

GEORGETOWN

Russell Shaw Tribute p.60

p.60

80 Years

of Courage and Vision

WHERE STUDENTS LOVE TO LEARN AND LEARN TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Leadership

Head of School

Russell Shaw

2025-26 Board of Trustees

Executive Committee

Donald Saelinger, *Chair*
Ciera Ashley, *Vice Chair*
Marc Lindsey, *Treasurer*
Karen Dunn, *Secretary*
Deneen Howell, *At Large*

Marc Battle
Chris Borek
Jorge Castro
Tarun Chhabra
Jon Cooper
Julie Fernandes
Maria Gomez
Cecilia Kang
Jon Kaplan
Hilina Kebede
Caleb Kramer
Adrienne LaFrance
Elizabeth Lewis
Nick Penniman
Greg Selfridge
Otey Smith
Kimberly Stokes
Viyas Sundaram
Rachel Vogelstein

2025-26 Alumni Board

Julie Fanburg '89,
President

Amy Oberdorfer Nyberg '91,
Vice President-Development

Alex Hirschhorn '01,
Secretary

Issa Braithwaite '07
Chandler Charity '10
Sarah Downie '99
Cornelius Gault '98
Ayoka Jack '86
Alexa Minerva '03
Mike Schaffer '91
Paul Brunell '86
Franny Cohen '70
Batya Feldman '07
Brian Hennessey '00
Laura London '07
Alejandro Rosenberg '98
Gabriela Tobal '87

Magazine Staff

Managing Editor

Dina ElBoghdady

Communications Director

Anne Merrill

Storyteller

Dani Seiss

Magazine Designer

Sarah Flood-Baumann Design

2025-26

IN THIS ISSUE

Celebrating 80 Years at GDS

- 2 From Where I Stand
- 4 A History of Courage and Vision
- 6 Leading GDS
- 12 Staking Our Ground
- 16 Decade-by-Decade Highlights
- 58 80th Birthday Bash

60 A Tribute to Russell Shaw

Honoring 16 years of transformative leadership and community building

- 72 Community Counts
- 84 GDS Trustees: Past & Present
- 90 Athletics
- 96 Arts & Performances
- 102 Faculty
- 108 Alumni

From Where I Stand

Sixteen years ago, I wrote my first “From Where I Stand” column. The title was a nod to my grandfather, who worked as a rabbi in Baltimore for several decades and called his synagogue newsletter column by the same name. I never asked him about the genesis of the title, but I imagine he was referencing where he physically stood—on his pulpit, delivering weekly sermons. It could also have been a reference to the unique vantage point he had as a leader, watching his community evolve from a distinct perch.

“I AM GRAYER. I AM MORE WRINKLED.
AND I HAVE LEARNED A THING OR TWO...”
Russell Shaw



NOW

THEN



For 16 years, it has been my privilege to serve GDS from a similarly distinct perch. The world has changed meaningfully since I became a Hopper in the summer of 2010. Back then, less than a quarter of Americans owned smartphones. No one had heard of COVID or ChatGPT. And in my early years, I routinely showed up for Board committee meetings on MacArthur Boulevard (home of our former Lower/Middle School campus) only to realize I was supposed to be on Davenport Street. I have changed as well. My children, the youngest of whom wasn't old enough to start school in 2010, are now young adults. I am grayer and more wrinkled. And I've learned a thing or two—perhaps most importantly, how much there is that I still don't know, and how much of leadership is not about solving problems but managing dilemmas.

What I do know is this: GDS lives in its stories.

Eighty years of history means a lot of stories. There's the one about Aggie O'Neil, our founding head, who arrived with Board Chair Philleo Nash to inspect the new Grasslands campus in the summer of 1946, only to find the front door locked. Philleo suggested they return with a real estate agent. Aggie said, "Give me a minute," walked around back, found a window slightly ajar, climbed through, and opened the front door from the inside. "Welcome to Georgetown Day School," she said. That story tells you something essential about the school she founded: it confidently pushes past barriers that would have stopped most people.

Then there's the story I discovered in 2019, when a historian friend researching Julius Rosenberg found a 1948 Justice Department memo in Rosenberg's declassified FBI file. The memo had been written at the request of GDS parent David Bazelon, who would later become a prominent federal

judge. Judge Bazelon was worried about prospective GDS parents who might be affiliated with the Communist Party and could bring discredit to the School. The official's reply: the headmaster was "very unusual, very good with children," and he "could not bring himself to believe that there was anything wrong with the school." (A few years later in 1952, Philleo, who was serving as a special assistant to President Harry S. Truman, became the first member of Truman's staff to be publicly accused of being a Communist or Communist sympathizer by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy.) GDS was apparently too idealistic or too rooted in its mission to be entirely trusted. Some things don't change.

This past year, the Benjamin Cooper Memorial Lecture featured Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson—following in the footsteps of former GDS parents Thurgood Marshall and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Jackson's 2022 confirmation hearing brought the School into the national spotlight when senators attacked her service on our Board. Once again, GDS's values attracted scrutiny from those who don't share them. Once again, the School stood firm.

The story of what we have built together during my 16 years here has key components: a financial aid budget that will exceed \$10 million next year, supporting a quarter of our student body; a growing endowment that reduces our dependence on tuition; and a unified campus that has deepened our community and strengthened our identity. But the things I'm most proud of resist measurement. The most important GDS stories—when a teacher helped unlock the mysteries of *Beloved* for a student or a first grader found the courage to speak publicly at Author's Brunch—are those that will never get written down and yet shape the lives of young people.

Not long ago, a senior came to my office to interview me for a class. She had been at GDS since pre-K, and I remembered her early months vividly. She was so shy that she sometimes struggled to get out of the car in the morning, and nearly inaudible when she spoke in class. The young woman who sat across from me was poised, curious, and entirely comfortable in her own skin. She wanted to talk about GDS's mission—why we chose it and how I saw it living in the School. I told her the truth: I see it living in you. In your journey from a terrified four-year-old to an 18-year-old ready to take on the world.

That is the magic of GDS—the alchemy of teachers who believe in children before children believe in themselves, of a community resilient enough to hold struggle and growth at the same time. Aggie and Philleo built this School in 1945 because they believed the world needed it. Looking at that young woman across my desk, and at everything happening in the world beyond these walls, I believe they were right. The work is evergreen. The School, its moral courage, its commitment to justice, its insistence that all children are worthy of love, matters as much now as it ever has.

What a privilege to be part of an institution that carries so many stories. And how exciting to think of all of the stories that have yet to be written and that will unfold over our beloved School's next 80 years. To the future!

Russell

Table of Contents

6	12	16	22	26	32	36	38	42	46	50
GDS Leaders Since 1945	Staking Our Ground GDS Locations	1940s Legacy Families The First Names Culture Dispatches from the Forties	1950s Navigating Integration Friendship Defies Barriers Christmas Balls	1960s A Lesson in Farmville Edith, a No-Nonsense Leader The Death of Dr. King	1970s Margaret Mead at GDS Launching <i>The Augur Bit</i> The Real Alexander The Buchwald Musings	1980s Students as Historians On Air: <i>It's Academic</i>	1990s GDS Celebrates 50th Year Farewell to Gladys Stern Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Visit The Legacy of Hill Day	2000s Reflections on 9/11 Claire Pires '09 on Acceptance Bonding in Africa Road to Navajo Nation	2010s The Impact Lab The Policy Institute Selma to Montgomery The Hop Shop GDS Drops AP Courses	2020s One GDS: Road to Unification Financial Aid Endowment Launches Hopper Tank Yields Entrepreneurs Tori Jueds Named Head of School 80th Anniversary Bash!

An 80-year History of Courage and Vision

In 1945 a gifted teacher named Agnes O'Neil and a handful of parents founded Georgetown Day School, a bold experiment that defied the racial and social barriers of that era.

Back then, the nation's capital was a segregated city under the oversight of Sen. Theodore Bilbo, an avowed segregationist and Ku Klux Klan member who chaired the U.S. Senate Committee on the District of Columbia. Racial tensions ran deep, presaging the struggle for equality and civil rights. At the same time, the end of World War II was forcing a national reckoning. The war heightened awareness of the gap between the democratic principles Americans fought for abroad and the lived reality at home, while fully revealing the atrocities of the Holocaust.

Against that backdrop, GDS established itself as Washington's first racially integrated school and championed religious, socioeconomic, and cultural diversity as a core value.

The timing was right. Washington had experienced a surge of new arrivals from the Midwest, the West Coast, and the Eastern Seaboard—drawn to the capital by government work during the New Deal and the war effort. For many of these families, the city's rigid racial barriers were a repugnant contradiction to the democratic values they were working to defend.

Conceived as a parent-owned, nonprofit institution, GDS was designed to offer a top-tier, integrated education at a price civil servants could afford. The founders' vision was radical, but its beginnings were humble: just a dozen students in a G Place rowhouse and a mere \$25 in the bank, the equivalent of \$446 today.

The School's 80th anniversary invites us to reflect on its audacious beginnings and the people, values, and milestones that have shaped its academic excellence and moral purpose. While the pandemic upended our 75th-anniversary plans, we marked our 80th year with fanfare, looking back across the decades to trace GDS's evolution into the institution it is today.



Leading GDS

Six Visionaries Since 1945

Agnes (Aggie) Inglis O'Neil

1945-1961

Georgetown Day School's guiding spirit has a name: Aggie, as students and parents came to know Agnes Inglis O'Neil.

In 1945, Aggie enlisted the help of several parents to form GDS, serving as its first Head of School, head teacher, and gentle disciplinarian. She was the School's primary shaper of character, a leader who accepted each child exactly where they were and nurtured them. Her career-long devotion to this philosophy earned her a reputation as "an innovator in education and childcare," as her 1975 *Washington Post* obituary noted.

Aggie rejected rigid formulas, favoring a non-dogmatic teaching style. A first loose tooth earned entry into the "Loose Tooth Club"—a cozy room where reading lessons progressed in tandem with the arrival of new teeth. In the afternoons, she offered advanced stimulation for those with a high math aptitude, assigning them to calculate room angles, paint volumes, and labor costs for make-believe homes. Her creativity extended beyond campus: she sent students to Vermont's Goddard College for science immersions during winter breaks and dispatched students via bus for a weeks-long study of history where it unfolded. In the summer months, she hosted students at Camp Redbrick, her home in the Catskill Mountains.

"Everyone learned from Aggie's way with children — her ability to teach them, to guide them, to understand them, to be creative the way that children are," Edith Nash, Aggie's successor,

wrote in a 1975 letter to parents. "...And for many of us young, insecure parents, she became the moral force we wanted for our children."

Aggie forged her brand of leadership through her own life experiences. When a horseback riding accident during her freshman year ended her formal education at Vassar College, Aggie learned by doing. She worked at the Spring Street Settlement House in New York and taught at a missionary school in India. Later, she founded what became the Windward School in Mamaroneck, New York, a home for children of separated parents. Windward evolved into an experimental, parent-owned school that welcomed a wide array of learners—shaping the blueprint she would bring to GDS.

Along the way, Aggie adopted the first of her five sons. After leaving Windward in 1933, she returned to India by freighter with a group of children in tow and kept school shipboard. The following year, she arrived in Washington to work for the Roosevelt Administration, leading to a lifelong friendship with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt—who wrote in a 1944 syndicated column that Aggie told her about the "unusual little school" she was planning.

