



Bruce C. Kaercher,
on Dec. 18, 2021.

Class Notes

1951



John O. Byren,
on Oct. 1, 2021.



Donald L. Greene,
on Nov. 12, 2023.



Buell A. Miller,
on Aug. 20, 2022.

1952



George (Skip) Corson,
on May 21, 2024.



F. Bruce Waechter,
on Dec. 15, 2023.

1955



Drew C. Smith,
on Aug. 19, 2023.

1958



Rodger C. Wichterman,
on Nov. 18, 2023.

1957



G. Allan Dash,
on Nov. 30, 2023.

1961



Joseph W. Price IV,
on Dec. 19, 2023.

1963



James T. Dimond,
on Feb. 3, 2024.

1968



Thomas J. Einman,
on May 21, 2024.

1976



James A. Dooley,
on Jan. 21, 2024.

1978



Timothy C. Kropp,
on Jan. 15, 2024.

1981



Timothy A. Dowling,
on April 17, 2024.

Former Teachers



Jack Coleman, who taught
social studies 1980-2007,
on Jan. 28, 2024.



Gus Puleo, who taught
Spanish 1986-89,
on April 3, 2024.

MARRIAGES

1998

Melissa C. Schuck married Nicholas Makowski
on Dec. 2, 2023.



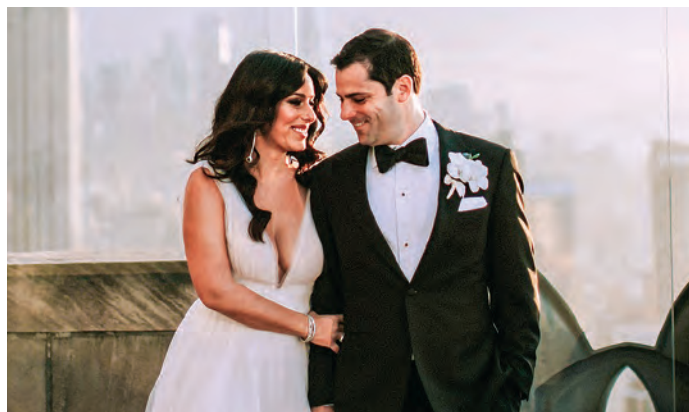
From left: Jill M. Rafter, **Kathleen B. O'Donovan OPC '99**, **Melissa C. Schuck**, **Colleen Lynch**, **Jaime A. McGowan**.

Class Notes

MARRIAGES

2007

Eric Schwartz married Aviva Noorani on Nov. 9, 2023.



2010

Joseph A. Acquaviva married **Danielle M. Sienko OPC '12** on Sept. 3, 2023. Front (from left): **Austin B. Wood**, **Phoebe B. Ingersoll OPC '12**, **MaryKate Boland OPC '12**, **Danielle M. Sienko OPC '12**, **Joseph A. Acquaviva**, **Michael G. Lordi OPC '13**, **James H. Grace OPC '09**. Back: **Anthony Lordi**, **Andrew (Drew) Bonus OPC '09**, **Benjamin Cooper OPC '09**, **Will Kimball**, **Cormac J. Ferrick**.



2016

Eileen M. Hennessy married **Freddie Killian** on Oct. 21, 2023.



BIRTHS

2003

Stella Jane, to **Jonathan** and **Meredith L. Wolfe**, on Aug. 25, 2023.



2005

Kai, to **Eliana** and **Evan F. Jaroff**, in October 2023.



2006

Theodore "Teddy," to **Katherine A. (Siegmann) Hugel** and **Erik Hugel**, in December 2023.



2007

Rafaela Anavair Rutgers, to **Charlotte Revol** and **Heimata Rutgers**, on Dec. 10, 2023.



2008

Callie Rose, to **Robin R. McDowell** and **Andrew Caines**, on Nov. 2, 2023.



Aaron Reese, to **Brian** and **Stephanie Kotloff**, on Jan 18, 2023.



WHY DO YOU SUPPORT PC?

"From my office in the Graham Athletics & Wellness Center, I can see a banner displaying one of my favorite Quaker tenets: Let your life speak. At Penn Charter, we live our values daily, and that makes this place extraordinary."

– Tori Small OPC '96, P '25, '26, '29, Teacher and Coach

Pictured with fellow teacher and coach Debbie White P '11, '13



Gifts to Penn Charter's Annual Fund support students in all aspects of the student experience. They help provide our dedicated teachers with professional development opportunities, maintain world-class facilities, purchase classroom supplies and more.

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QUESTIONS? Contact Emma Rowan, director of the Annual Fund, at erowan@penncharter.com or 215-844-3460 ext. 227.

"I was fortunate to have received an exceptional education in the '50s, and the opportunities are even greater today. The activities in which one can participate have grown exponentially; the facilities are second to none; and the school's diversity offers students perspectives that reflect the real world, challenging these young scholars, athletes and artists to grow in new ways."

– John E. F. Corson OPC '58

Pictured with C.J. English, Class of 2024



"When I realized it was Kenny dressed as the Quaker, I laughed and thought, 'Why did they give him a costume that doesn't fit?' He was so funny running around and stirring up the students to cheer louder and louder. I realize now that no outfit would have fit my tall, lanky boy. It wasn't about how he looked but the energy and spirit that he manifested for Penn Charter."

– Elsie Goss Caldwell P '87, '89

Kenny Caldwell OPC '89, during the 100th PC/GA Day at Germantown Academy in 1986.

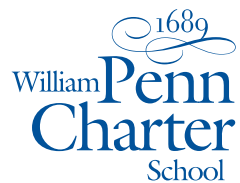


"With Penn Charter's dedication to community—a guiding Quaker principle—helping others is intuitive. Even though I'm no longer in the classroom, PC remains a strong source of support."

– Tim (Doc) Lynch Hon. 1689, P '19, '22, Retired Teacher

Pictured with his family, Buddy OPC '22, Julia OPC '19 and Jill Lynch.





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Save *the* Date

NOVEMBER 9

PC/GA Day

DECEMBER 11

Upper School Winter Concert

DECEMBER 16

Middle School Winter Concert

DECEMBER 20

Lower School Winter Concert