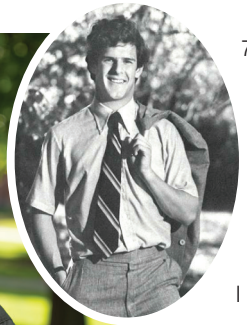
Kip Jacobs

Kip Jacobs ’74





He was supposed to be a doctor. At least, that’s what Kip Jacobs ’74 planned when he declared biology as his major at Denison University. However, the summer after his freshman year, he agreed to serve as a counselor at Red Arrow Camp in northern Wisconsin, and that’s when the trajectory of his life changed. “I realized that I love to work with kids,” he said. “When I went back to Denison in the fall, I walked directly into the education office and signed up for the teacher certification program.”

Jacobs continued to study biology, but was no longer on the pre-med track. “I started to love my classes, because learning as much as I could in college meant I would have more knowledge I could share with kids. That was powerful for me.”

After graduating from Denison, Jacobs taught at two independent schools before coming back to USM in 1987, where he’s remained ever since, although in a wide variety of roles. He served as a teacher and coach in both Upper School and Middle School, and has held administrative roles, including dean of students in the Upper School and director of athletics. Teaching always remained his true passion, however, so in 2000 he dedicated himself to teaching 7th grade science. “I always enjoyed Middle School because I’m kind of a middle school kid myself, and I just understood them. No two days were ever the same. I loved it.”

As he approached the end of his 44th year of teaching (35th at USM) in 2022, he realized he wanted to make a change. Starting in the fall of 2023, he began serving as USM’s first-ever outdoor education coordinator. “I had been doing experiential education involving the outdoors for years, so this was a natural fit for me,” he said. In this role, he works with teachers in all three divisions to help them incorporate the outdoors into their curriculum. “Whether working with Preschool kids on animal habitats, studying honeybees, or helping Upper School students research global issues involving the environment, I try to help out as much as I can.”



Jacobs has been instrumental in transforming USM’s surrounding landscape, directly involving students whenever possible. When USM’s campus was being overrun by buckthorn and other invasive species, Jacobs played a major part in their removal, often empowering students to take the lead. When the school’s Outdoor Education program needed a shed to store tools and materials, Jacobs monitored the 7th grade students who constructed the building. When Caroline Harkless ’21 wanted to spearhead an Arbor Day celebration, Jacobs was there to help gain the necessary approvals, identify trees that would grow best, and assist with the planting of hundreds of trees. When Caleb Webb ’22 wanted to learn about the school’s system for composting food waste from its dining rooms, Jacobs was there to teach him—and then help him and others grow fruit and vegetables in Karen’s Garden on campus to be distributed to local organizations and people in need.

“I’ve seen first-hand the changes that have impacted education during my four decades as a teacher, and USM has done a wonderful job of making sure that we stay on the cutting edge of academics and technology. But we’re also dedicating ourselves to the revitalization of our 125-acre campus by removing invasive plant species and creating outdoor habitats to study and research. I can’t wait to see what the future will bring.”

Kip Jacobs ’74 came to Milwaukee Country Day School as a 5-year-old kindergartener in 1961. He and his wife, Jill, have three children: Rob ’02, Brad ’04, and Kyle ’08.

“Over the years, Kip and I have become and remain best friends. Even though he is ‘semi retired,’ he continues to be an educator and environmental leader. He has had a huge impact helping the school design a concept for the outdoor campus space and its future use.”

— Tom “Butch” Richardson, former AP Biology teacher, varsity track and field head coach, and JV football coach