Whether she was establishing schools for the Rural Resettlement Administration during the Great Depression or directing national refugee and childcare programs during World War II, Aggie's career remained rooted in a singular focus on children. When she launched GDS in 1945, she carried that mission forward, pouring her experience into shaping what she called her "experimental school."



Edith Nash

1961-1975

When founding parent Edith Nash succeeded Head Aggie O'Neil in 1961, she drew on her intimate knowledge of GDS's formative years, led with a fierce moral conviction, and leaned into her plain-spoken style.

During her 14-year tenure, Edith saw her role as balancing high academic standards with a willingness to "tolerate some chaos if in the service of learning," as she put it. Some parents clamored for more structure or spruced-up facilities, but Edith defended GDS's unique culture—including its dogs. When naysayers wanted them banned, she insisted that having "a dog or two in the hall" was an asset. And so Edith's pooch, Delilah, roamed the campus, continuing a tradition set by Aggie and her poodles.

Edith was a formidable match for any critic. Her devotion to GDS and its ideals was as resolute as her teaching philosophy. An anthropologist by training, she reveled in examining how culture shapes people and viewed education as the ultimate way to cultivate human potential. She shared this philosophy with her husband, Wisconsin Democrat Philleo Nash, a fellow anthropologist she met while studying at the University of Chicago.

Edith and Philleo arrived in Washington from Wisconsin during World War II when he accepted a position at the Office of War Information in 1942. While Philleo was busy monitoring the effects of racial tensions on war plant productivity, Edith focused on settling their family into their new home and finding the right school for their young daughters, Maggie and Sally.

Her search eventually led to a day school that Aggie was preparing to launch out of a wartime residence for government workers. Her daughters became two of the seven children enrolled in the school's first class in 1944. When the property owners no longer wanted a school on their grounds, the Nashes were among the parents who joined Aggie to establish GDS in 1945.

As Aggie's assistant director, Edith played a pivotal role in shaping the School. Philleo helped write its bylaws and manage its finances as the first Board president, even as he climbed the ranks in the Truman administration. They were deeply embedded in the community until 1952. When President Eisenhower was elected, they returned to Wisconsin, where Philleo became a prominent leader in the state's Democratic Party and later served as Lieutenant Governor.

A new political chapter brought them back to Washington a decade later. When President Kennedy appointed Philleo as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1961, Edith reclaimed her place at GDS—this time as head of school. In her new role, she worked to establish a coherent curriculum and expand space for the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades. And she wisely empowered her assistant, Gladys Stern, to create a high school.

Philleo Nash

GDS Board Chair,
1945-1952

Not every school gets to claim a founder who faced a direct attack from Senator Joseph McCarthy. But Philleo Nash was the first member of President Truman's White House staff to be branded a communist by the infamous Wisconsin lawmaker.



Edith and
Philleo in
Powers Bluff,
Wisconsin

Philleo denounced McCarthy's accusation as a "contemptible lie," and nothing came of the charges. "He shut up about me," Philleo said in a 1966 interview for the Harry S. Truman Library. "I don't think he was really aware of, deeply aware of, my sister's and my own Wisconsin connections and roots."

Philleo—a Wisconsin Rapids native—was a man of many achievements. During his lifetime, he was a cranberry farmer, an academic anthropologist with a PhD from the University of Chicago, and a Democrat who served three U.S. presidents.

GDS was a central part of his life. He was the School's first Board chair when his daughters (Maggie and Sally) were students, a prime architect of its governance structure, and—when his wife Edith became the school's second head—a proud "first husband," as he liked to joke.

Philleo came to Washington in 1942, as World War II escalated, to serve in President Roosevelt's Office of War Information. By then, he'd spent five years lecturing in anthropology at the universities of Toronto and Wisconsin. He'd even lived on an Indian reservation for a year to write his doctoral dissertation on the Klamath Ghost Dance. This social science expertise proved vital for his new job as he analyzed domestic racial tensions and reported on minority groups in the military.

When Roosevelt died in April 1945, Philleo became Special Assistant to President Truman on minority affairs—just as GDS was preparing to open its doors as the city's first racially integrated school. His high profile threatened to thrust the

school into the political crosshairs as segregationists—and later McCarthy—ramped up their crusades.

Truman supported Philleo and his ties to GDS, even in 1952, when McCarthy singled out Philleo on the Senate floor. "With Mr. Truman's knowledge and permission, a good deal of my time went into the affairs of that school," Philleo said in 1966, though he and the Board operated with extreme caution. His eldest daughter, Maggie, later wrote that the school went so far as to drop "Peat Bog Soldiers" from choir practice simply because it had been written by communist prisoners in a Nazi concentration camp.

Following President Eisenhower's 1952 election, Philleo returned to Wisconsin to "settle the score," he said, throwing himself into state politics to orchestrate McCarthy's defeat. He quickly rose to chairman of the state's Democratic Party and was elected Lieutenant Governor in 1958 but lost his re-election bid in 1960.

A year later, President Kennedy appointed him Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Edith took the reins at GDS, and Philleo again immersed himself in school life—whether grilling at Country Market Day, shaping the 1969 HS social studies curriculum, or reading Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales* to students in December. In 1977, Philleo and Edith returned to Wisconsin to run his family business, the Biron Cranberry Co.

It was that older Philleo—a "man who looked like a conventional mid-century Santa Claus," as one alumna put it—who served as Edith's proudest ally.

Gladys Stern

1975-1996

By the time Gladys Stern concluded her 21-year run as Head of School, she was inextricably linked to GDS's identity and a defining force in the DC independent school arena. A deeply committed educator, Gladys launched the High School and cemented the institution's reputation as an academic powerhouse. She steered GDS through major campus moves, rapid growth, and societal shifts—all while ensuring the School remained anchored to its founding principles.

Gladys attributed her success to two decades spent rising through the GDS ranks. Her journey began in 1954, when she joined the community as a volunteer tutor just as her son, Michael, entered the first grade. In 1961, she became Assistant Director, a vital partner to Edith Nash. As her role expanded, she spearheaded the years-long effort to establish the High School, starting with the addition of the 10th grade in 1969.

Gladys went on to serve as the High School's first principal, acting as the architect of its academic expansion and navigating its transition through several interim campuses. When she was named Head of School in 1975, she began the definitive work of her career: overseeing development of the High School campus at 4200 Davenport Street and mastering every nuance of the School's operations.

Throughout, Gladys's moral compass merged with GDS's founding values. She had a knack for hiring passionate educators who taught seriously and intensively. She believed learning should be "so pleasurable, so satisfying, that for all of one's life there is an excitement and joy to be found in learning," as she put it.



When she retired in 1996 at the age of 78, *The Washington Post* dubbed her "the doyenne of private school directors in the Washington area"—a role model for other school leaders at a time when most independent schools were run by men. The total number of GDS students and staff had doubled under her watch to more than 1,000, yet she knew each one by name.

Gladys brushed aside any angst about her departure. "The staff says to me, 'How will we get along without you?'" she told the *Post*. "I say to them that the nature of life is such that six months after I'm gone, someone will say, 'I saw Gladys yesterday,' and someone else will say, 'Gladys who?'"

She was wrong. Gladys's name never faded into the background. When she turned 100 in 2017, the community came out in force to toast her at the Woodholme Country Club. They gathered again on campus to honor her enduring legacy after she passed away on November 14, 2021, at age 104.

Peter Branch and Gladys Stern

Peter Branch

1996-2010

During his 14 years as Head of School, Peter Branch upgraded GDS's facilities to match its distinguished stature and doubled down on its commitment to diversity.



PHOTO BY JASON PUTSCHÉ

At first glance, the man behind this ambitious undertaking didn't seem to fit the part. Peter's signature tweed jackets and formality appeared at odds with the School's scrappiness. But where skeptics saw a cultural outlier, the parent-led search committee saw a strategic necessity—a seasoned administrator whose previous two decades of experience made him the ideal match for GDS at a pivotal moment.

Peter had already run Oklahoma's Holland Hall, where he had grown the endowment to historic levels and raised funding for a major new arts center. Before that, he was head of what is now Lawrence Woodmere Academy on Long Island and acting head of the Dalton School in Manhattan.

"We were looking for someone who could grow the School's resources, and we found the right person at the right time," said former Board President Susie Gelman, who co-chaired the *yes!GDS* campaign that funded Peter's first major campus renovation.

Upon his arrival in July 1996, Peter challenged GDS's traditional aversion to fundraising, arguing that the School's do-it-yourself mindset shouldn't preclude growth. Through the \$11 million *yes!GDS* campaign, he realized a 70% expansion of the Lower/Middle School's footprint by September 1999. A few years later, he oversaw the doubling of the High School's footprint—a massive undertaking that included digging two

stories deep to make space for athletic facilities and creating the Forum, which remains the building's heartbeat.

In tandem with the expansions, Peter steered GDS from its legacy of integration toward the embrace of equity. "It was the big change from 'everybody's the same, and color doesn't matter' to recognizing that people are different and the way to establish diversity was to embrace those differences," said former Board President Marc Efron, who co-chaired the *yes!GDS* campaign.

With GDS no longer the sole option for local Black families, diversity at the school had slipped. Partnering with the Board and an outside consultant, Peter established GDS's first diversity office and prioritized faculty recruitment. To further this work, he championed protections for sexual orientation in GDS's non-discriminatory policy and launched the School's "Free to Be Me" and "Pride" assemblies.

In 2004, the National Association of Independent Schools recognized GDS with the Leading Edge Award for its work in equity. By the time Peter stepped down in 2010, faculty diversity had quadrupled to 35%, and student diversity had risen from 18% to 38%.

These results grew from Peter's conviction that an institution is defined by its people. His parting words served as a final charge to the community: "Keep GDS weird and kind and thoughtful, and edgy and ambitious, and iconoclastic and respectful, and absolutely perfectly imperfect."

**Russell Shaw**

2010-2026

In the summer of 2010, GDS officially welcomed Russell Shaw as its fifth Head of School—and the intellectual curiosity, warmth, and energy that made him stand out during the search process quickly became familiar to the entire community.

Russell's candidacy stood in stark contrast to the "proven" veterans presented to GDS by an outside firm. He was young and green—the Middle School Director of Abington Friends in Philadelphia. "The firm didn't realize that green is our School's favorite color," Marc Fisher, a member of the parent-led search committee, later joked.

He even won over skeptics like David Stern, also on the search committee, who initially wanted to hire someone with head of school experience. "Within five minutes of meeting Russell, I thought: 'This is our guy,'" David said. "He was warm, funny, thoughtful, smart, and eager to have students engage in dialogue on hard issues. All my doubts disappeared."

Russell did not disappoint. Over the next 16 years, his willingness to dream big made the school stronger and more unified—literally. His crowning achievement was leading the \$52 million One GDS campaign that brought all three divisions of

the School onto one campus. When the long-awaited opening of the unified campus coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic in fall 2020, Russell pulled through again, guiding the community in the shift to virtual learning and the complex return to the classroom.

But Russell's vision went beyond having a single campus; it encompassed opening access to that campus to as many families as possible. "Without a range of economic backgrounds in our school," Russell said, "we would be meaningfully limiting the impact of every student's education because we would be missing critical voices and perspectives that any learning environment needs."

To that end, Russell recently spearheaded fundraising for the \$12 million GDS Scholars Financial Aid Endowment, which covers a four-year High School education for two new students every year, in perpetuity. The financial aid budget will top \$10 million in the 2026-27 school year, covering roughly a quarter of GDS students.

And he did it all while exuding a joy that made students feel cherished. His warmth was his magic, whether playing guitar at an assembly or greeting students at morning carpool. Parent Julie Fernandes witnessed the impact of that personal touch firsthand during Russell's first year, when her pre-K son, Avram, jumped out of the car during drop-off and ran toward the new head of school, yelling, "Hi, Russell!"

"Russell turned, crouched down, and gave Avram a high-five. Avram bounced into the building with his feet a little off the ground," Julie said. "For 16 years, Russell communicated to the kids that each of them is seen and valued."

Staking Our Ground

Georgetown Day School has occupied eight addresses—none of them in Georgetown. While several of the School's founders lived in the neighborhood and expected GDS to settle there, the "Georgetown" in our name remains one place we've never actually called home.



1945

The Rowhouse Roots 13th Street and G Place NW

The School's first home was a small rowhouse in what is now known as Chinatown. Philleo Nash, a founding parent and GDS's first Board Chair, called it "a marvelous old residence, but a terrible place for a children's school." The neighborhood was a gritty mix of shooting galleries, pinball arcades, and adult establishments, which may explain why the School's stay there was so brief.



Front porch of
Grasslands school
building with
GDS co-founders
Philleo Nash
(foreground) and
Aggie O'Neil (on
porch, second
from right)



1946-1956

The Grasslands Era

4001 Nebraska Avenue, NW

At the beloved Grasslands campus, GDS was housed in a rambling federal-style mansion set on 10 wooded acres. Built in 1810, the mansion was once part of a country estate owned by Nathan Loughborough, a senior Treasury Department official turned banker.

Those who experienced the Grasslands campus remember it as a magical place, where teachers and students used their imaginations to make the most of playtime and the sprawling outdoor space. They remember students using decommissioned army footlockers to build play towns on the property and digging tunnels into the bank of a nearby stream, later hauling the excavated clay back for ceramics class.

That unstructured spirit extended into the classroom, where even the building's architecture was treated with a characteristic lack of protocol. Frequent visitors were often assigned the task of keeping the boiler filled with water so it wouldn't blow up, and students would jump out of the lower-floor windows for fire drills.

But alas, the rickety schoolhouse proved too difficult for GDS to maintain. NBC purchased the property for its headquarters and razed the building after GDS moved out in 1956.



Staking Our Ground

... continued



U.S. Education Secretary Samuel Brownell breaks ground at 5005 MacArthur Boulevard, 1955

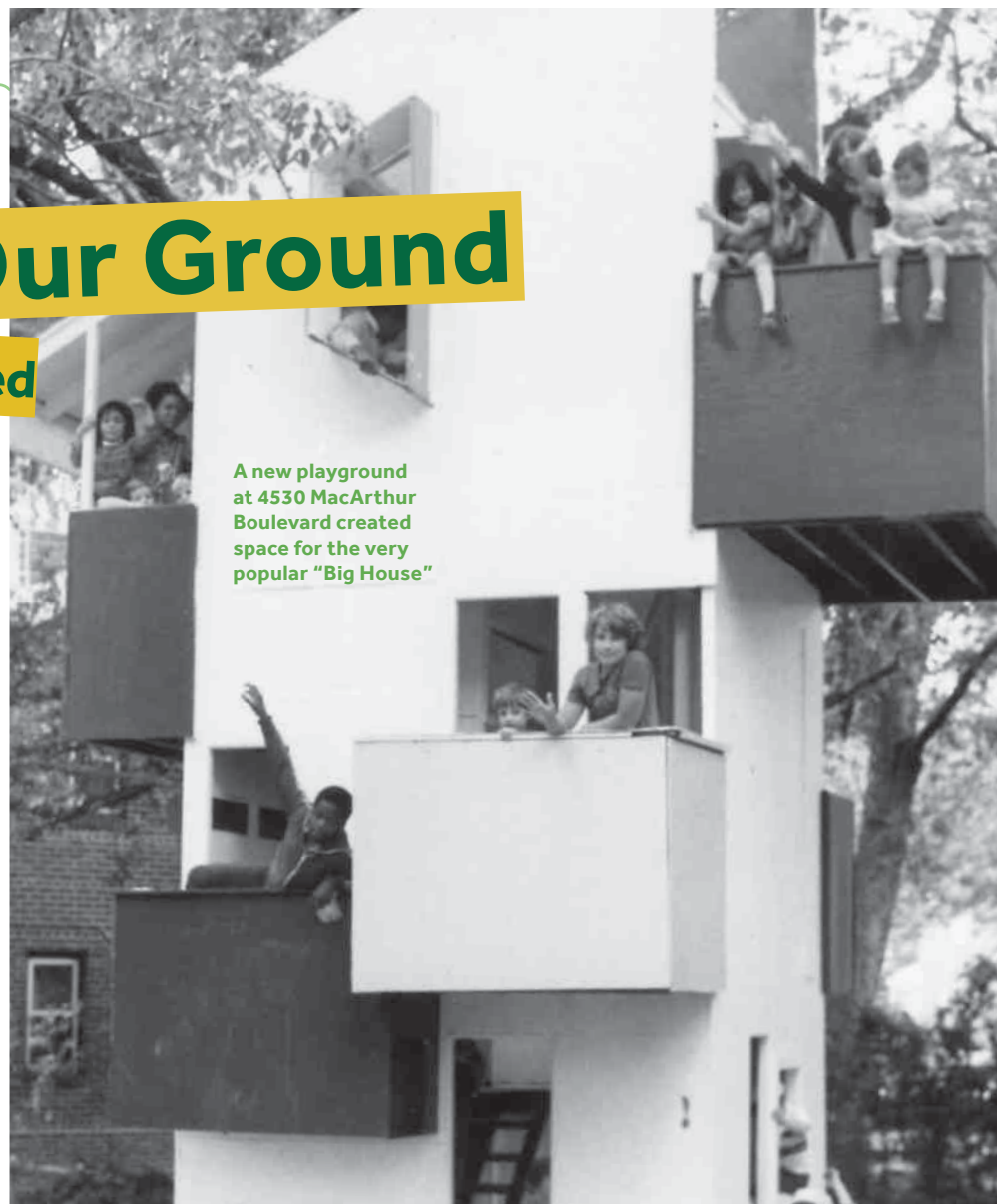


1956-1965

Owners at Last!

5005 MacArthur Boulevard, NW

GDS purchased its first building at the corner of MacArthur and Chain Bridge Road, close to parks and the Potomac River. The school still offered students the freedom to explore the outdoors, just as they had at the Grasslands campus on Nebraska Avenue. The purchase was financed by a "very unusual mortgage" engineered by Aggie O'Neil and savings from yearly operations, according to Edith Nash, Aggie's successor. Still, the space was almost too small from the moment students moved in. It consisted of 10 classrooms, an auditorium, a kitchen, a shop, and a library. A separate building for the kindergartners stood on Schoolhouse Hill, where during the winter students would launch themselves down the slopes on "the rocket ride," a makeshift sled fashioned from scraps of wood and old shipping crates.



A new playground at 4530 MacArthur Boulevard created space for the very popular "Big House"

1965-June 2020

LMS Home for 55 Years

4530 MacArthur Boulevard

Under GDS's second Head of School, Edith Nash, GDS broke ground on the campus it would own for the next 55 years. The original 16-room building accommodated 275 students from kindergarten through the small but expanding 9th grade.

Reporting on the new campus, *The Washington Post* noted the school's "informal, almost residential character." The *Post* further captured the institution's unique spirit in a separate article: "A stranger walking in and out of classrooms seems to disturb no one; one has the feeling that they regard an adult as a friend. ...The atmosphere is exciting."

The campus underwent numerous facelifts, renovations, and expansions as enrollment increased and grade levels expanded. Even the outdoor spaces evolved. A new playground made space for the "Big House," a play structure later replaced by the iconic "Big Toy."

1970-1971
Keegan's Hardware



1971-1973

Mount Vernon College campus
Site of first HS graduation ceremony



1970-2020

The Great High School Migration

While the Lower Middle School remained at 4530 MacArthur Boulevard until 2020, the High School occupied a series of unconventional sites as it grew.

1970 GDS rented a storefront near the LMS—Keegan's Hardware—to house the 10th grade, which was added the previous year under the guidance of Gladys Stern.

Fall 1971 The High School moved to the Mount Vernon College campus on Foxhall Road, where GDS celebrated its first commencement in June 1972.

1973 GDS purchased an apartment building at 4880 MacArthur Boulevard (now part of the River School) and developed the space behind it. In this converted residence, a living room became an English classroom, and the art room featured a bathtub. True to the 1970s, there was a smoking room used mostly, though not exclusively, by students.

"To many of us, that's the high school," said Lars Hanson '82. "Every time my brother Ivor and I go to a GDS reunion, we make a point of stopping by 4880 just to take in that building."

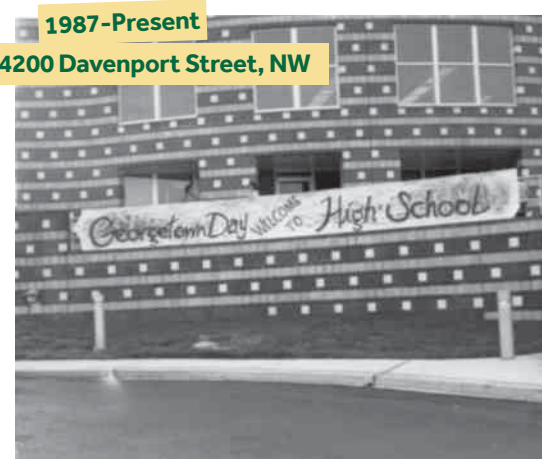
1987 The High School settled into its permanent home: 4200 Davenport Street. The move was overseen by Gladys, who was Head of School by then. Her successor, Peter Branch, expanded the campus in 2005.

2020 Head of School Russell Shaw unified all GDS divisions on the Davenport campus.



1973-1987
4880 MacArthur

1987-Present
4200 Davenport Street, NW



2020

The Unified Campus

4200 Davenport Street, NW



1940s

1945, October 22
First classes held at GDS

1946, Fall
GDS moves to Grasslands campus on Nebraska Avenue

1946, December
First Christmas party/fundraiser

First Board of Trustees

Philleo Nash, *President*
Arthur E. Goldschmidt, *Vice President*
W. Randolph Compton,
Secretary-Treasurer
Dwight M. Collins
Mairie Foreman

1940s America

1940 Median DC Home Price
\$7,568 (~\$173,000)

1940 Median DC Gross Rent
\$45 (~\$1,000)

1947 Average DC Family Income
\$3,800 (~\$57,400)

New Car
\$920 (~\$16,500)

Movie Ticket
35 cents (~\$6.30)

Gasoline/gallon
21 cents (~\$3.77)

First-Class Postage Stamp
3 cents (~54 cents)

Sources: Government data and historical price records. Values in parentheses are expressed in inflation-adjusted September 2025 dollars (CPI).

Through the Generations

The story of Georgetown Day School is best told through the lives of the families who have walked our halls since the very first chapter. On the following pages, we feature three such lineages—the Pinketts, the Perlmans, and the Hills. For them, GDS is more than an alma mater; it is a shared inheritance passed down through generations, linking the pioneers of the 1940s to the students of today.



Students at the Grasslands campus with GDS founder Aggie O'Neil (back row), spring 1949

The Pinketts

John Pinkett III, aka Boojie (front row), with his family, including his grandfather, John Randolph Pinkett, Sr. (back, middle).



Boojie Pinkett



Norris Dodson—grandson of John Randolph Pinkett Sr.—and Helen Dodson celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2023. A true GDS family, both Norris and Helen are alumni, as are their three children: Carlyn '99, Daryn '98, and Lori '93. Though their GDS roots run deep, Norris and Helen never crossed paths on campus; he departed for boarding school in 1961, the very same year she enrolled. Helen eventually graduated in 1967, back when the school ended at 9th grade.

While all of GDS's founding families demonstrated remarkable vision, the involvement of the Pinkett family provided a bridge to Washington's Black community that was vital to the School's mission and success.

John Randolph Pinkett Sr. was a prominent figure among the small group that decided to incorporate the School in 1945. By then, he was already an influential businessman; in 1932, he had founded what would become one of the nation's oldest and most successful Black-owned real estate and insurance firms.

John R. Pinkett Inc. was a vehicle for social progress, known for constructing the modest homes that granted many of the city's Black residents their first opportunity for home ownership. Because of this reputation, Pinkett's endorsement of GDS carried immense weight. He was a respected elder whose presence signaled to a segregated city that the School was a place where Black families could truly belong.

Pinkett's grandson, John R. Pinkett III, became the first Black student to attend GDS. His enrollment began a multigenerational legacy that has seen about a dozen of John Sr.'s descendants pass through the School's doors.

Through the Generations

... continued

The Perlman



Judith (Perlman) Martin

Judith (Perlman) Martin, the syndicated columnist and author also known as "Miss Manners," started attending GDS just a few years after the School's founding. She was in second grade back then and has written about how the GDS of the 1940s was "not to everyone's taste."

"My brother took one look at the pupils sprawled on the floor, wearing jeans and calling their teachers by their first names, and marched thankfully back to public school, where none of this would have been allowed," Judith wrote in a book dedicated to GDS's 75th anniversary.

Judith (Perlman) Martin (center) with her children Nick '84 and Bina '88



But when it came time to send her own children—Nicholas '84 and Bina '88—to school, GDS was the obvious choice. "It was that the school had retained—the founders' deep principles, which had openly defied the prevailing prejudices of the time—that made me want my children to go there," she wrote.

Helen Perlman, Judith's mother, joined the teaching staff in the late 1950s (See page 19). Aside from Nick and Bina, three of Helen's other grandchildren also graduated from GDS: Penny '86, Sarah '90, and Jacob '94 Perlman.

The Hills



Dulany Hill

At a recent family reunion: (from left) Dulany Hill, Julia Cunningham '81, Ralph Cunningham '79, his sons Julian '21 and Henry '16; (front row, from left) Paloma '27 and Carter '29 Evans

In the spring of 1947, Julia Hill walked to her mailbox weighing a familiar worry: where to send her son, Dulany, for junior high. She ran into a long-lost friend who was teaching at GDS and walked home repeating one name like a mantra: "Aggie Inglis"—the Head of School.

That encounter, detailed in a 1975 letter to the School, launched a GDS connection spanning generations. Dulany thrived at the Grasslands campus, and Julia "retired" into a second career teaching GDS drama in the 1970s. From there, the family legacy grew: Julia's grandchildren, Ralph '79 and Julia '81 Cunningham, were followed by Ralph's sons,

Henry '16 and Julian '21. A fifth generation carries that legacy today: her great-great-grandchildren, Paloma '27 and Carter '29 Evans.

"It's a special place with lots of different voices that are all equally respected," said Ralph, a DC architect, who served on the GDS Board from 2004 through 2006 (the last two years as Chair).

Ralph maintains that the GDS of his day remains unchanged in spirit, just as his Uncle Dulany (now 89) insisted in a 1978 interview. "The physical plant is certainly different," Dulany said. "But there's certainly a lingering of that Georgetown Day feeling."

Mrs. Helen Perlman holds a parent conference with Cecilia Suyat Marshall and John Marshall, the wife and son of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. 1968

First Names Only

(for most!)

It makes some squirm and others roll their eyes, but GDS has never embraced honorifics, opting instead to have teachers and students address each other by their first names. The practice was not calculated; it evolved organically.

Before GDS was incorporated, the founding families were close friends who met at a small elementary school run by Aggie O'Neil. Because they already called one another by their first names, students followed suit when GDS opened with Aggie as its Head. That first-name custom remains a tradition that distinguishes GDS from its peer schools.

Decades later, GDS's second head of school, Edith Nash, wrote that the practice was about more than just being casual; it was an understanding that a teacher's authority does not depend on a title. However, she acknowledged that not everyone was comfortable with the informality. To Edith, that friction reflected what she described as the "deeper tension between freedom and structure, permissiveness and discipline" that defines all education.

GDS resolved this tension by prioritizing individual choice over



Mrs. K with her husband, Fred (aka "Mr. K"), an airline executive who assisted in her classroom after he retired.

uniform policies. In 80 years, only two teachers chose to forgo the first-name tradition: Mrs. Jessie Klein and Mrs. Helen Perlman.

Mrs. Klein—known to her kindergarten students simply as "Mrs. K" during two decades at GDS—retired in 1983. "She didn't feel having kids call her by her first name was respectful," said her son, Fred Klein. "I think 'Mrs. K' was a suitable compromise." The title honored her position while remaining accessible. Though Fred lives far from DC on Orcas Island, Washington, he still crosses paths with people who remember the inimitable Mrs. K. Just last year, he met an island visitor who had begun her education in Mrs. K's classroom decades ago.

While "Mrs. K" was a middle ground, Mrs. Perlman (who retired in 1976 after 25 years) was even more



Mrs. K (foreground) with her class

traditional. She remained firmly and exclusively Mrs. Perlman to her 5th and 6th grade pupils. It is perhaps fitting that her daughter, GDS alumna Judith Martin, grew up to become the world-renowned etiquette authority "Miss Manners."

Judith—who started at GDS in second grade a few years after the School's founding—recalled that GDS's culture was flexible enough to accommodate a teacher's eccentricities. She remembered her mother's specific departure from the norm: "One peculiarity was her insisting that no little kid was going to call her 'Helen,' so she was Mrs. Perlman, the exception among all those first names."

1940s

Dispatches from the Forties

The Woman in Red

In the spring 1975 issue of GDS's now-defunct *Studessence Magazine*, high schooler Robin Pelzman '76 captured the spirit of founding Head Aggie O'Neil. Drawing from the memories of longtime teacher Dorothy Jackson, the article explores the quirks that made Aggie a legend—from her choice of attire and four-legged companions to her unconventional teaching style. Here is an excerpt:



Studessence Magazine

Spring 1975

Dorothy Jackson had known Aggie since 1954. Dorothy can remember all the things about Aggie that made her unique, especially for the children. She would bundle into school each morning, dressed always in red, so all children, K-8, would be able to identify her. She brought two French poodles to school every day, starting a long tradition of teacher-owned dogs at GDS. (Who could forget Kimshi, Lenny, Meg, Guinevere, or Gretel? Faithful school hounds all.)

Aggie was a participating principal. She loved to spontaneously take over a class, and she had no qualms about skipping entire classes a year ahead if she felt they were all ready. She knew all the kids personally, and thus knew what some could handle. When Aggie was principal, you were just as likely to find Shakespeare in a third grade class as *Charlotte's Web*.

GDS IS 80!

"Unorthodox" School Has No Grades

In 1947, a feature in *The Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* marveled at the "fantastically unorthodox" Georgetown Day School and its founding Board President, Philleo Nash. The article described Nash—a key advisor to President Truman at the time—as a "pistol" of a man with close-clipped white hair and "ledge-like black eyebrows that seemed to crawl up his forehead when he chuckles." An excerpt follows:



Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune

May 3, 1947

This school Phil started two years ago is fantastically unorthodox. It has no grades, and the kids roam all over the place mastering knowledge I didn't even suspect in college. They range in age from four years through junior high.

A little tike who can't count his thumbs can translate hieroglyphics if he's a mind toor he can major in mathematics when he can't write to Santa Claus. This, of course, is an awed guy's effort to rationalize in old-school terms the startling range of intellectual attainment in this amazing school.

There is a common denominator. The pupils are required to pass standard achievement tests by age groups each year for promotion and high school entrance.

I understand the individual accomplishment is phenomenal. No child is held back or pushed out of bounds by class or group progress. He develops his own work habits. He gets individual instruction. After he has mastered modern elementary education in reading, writing, spelling and computation, he can sail out of sight. Some of those youngsters know more about the social, political and economic complexities of their community, the nation and the community of nations than grown-up contemporaries.

Teachers take them by age groups from their workshops and playgrounds to "sit in" on Congress, the Supreme Court, press conferences...and to the railway yards, the markets, the fish wharves... anywhere are manifest the affairs of humankind and their meaning. The underlying idea emphasizes not so much the youngster as such but the adult he will become.

The school slogan is "Hard Work and No Worry." But, taking the customary pedagogic wraps off, the pupils produce neither a precocious little dumb bunny nor a Quiz Kid. They are just normal boys and girls who have the advantage of free-rein intellectual initiative.

1950s

GDS IS 80!

1955

Washington Urban League honors GDS for "excellence in offering equal opportunity"

1956

GDS moves to 5005 MacArthur Blvd NW, the first building owned by the School

Integration Journeys

In 1954, nine years after GDS opened as the first racially integrated school in the nation's capital, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of public schools in its landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. But for many Black students, integration was uneven and often hostile. GDS offered an alternative—a starting point for some and a refuge for others—at a time when most schools struggled to deliver on the ideals of equal opportunity and inclusion.

Harry N. Jones, Jr.

Six-year-old Harry N. Jones, Jr. made headlines nationwide in 1957 when his attendance at an all-white school in Deale, Maryland, sparked demonstrations and led his family to enroll him at GDS.

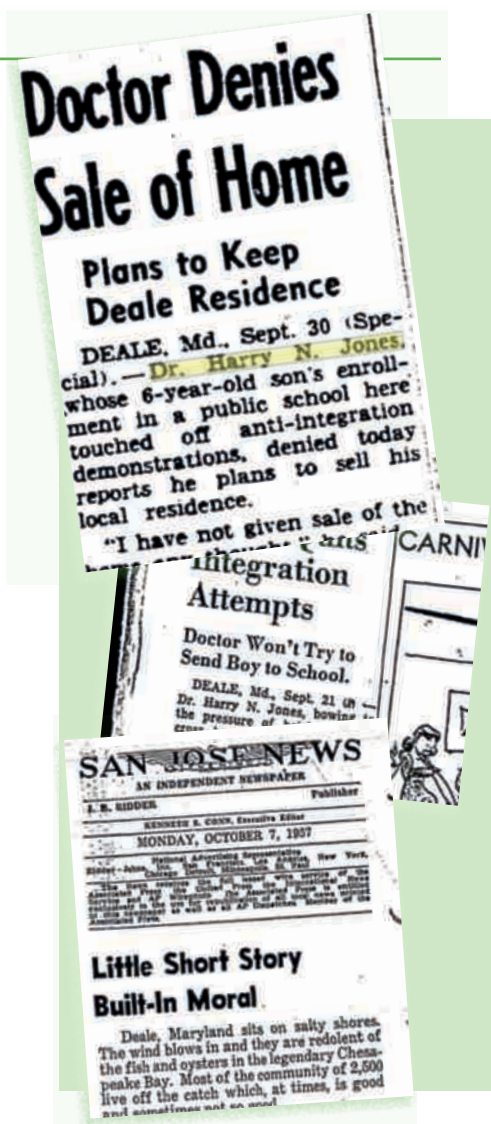
His father, Dr. Harry N. Jones, was a popular Black physician and the only doctor within six miles of the small Chesapeake Bay fishing community. He had moved his family to Deale five years earlier and built a house there with a medical office, often treating patients at no cost, according to a 1957 column in the *San Jose News*. "Everybody was crazy about him," the columnist wrote, and his son made "good friends among the neighboring children."

But the family came under attack after Harry Jr. joined first grade at a schoolhouse close to home: threatening phone calls, smashed windows, a

cross burning in their yard, and a menacing, late-night motorcade of white segregationists cruising past their house. Like many public schools nationwide, the one in Deale was slow to integrate after the *Brown* decision.

Maryland Gov. Theodore McKeldin offered the Jones family police protection. A group of Deale residents subsequently bought a full-page advertisement in the *Annapolis Evening Capital* blasting McKeldin and proclaiming that "the peace, good order, welfare and future of county, state and nation lies in segregation of the races."

The Jones family declined McKeldin's offer and announced that Harry Jr. would attend GDS; Dr. Jones already had a formal medical practice in DC. "It's hard to understand, but maybe one of these days it won't be this way," Dr. Jones told the governor by phone in the presence of a cluster of reporters, the Associated Press reported.



Hugh Price, pictured from his toddler years to his career in the spotlight (below), spent one year at GDS before attending DC's newly integrated public schools. His leadership roles included serving as President of the National Urban League.



Hugh Price

After graduating from DC's racially segregated Bruce School in 1953, 7th grader Hugh Price was at a crossroads. Rather than continuing into the city's dual public school system, his parents—devoted integrationists—enrolled him at GDS.

"Ardent integrationists who could afford it sent their kids to Georgetown Day School," Hugh wrote in his memoir, *This African-American Life*. "[My older brother] Kline went there first. I followed him after graduating from Bruce and for the first time studied alongside white kids."

Though the brothers were five years apart and never overlapped at GDS, they shared the same long commute across a segregated city to reach the Grassland campus—a destination that felt like a portal into a different reality.

Kline remembered the school as a sanctuary. "Georgetown Day School was my first contact with whites," he said. "It was a really warm and wonderful relationship. It was almost like a protective environment. Completely different from the outside. Once you walked down that road, you were in another world."

For Hugh, that "other world" lasted only a year. When DC public schools began to desegregate in the fall of 1954, his parents—a distinguished physician and a mother active in civil rights causes—saw his education as part of a larger mission. The family had just moved to Northeast DC near Taft Junior High School, and they enrolled their son there for 8th grade, making him one of about a dozen

Black students to integrate a school of more than 850.

Hugh and his family quickly saw how court rulings alone couldn't transform a culture overnight. At Taft, the handful of Black students like him who served as hall monitors became easy targets, "convenient punching bags and kicking posts" for White classmates, Hugh wrote. Tensions escalated as DC officials accelerated integration, prompting citywide walkouts and protests by White students.

When he entered 10th grade at Coolidge High School in 1956, Hugh found an expanded curriculum that he navigated with ease. Yet academic success couldn't bridge the racial divide. While relations were more cordial than at Taft, contact between White and Black students ended at the final bell; there were few, if any, visits to each other's homes, and certainly no dancing or dating across color lines. "These proved to be the unhappiest three years of my life," Hugh wrote.

The payoff for enduring those years was a trajectory that broke barriers. Propelled by his family and his own scholastic drive, Hugh swept through Amherst College and Yale Law School into a career of national influence. He served on *The New York Times* editorial board and held executive roles at the Rockefeller Foundation and WNET, the nation's largest public television station. In 1994, he was named head of the National Urban League, a position he held for nearly nine years. Now retired in New York's Westchester County, the boy who helped integrate DC's public schools is a living testament to the ideals GDS was founded to uphold.

1950s

GDS IS 80!

Friendship Defies Barriers

Clare Wilson and Cynthia (Spears) Sparrow have been lifelong friends since meeting at GDS in 1958; both left the School in 1961, as it did not yet extend beyond the 9th grade. In this letter to a classmate, Clare reflects on the early days of their friendship and her first encounters with the era's racial tensions. Here is an excerpt:

Letter from Clare Wilson

December 13, 2023

In the spring of 1958, I was an 11-year-old, pre-pubescent, well upholstered, white girl with red hair and glasses. I was in Don's Group, 6th grade at Georgetown Day School.

Cynthia was in Jim's Group, and we met in the playground. She had a natural beauty about her, graceful and soft-spoken with beautiful light-brown eyes. Cynthia is Black. She walked right up to me and asked me about that "cute boy" in my class. We giggled. I noticed her elegant manicure and asked about the color of her nail polish. "Frosted Pink Coconut," she replied, and that's how our friendship began. We sat together at lunchtime in the Big Room.

Sometimes, after school, we walked several blocks to the MacArthur Pharmacy, where we perched on the stools at the drug store counter and each ordered a hot fudge sundae (25 cents each). This became a routine, and when we had the money, we would add a Coke to the order.

Our conversations were very likely about the merits of oatmeal soap, pimple creams, and bath oil. We looked at teen magazines, lusted after fashionable shoes, and dramatically discussed the boys we both knew. We spent endless moments admiring the makeup displays before hopping on the D4 bus. At home, we continued our conversations on lengthy phone calls.

I remember feeling the undercurrents of resentment and disapproval or shock when Cynthia and I shopped downtown together. We knew the stores to avoid.

On that D4, for example, there was one bus driver whom I identified as a bigot. He would try to demonstrate his disapproval of my friendship with my Black friends when he drove past my stop. I had rung the bell. I stood at the door. I got off at that stop every day. He deliberately passed it so I'd have to walk farther to get home. I could sense his satisfaction as I looked back at him. I said nothing and waved to my pals.

Cynthia and I remained close friends through high school and kept in touch throughout college. As grown-ups, we both returned to live in Washington. She became a clinical psychologist, and I became a graphic designer. We travel well together. Over the years, we've made several trips to Rehoboth Beach, the Caribbean Islands, and Mexico. Since retiring, we've visited Cuba, England, Italy, Spain, and Egypt. We are now in our 70s and still best friends, planning our next adventure.



Clare Wilson



PHOTO BY JASON PUTSCHE



Cynthia Sparrow

They had a ball

Splashy GDS Christmas parties were a recurring feature in Washington's society pages from the late 1940s through the 1960s. The tradition gained steam shortly after GDS moved to the Grasslands campus, which required \$6,000 in remodeling. Founding Head Aggie O'Neil launched an auction to raise funds, while Board President Philleo Nash tapped his connections to bring in world-renowned folklorist Alan Lomax as a featured attraction.

Each year was an "all hands on deck" production. Guided by art teacher Dante Radice in the early years, faculty and parents spent days volunteering to transform the School—painting murals and building elaborate decorations inspired by the year's theme. While the initial events funded building repairs, the parties evolved into a major annual fundraiser that benefited the School's scholarship fund.



1948

Dancing the night away at one of the earliest GDS Christmas parties: Founding Board Trustee Arthur (Tex) Goldschmidt and his wife, Elizabeth (Wickey), in 1948. (Inset) Arthur (Pat) Goldschmidt, their son.



1957



By the 1960s, the GDS Christmas parties were the talk of the town, with guest lists that regularly attracted media attention.



1962

Mrs. Aaron Kimche (foreground) with GDS Head Edith Nash decorating for the 1962 party, as covered in *The Washington Post*.



1965



1966



1965



1966

1960s

GDS IS 80!

1961

Student trip to Farmville, Virginia

1961

GDS Head of School Aggie O'Neil retires; Edith Nash succeeds her

1965

GDS moves to 4530 MacArthur Boulevard; LMS remains there until June 2020

1969

First GDS Country Market Day held

1969

10th grade added with HS Principal Gladys Stern's oversight

The GDS-Farmville Exchange

Virginia's "Massive Resistance" Made Personal

After Virginia's Prince Edward County shuttered its public schools to defy court-mandated integration, a group of GDS 9th graders initiated a dialogue with Black students in the Commonwealth that sparked an exchange of visits to one another's turf.

The partnership began to take shape in early 1961, after Edythe Rich's 9th graders read that officials in Farmville, Virginia, had effectively exiled Black students from the education system. The Supreme Court had outlawed public school segregation years earlier, but local leaders in Farmville found a workaround. Having exhausted their legal appeals, they leveraged Virginia's "Massive Resistance" laws to padlock every public school. They then funneled taxpayer dollars into all-White private academies.

When her stunned 9th graders asked if such a thing could really be true, Edythe's response was direct: "I said there was only one way to find out, and that's to go down there." She contacted Helen Baker at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), which had established "training centers" for Prince Edward's Black children, and arranged a visit.

On April 10, 1961, eight GDS students packed into two cars for the drive to Farmville. Arriving in town, they felt an immediate tension. "It was one of those really prickly experiences because as we walked down the street, there were people watching us and not saying a word. Their eyes followed us all the way down," Edythe later recalled. "Mrs. Baker [our chaperone] kept saying, 'nobody's going to hurt you. They never hurt the Quakers.' ... It felt uncomfortable."

The GDS group visited makeshift classes in basement rooms and church halls where space was so tight that students had to sit on one another's laps. Despite the dire surroundings, the students found common ground. GDS student Bobby Shelton told the Associated Press that he played baseball with his newfound friends. His classmate Laverne Franklin said she talked to her peers about popular songs, and some boys who would have been in junior high school told Jimmy Dworker that they had never talked to White children "as friends" before.

The visit culminated in a lunch meeting that was supposed to last one hour but stretched well past that, according to an archived report by Mrs. Baker. "The pupils themselves were not willing to stop at so short a period, so the conference went on from 1:00 to 4:30," she wrote. "... [For nearly all the Farmville children] this was

the first interracial experience with students of their own age they had ever had."

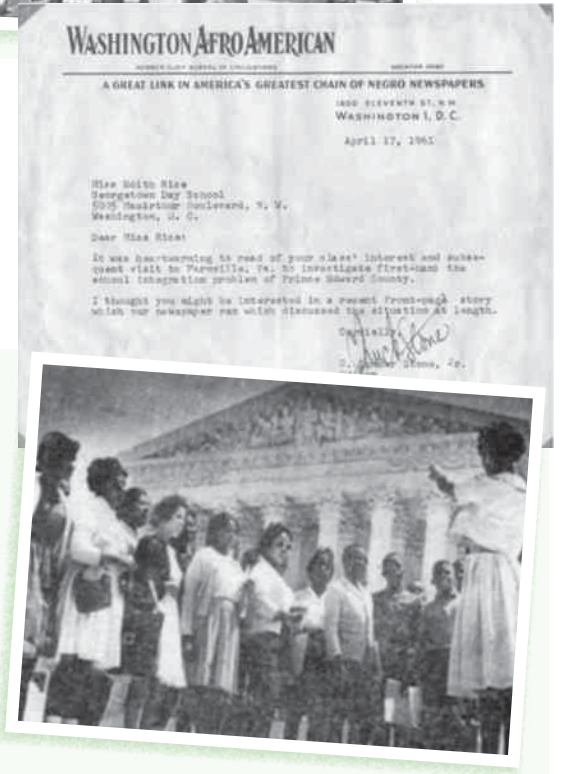
The dialogue did not end in Virginia. Two months later, on June 5, GDS families hosted 29 Farmville youngsters for a two-day visit to Washington. After a picnic at nearby Battery Kemble Park and an evening baseball game, the visitors—ages 11 to 18—spent the next day at the U.S. Supreme Court. As they entered the crowded cafeteria for lunch, with Mrs. Baker in the lead, she sensed their trepidation.

"I want them to feel easier about a building like this," she told *The Washington Daily News*. "And I also want them to feel the freedom of this room, not to feel they have to crowd into a corner of it. I want them to not have so much fear of white people as they did when they got up this morning."

Other stops included Capitol Hill, the Washington Hebrew Congregation, the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Islamic Center of Washington, the National Gallery of Art, and the Smithsonian Institution. In the afternoon, GDS hosted a lunch for the students and a trip to Glen Echo Park, which had integrated only a month earlier following intense protests.

While Massive Resistance was a statewide policy, Prince Edward

A GDS student (left) welcomes two students from Farmville to the MacArthur Boulevard campus in June 1961. After local officials closed Prince Edward County public schools to resist integration, GDS families hosted 29 Farmville youngsters for a two-day visit to Washington.



County remained its most extreme and longest-lasting adherent. As reported by *The Washington Post*, the county's 1,800 Black children were barred from public schools from 1959 (when the Supreme Court denied Prince Edward's request to delay the desegregation mandate) until federal courts finally forced the schools to reopen in 1964.

The irony is that the local shutdown was the final stand against a movement Farmville itself helped ignite; a 1951 student strike there led to one of the five lawsuits that formed the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that outlawed school segregation.

"... this was the first interracial experience with students of their own age they had ever had."

— Helen Baker, the AFSC's local organizer in Virginia's Prince Edward County



(From left) Virginia Blour, GDS Head Aggie O'Neil, and Helen Baker. Blour and Baker were the local Prince Edward County organizers who, through the American Friends Service Committee, helped arrange the Farmville students' visit to GDS in June 1961.



GDS teacher Edythe Rich (seated) arranged the trip to Farmville.

Edith Nash vs. The Citizens' Association

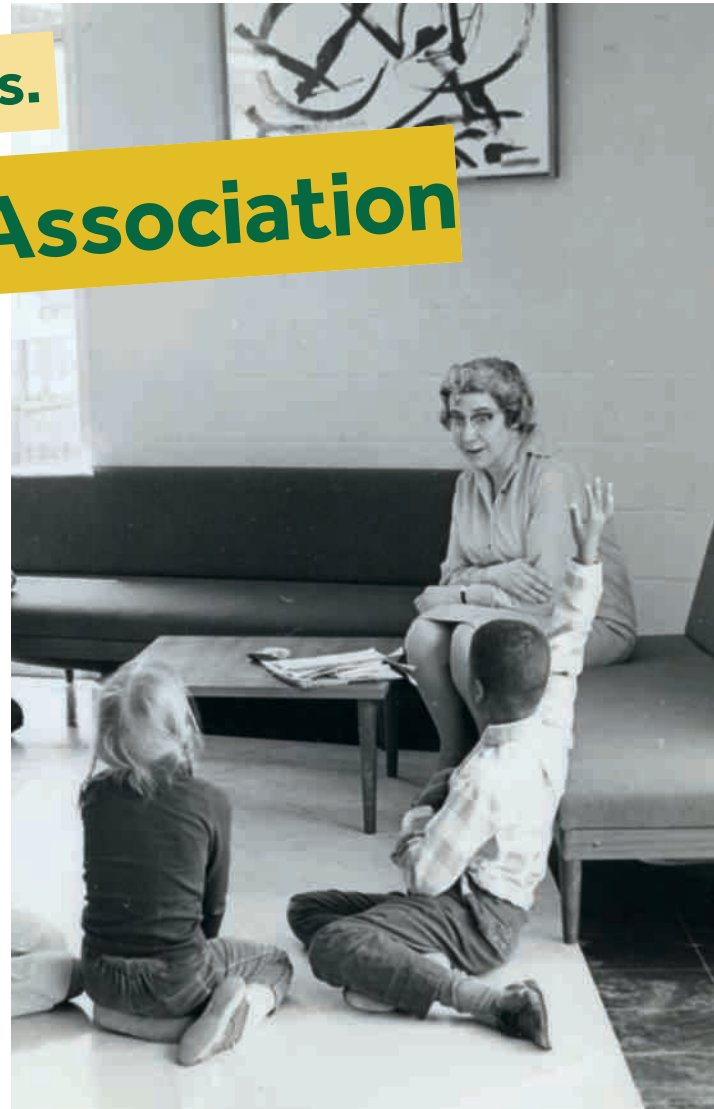
When a local neighborhood association leader circulated a warning to private schools against “subsidizing” the enrollment of “minority groups,” GDS Head of School Edith Nash’s response was swift and uncompromising.

In the December 1964 letter, the president of the American University Park Citizens’ Association argued that scholarship distribution should not be subject to “outside political tampering,” adding that “it would be unwholesome and unwise to have a student body so miscegenated.”

In response, Edith fired back with a missive of her own, blasting the suggestion as “inappropriate and indeed offensive.” By then, GDS had been integrated for nearly 20 years, with Black students comprising 25 percent of the student body. Edith pointed out that the School had always received more scholarship applications from White families than Black families, and she reaffirmed GDS’s commitment to a racially, religiously, and culturally diverse student body.

“Many other minorities are well represented and a thoroughly mixed enrollment is our aim,” Edith wrote. “If you feel this population is ‘miscegenated,’ that is your problem.”

The exchange was reported by *The Washington Post and Times Herald* in a 1965 article. Edith concluded with a sharp request: “Please take us off your mailing list. We would not think of allowing you or anyone else to influence our selection of students.”



“A thoroughly mixed enrollment is our aim.”

— Edith Nash

Edith Nash's No-Nonsense Welcome

In August 1969, *The Washington Evening Star*’s “Rambler” column featured a curious guest entry: a letter from GDS Head of School Edith Nash to the student body heading into the 1969–70 school year. Attributed to an anonymous “young friend of the Rambler,” the correspondence was clearly leaked to the press—proving that even in the ‘60s, GDS students had a flair for “transparency” (and perhaps a bit of mischief).

This excerpt from the letter captures Edith’s no-nonsense style.

The Washington Evening Star

August 1969

Now, just a word about what you are supposed to do when you come to Georgetown Day School. This part is more for new students than the old ones but it doesn’t hurt old ones to hear it again. Remember, this is a letter to you personally, not a letter to your mother or father. Get one of your parents to read it to you if you can’t read yet. You’ll learn how to read soon enough, and then you can read it to them, if you feel like sharing it.

You may wear anything you wish to school. We expect you to use good sense, according to how young you are. The youngest children in our school have the most sense about clothes – it just so happens. All of us will help you to develop good sense by telling you privately, if some costume you wear is really out of line. If it’s only fashionable, we won’t say anything.

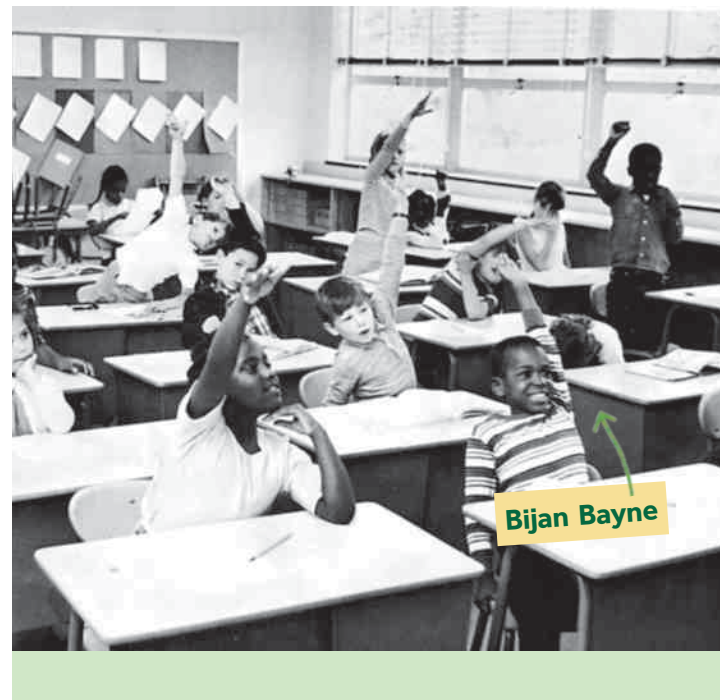
We expect you to study and work hard in class-time, to do homework and turn it in when it is assigned. We expect you to put a little more into school than some schools may require, and to take a little more out.

If you really don’t like the idea of standing on your own two feet and beginning to be the master of your own life – if you’d rather be a chip in the ocean with the mammoth water raising and lowering you and you making no effort at all – don’t come to Georgetown Day School; ask your folks to help you find another, more regular school where a lot more will be done for you, and you’ll not have to do so much for yourself.

I know this line of talk is over your head if you’re little, but it’s the way I talk and write and you might as well get used to it. Come and see me after school starts, and I’ll tell you what it really means, if you have some trouble understanding it.

The Day My Superhero Died

Cultural curator Bijan Bayne, who attended GDS from 1966 to 1968, reflects on the shattering impact of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination through the eyes of his younger self. This piece was originally published in *The Boston Globe* on January 16, 2026.



Bijan Bayne

By Bijan Bayne

Between 1966 and 1968, my friends and I believed in superheroes.

We believed in Superman, Batman, and the Green Hornet. We pretended to be them, wearing towels around our necks and down our backs like capes. We believed that if a city was in trouble, someone would arrive just in time — calm, principled, and fearless — to make things right.

And in real life, for us, that hero was the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

We were Black children, but we were also children of television, comics, and certainty. King appeared on our screens not as an abstract historical figure but as a steady presence — walking into hostile cities, speaking softly to crowds filled with anger, and leaving behind something that looked like peace. He didn't fly, but he arrived. He didn't wear a cape, but he did protect. King, to us, fought for freedom, and against hate.

I attended Georgetown Day School in Washington, DC, an unusually diverse and largely integrated environment for the time. King's dream did not feel like a metaphor to me — it felt lived. Close enough to touch. To me, King wasn't fighting for a world that might exist one day; he was the superhero fixing the world I was already living in. Naturally, I thought he was invincible. I thought the episodes would go on forever.

On April 4, 1968, I was in our living room waiting for my daily evening dose of *Truth or Consequences*, hosted by the genial Bob

Barker. My mom and grandmother were a few feet away in our kitchen, preparing dinner. An ad for Beatrice Foods aired. But then the show's theme music didn't play. The screen cut to a faceless bulletin. A voice said that King had been shot in Memphis.

No buildup, no explanation — just the sound of history shattering the calm of a little boy's house on a Thursday evening.

I didn't yell. I didn't cry. I didn't run to a grown-up. That would scare them.

I waited a few seconds, because the TV sounds hadn't reached the kitchen yet, and I didn't want the news to crash in on my mother and grandmother like a bomb. Then I walked three steps in and said:

"I didn't want him to die."

That sentence did the work of the headline I was too afraid to deliver.

They looked at me and asked who I didn't want to die. I told them "Martin Luther King," even though I still couldn't believe it myself. Mummy and Nana didn't wail or bawl; they walked into the living room to face the TV. Standing.

At the time, a high school-aged female cousin from Queens was living with us. When an evening curfew was declared in DC in hopes of quelling widespread violence and looting, my cousin suggested to my parents they write "SOUL" on a large piece of cardboard and place it in our front basement window to alert rioters

that we were Black. In the daytime, when I did go outside, other teens were running back from nearby 14th Street, their arms full of either shoeboxes or Easter clothes. A National Guard tank came up our quiet little street. I avoided 14th Street, because I thought tear gas was fatal. Monday, when King's funeral aired on the three major TV networks, I watched some people entering the chapel in the beginning, but I couldn't watch the funeral. I went outside, where I played my first game of touch football.

The next week at school, all six grades were called into an assembly. We watched a documentary about King's life, "From Montgomery to Memphis." Then blank composition books were handed out. We were told to write our thoughts about King's death, for a book that would be published about children's feelings regarding the assassination.

I stared at my blank page the entire hour of the assembly. I fingered my pencil, surrounded by students who were scribbling away. I had plenty of thoughts that day, but I lacked the language, or distance from the tragedy, to share them. Reducing the moment to words felt powerless and insufficient. Superheroes weren't supposed to die. They weren't supposed to be vulnerable to bullets or hatred or chance. They didn't leave children staring at blank composition pages, struggling to describe a loss they hadn't known was possible. When the moment demanded that I bring the bad news to Mummy and Nana, I delivered because their awareness was imminent.



Bijan Bayne

When I was asked to reflect on the loss of a leader, for the country to read, words failed me.

A few years later, I saw a book at my Aunt Eunice's house in Newton Centre. It was the book of children's thoughts on King's death. Alone in my aunt and uncle's library, I thumbed through the anthology, wishing I had words when I was given the opportunity to weigh in.

As an adult, I understand King as a man — a brilliant writer and public speaker, a flawed, courageous human. But as a child, I understood him differently — symbolically. His death marked the moment when the world stopped behaving according to the rules I had been taught.

Our superhero had died.

And the world no longer felt protected.



A televised broadcast of Dr. King's final address

1970s

1970

High School expands into Keegan's Hardware storefront

1971, Fall

High School moves to Mount Vernon College campus

1972, June 11

GDS holds its first High School graduation for 16 students at Mount Vernon College

1975, February 9

Agnes O'Neil passes away

1976

Students launch *The Augur Bit* newspaper



George McGovern

Candidate in the Classroom

At GDS, one presidential candidate was more than just a face on TV. South Dakota Sen. George McGovern stopped in at the School in the 1970s, most likely around the time of his 1972 presidential run.

Margaret Mead's Visits

Margaret Mead, a pioneering anthropologist and one of the world's most enduring intellectuals, visited GDS twice in the '70s. She came to meet with students and faculty at the request of her close friends and fellow anthropologists—GDS co-founders Edith and Philleo Nash.

Mead's visits coincided with the School's 25th and 30th anniversary celebrations. *The Washington Post* and *Times Herald* reported on the former, describing how Mead held three informal discussion groups with 4th to 11th graders during a May 1971 gathering. The students came "in blue jeans, tee-shirts, sneakers or bare feet" to hear from Mead, who sat "cross-legged in slacks and thick glasses" and took questions, the article said.

On the Vietnam War-era May Day protests that had erupted earlier that month, she told students that "[President] Nixon is not interested in demonstrators because ... it's pretty certain they're not going to vote for him." As for the countercultural communes of the time, widely associated with hippie ideals and antiwar activism, Mead dismissed them as "monasteries," adding: "You don't feed two million people in the world by grinding a little grain with a stone."

At the day's end, Mead mingled with several faculty members during an intimate dinner at Edith and Philleo's Southwest DC apartment, where she stayed overnight. Edith, who was Head of School by then, later wrote that Mead and Philleo spent the late-night hours discussing Indian-White relations in the United States.

Margaret Mead



Philleo and Edith Nash were among a circle of inner friends who were interviewed in the 1981 PBS documentary *Margaret Mead: Taking Note*

LIBRARIES, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

The Bit Goes On

In a 1996 issue celebrating GDS's history, *The Augur Bit* student newspaper included a retrospective on its own 1976 founding. In the following excerpt, Keith Dashefsky '98 chronicles the paper's origins, drawing on the memories of co-founder Marc Fishman '78 to explain the publication's early days and its curious name.

The Augur Bit

1996

Before the paper was conceived, GDS had a small literary magazine. Marc and most of the other *Augur Bit* originators were on its staff. However, they weren't satisfied: "We knew we wanted to start something new, something that hadn't been done before. That's where the paper came in," said Marc. They applied for and received funding from the administration. Marc and the others created what would become an institution in our school; *The Augur Bit* has been here for 20 years and is not promising to go away soon.

Many of the new responsibilities that came with starting a newspaper took Marc by surprise. "Back in high school, I was a pretty disorganized guy. The deadlines always posed a problem to me and the other staff members." Marc also praised the organizational skill that *The Augur Bit* staff has acquired since its birth: "We only released a paper around twice a year, and fundraising activities were never thought of." In the beginning, the overall format of the paper was not as carefully defined as it is now. Leadership positions were not created and assigned. Without a specific editor for sports or news, students worked on whatever interested them.

One of the most commonly disputed mysteries surrounding the paper is how it came to be called *The Augur Bit*. The truth is that Marc and the other originators were watching a preview of the school play, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. One character blurted out a line containing the words "auger bit"; it immediately caught the fancy of the whole staff and with a little careful punning the newspaper got its name.

The Real Alexander

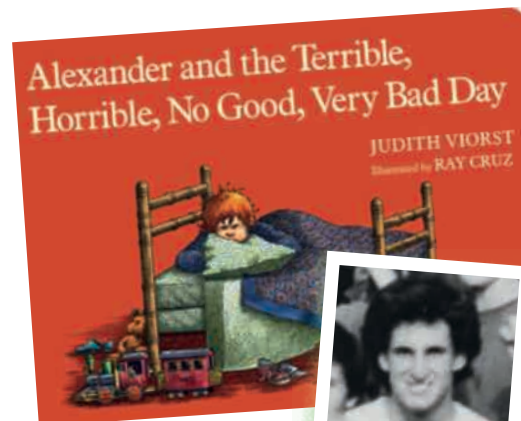
Few people can claim their childhood misadventures inspired a classic children's book—let alone one that spawned sequels, a musical, and a Disney movie. But for Alex Viorst '85, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* did just that.

The 1972 book was a favorite in the GDS library, where Alex remembers hearing it read at story time when he was in second or third grade. "It's followed me around since then," he joked.

The classic was written by Alex's mother, Judith Viorst—who had also authored books featuring Alex's older brothers, Tony '79 and Nick '81. On the *Good Life Project* podcast, Judith said Alex initially disliked the manuscript when she read it to him. He asked: "Why are you giving me this bad day?" Only when she pointed out that his name would be in big, colorful letters on the cover did he agree to it, she added.

Another fun fact: Judith co-wrote with former LS Arts Department Chair Jackie Marlin the GDS Passover Song that students sing to this day.

Alex, who works in affordable housing finance, recently celebrated Mother's Day with Judith, now 95. "She's probably got one more book in her," he said.



The real Alex (inset, circa 1985) is not a redhead



1970s

Two Generations of Buchwald Musings

Few families have captured the GDS spirit with as much wit and affection as the Buchwalds. In these excerpts, written decades apart, the late Pulitzer Prize-winning humorist Art Buchwald and his son Joel '72 (parent of Corbin '21 and Tate '23) share slices of GDS history.



By Art Buchwald

GDS newsletter, 1972

When I first sent my children to Georgetown Day School, I was 40 years old. Six years had gone by, and I'm now 65. Georgetown Day has been good to my children, but I'll be very honest, I still don't know what they do there.

Coming from what might be called a square-school background, I was suspicious of the place from the first day when my son came home from school and announced his teacher's name was Shirley.

"Shirley, what?" I asked.

"I don't know her last name."

"You can't just call her Shirley," I shouted. "It's disrespectful."

"But that's what Edith told us to call her."

"Who's Edith?"

"Edith is the principal."

"You call the principal Edith?"

"Yes, and I call Gladys, Gladys, and Dorothy, Dorothy."

"That's some school. Well, go and do your homework."

"I don't have any homework, and if I did, you're not supposed to tell me to do it."

"Why can't I tell you to do your homework just in case you have some?"

"Because Shirley says it's my problem."

That was the first day, and it didn't get any better later on. I attended a few parent-

teacher meetings, but gave it up because I never could find out anybody's last name. I also discovered that when I discussed Georgetown Day with parents who had kids at Sheridan or Maret or Landon, I was at a loss to explain what Georgetown did.

All I knew was that my kids were happy. They didn't even think of Georgetown Day as a school. And this really made me worried, because what good is a child if he doesn't hate his school?

When they went on to high school, I still couldn't fathom what was happening. All I knew is that every morning, my son was going to a hardware store for classes. I'm not a snob, but you have to admit, it's embarrassing

when someone asks you where your kid's going, and you tell them Keegan's Hardware Store. I mean, what kind of a college is going to take a student who learned everything he knows in a hardware store? ...

Well, I still don't know too much about Georgetown Day, except my children love it and wouldn't want to go anywhere else. I shall always be grateful to all those people with first names who care more for their students than they do for mortar and bricks. We may not be the fanciest school in the country, but we sure have a lot of class.

The Hopper Effect Blog

June 1, 2018



GDS's First Graduation

By Joel Buchwald '72

Categories

Academic Excellence

Educational Innovation

Equity & Social Impact

High School

Middle School

Lower School

Leadership

In the Classroom

Beyond the Classroom

Admissions

Diversity

Technology

Policy and Advocacy Institute

Uncategorized

GDS was an alternative school in 1972 and it was so different than the high school experiences of everyone else I knew. ... Originally GDS only went through 9th grade, but they decided to start a high school with our class, so we were the first 10th grade, then 11th and finally 12th grade. ...

When the high school began in 1970, space was at a premium. Our 10th grade classes took place in the gym. They divided the gym into several rooms by hanging these really long, dark and heavy curtains from the rafters in order to create classrooms. The following year, the school rented space from what was once a hardware store several blocks up the street. We'd spend several parts of our day walking back and forth between the school and the hardware store. We attended literature class next to where the hammers and wrenches used to be. We were reading Herman Hess, and for some reason it seemed fitting for the time period—what with the Vietnam War going on and the monthly anti-war demonstrations happening in DC.

The hardware store and the gym were not long-term solutions, so a new place was found, and in typical GDS fashion, our new home turned out to be at an all-girls junior college. The funny thing about Mount Vernon Junior College for Women was that we never seemed to see any college students. Our building was in a corner of the property surrounded by extremely large playing fields, and we were as isolated as if we had been surrounded by a fence. We had fun because we had free rein—neither the teachers nor the administrators seemed to have much of an idea of how we should behave. We were the inaugural class with no upperclassmen to lead the way. ...

For our graduation, my dad spoke. This started the wonderful tradition of a parent speaking at the commencement ceremony. I hear that senior parent Kamal Ali, GDS class of 1980, is continuing the tradition this year. Our ceremony was nice and pleasantly short—there were only 16 of us to graduate. It was also the commencement speech where my father started a phrase that he continued to use for the next 30 years of commencement speeches that he gave: "We've left you a perfect world. Don't screw it up!"



Art and Joel Buchwald in New York City, 1979. Courtesy of Joel Buchwald

1980s

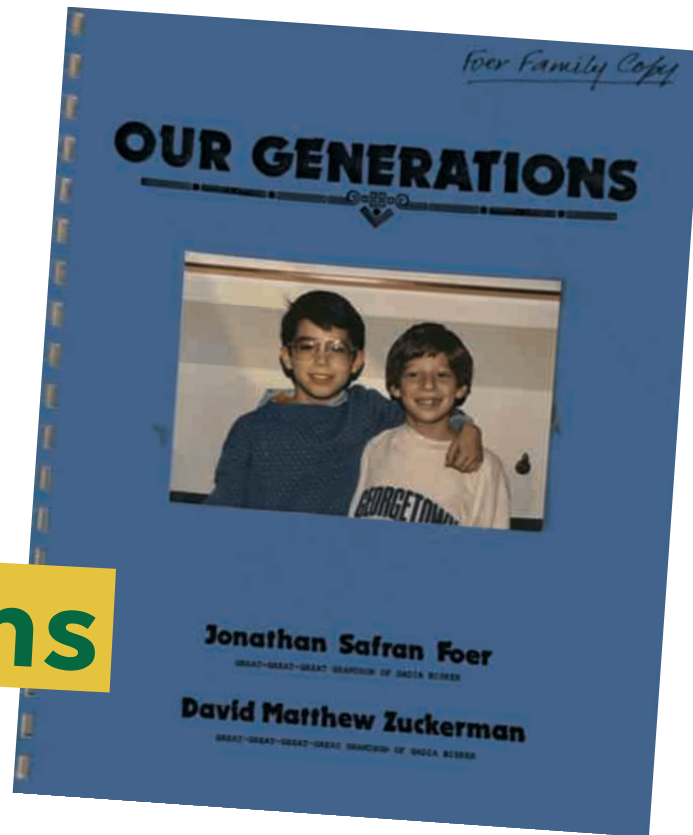
- 1987, Fall**
High School relocates to new Tenleytown campus
- 1987, October 12**
Philleo Nash, first Board chair, passes away
- 1987**
Parent Service Association created to provide support for various school activities

Tracing our Truths

Shortly after starting fourth grade at GDS in 1987, David Zuckerman and Jonathan Foer discovered they were fourth cousins—a connection revealed during a casual conversation between their parents at a parent-teacher conference.

That year, *The Washington Post* reported that the boys, with encouragement from their teacher, Gloria Runyon, chose to explore their ancestry for a five-week-long written project that was part of the fourth-grade curriculum. “We did interviews, and we did lots of research,” 10-year-old Jonathan told the *Post*. “And we made phone calls [to relatives] all over the world,” added David, then nine.

Together, they unearthed photos, stories, and connections that might have otherwise been lost, producing an elaborate family tree and a book chronicling the histories of each side of the family. The book documented Jewish life in small Polish towns and emotional stories of relatives who fled Nazi persecution—or didn’t escape. As a result of that project, the



Zuckerman and Foer extended families remain in contact, said Esther Foer, Jonathan’s mother.

Studying family history remains a throughline at GDS. For more than three decades, 6th graders have interviewed relatives and curated family keepsakes for the annual Family Box Project—an initiative Lisa Rauschart helped launch as a Middle School teacher. Now at the High School, Lisa has developed an Upper Level seminar in which students investigate how the intersection of race, place, and real estate has shaped their own family’s access to opportunities.

“History is a process of discovery, and sometimes that discovery starts with the things closest to you, such as family or community,” Lisa said. “It’s not about memorizing names and dates. It’s what you find out and what you do with that information, whether you’re in sixth grade or 12th grade.”

Star Folk Singer Visits



Livingston Taylor, a celebrated American folk singer and brother of the legendary James Taylor, brought a touch of musical history to GDS during his visit with kindergarteners in 1981.

Trivia as a GDS Team Sport

For nearly a decade before the game show *Jeopardy!* debuted its Teen Tournament in 1987, GDS students were showing off their trivia knowledge on *It’s Academic*.

Considered the longest-running quiz show in TV history by the *Guinness Book of World Records*, *It’s Ac*, as it was familiarly known, featured students from DC and Baltimore metropolitan area schools competing against one another. The show debuted in 1961, but GDS fielded its first team in September 1979.

The show was the brainchild of TV producer Sophie Altman, who served as executive producer until her death in 2008. In the late ’70s, Sophie approached then-Head of School Gladys Stern to convince her that GDS students simply had to participate. Gladys, in turn, tapped HS history teacher Gary Nicolai, who had successfully started a Model UN Club a few years before.

“I didn’t have any experience doing this and had to create something from the bottom up,” recalled Gary. “I collected thousands of questions from quiz books, topics previously tested on *It’s Ac*, facts about math and literature, which we put into categories. Then we tested ourselves on this knowledge.”

Roberta Feldman ’86, who was captain of GDS’s *It’s Ac* team during her junior and senior years, recalls those trivia-filled packets: “We had practices two or three times a week after school. There were no computers, of course. Gary had sheets of handwritten, Xeroxed trivia questions. To this day, I know all kinds of crazy stuff.”

In the early years, before GDS had sports teams of any distinction, competing in *It’s Academic* provided an outlet for school spirit and helped put GDS on the map as an intellectually rigorous institution. Although there were no GDS cheerleaders on the set when the team competed, unlike some other schools, Team members’ friends, teachers, and relatives turned out to root for a Hopper win.

It’s Ac founder and HS history teacher Gary Nicolai



Roberta Feldman ’86 (center), It’s Ac captain in mid 80s

After Gary relocated to Philadelphia, the role of coach passed to teachers Alan Sternstein, Joe Wolfson, and then Sue Ikenberry, who continues to prepare today’s students for their *It’s Ac* showings. (Sue went on to oversee GDS’s Quiz Bowl, the non-televised trivia competition that grew in tandem with *It’s Academic*.)

For the students who have participated over the years, the opportunity to be part of a team competing under the bright lights of a TV studio was unforgettable. “It was the highlight of my high school career,” said Roberta. “... I still have my trophy.”

1990s

1993, Fall
(APPROXIMATELY)

Hill Day Launches

1995, September
GDS Turns 50!

1996, May 15
Gladys Stern Gala Tribute

1996, July
Peter Branch succeeds Gladys Stern; Board creates Gladys Stern Endowment Fund

1997
Georgetown Days magazine debuts with Spring/Summer issue

Golden Anniversary and a Fond Farewell

The 1995-96 school year marked two milestones in GDS history: the School's 50th anniversary and the retirement of legendary Head of School Gladys Stern, which lead to the hiring of her successor, Peter Branch. The following excerpts from GDS newsletters of that era capture these events in the words of those who witnessed them.



September 29, 1995

50th Anniversary:

Music, Time Capsules, and a Helicopter

GDS newsletter, June 1996

More than a thousand cupcakes on tables against the wall; balloons and posters hanging in celebration; the bleachers and the floor crowded with GDS students from age four to age 18; staff; cameras; a band; and an atmosphere of joy, fun, and community. These all contributed to the 50th anniversary get-together of the whole of the Georgetown Day School in the high school gym on September 29, 1995. This was the first meeting of the complete student and staff body for 25 years, and it was more than worth the organization it took to pull it all together. Gladys spoke of early days and our unshakable ideals, and there were many firsts: the first time the Middle School and High School choruses have sung together; the first time the Middle and Lower schools have listened to the High School instrumentalists; the extraordinary attention the rest of the school gave to the very smaller children's performances; the first of [HS history teacher] Richard Avidon's epic poems to be read aloud to great interest, admiration, and applause. Time capsules to be opened in 2045 were loaded with children's gifts to their school descendants, and the finale was a meeting on the field with every person in a white shirt spelling out "GDS 50" against the green grass (carefully measured by the High School math modeling class) and a visit by a helicopter, which circling against a lovely sky, photographed the whole school community for posterity. It was truly a wonderful occasion.

-Lower School Principal Ben Benskin,
a 35-year GDS veteran who passed away in 2025

Scan to watch Richard
Avidon's epic 1995 poem
performance
(Fast forward to 2:00)



GDS IS 80!



Farewell, Gladys!

GDS newsletter, June 1996

It was an exciting, entertaining, and emotional night. More than 1,000 staff, parents, alumni, and friends packed Lisner Auditorium on May 15, [1996], for the gala tribute and tearful farewell to Gladys Stern, who is retiring after a 42-year association with the school, including the last 21 as head of GDS. Highlights of the evening were humorous reminiscences by alumni parents Art Buchwald, Judith Viorst, and Judith Martin; opera arias sung by alumna Laura Knoop; gospel music performed by the Reed family (four of whom are GDS alumni); choral selections by the seventh and eighth grade chorus; and numbers from this year's high school musical, *Evita*.

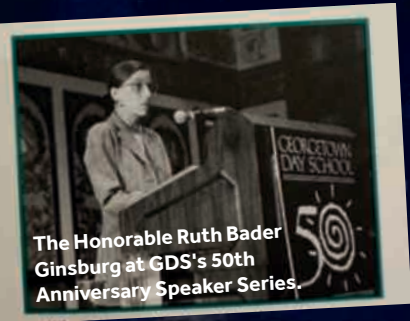
GDS alumni parent and board member Frank Mankiewicz was a deft and witty MC of the program, and special presentations included huge baskets of flowers from GDS students and staff, a \$375,000 down payment to the Gladys M. Stern Endowment Fund, the GDS 50th Anniversary print by renowned Washington artist and GDS alumni parent Sam Gilliam, a photo of Gladys by GDS parent Connie Reider, a letter from President Bill Clinton, remarks from Congresswoman (and GDS alumni parent) Eleanor Holmes Norton which were entered into the *Congressional Record*, and a special scrapbook of letters and photos from hundreds of admiring GDS students, staff, parents, and friends compiled by Gladys's longtime executive assistant, Beth Peters.

The gala ended with a video tribute to Gladys produced by GDS alumni parent Patty Abramson and Rick Bordman of West End Video and the singing of a special song written and conducted by GDS parent and board member Stephen Simon. The Gala Tribute to Gladys was masterfully organized by GDS parents Karen Schneiderman, Ellen Kay, and Patty Abramson and produced by GDS faculty Bill George and Laura Rosberg.



1990s

The Legacy of Hill Day



The Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg at GDS's 50th Anniversary Speaker Series.

RBG
and
GDS

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg with her son Jim '83

On May 2, 1996, GDS hosted U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg for a talk at Georgetown University's Gaston Hall. Justice Ginsburg—parent of Jim '83 and great-aunt of Jeff Elias '19—shared a behind-the-scenes look at the Court's inner workings. Her remarks focused on how the Court fulfills its constitutional mandate, from the meticulous process of selecting cases to the "spirited nature" of the justices' post-argument discussions. Beyond the legal mechanics, she highlighted the Court's internal culture of respect. "I am pleased to tell you," Justice Ginsburg noted, "that our Court really does prize collegiality and, in most cases, civility."

Justice Ginsburg started her address with personal reflections on Jim's time at the School. Quoting from a letter she wrote to then-Head of School Gladys Stern, she spoke of how her "lively son came to GDS as a restless youngster, and became in the course of three years a person able to find his way to the joy of work and of living."

She concluded the talk by reading from what Jim had written about his impression of the School. "GDS refused to place style over substance or encourage conformity for its own sake," Jim wrote, citing a culture where no choice of attire was considered "too slovenly or weird," and teachers were called by their first names. This "uncommon freedom" and "lack of traditional formality," he continued, "sent a powerful message that it was only the quality of teaching and learning

that mattered, not the trappings. Respect and admiration for the teachers and GDS itself were genuine because they were earned rather than imposed, imperiously, from above."

Justice Ginsburg remained connected to GDS throughout her life, hosting Middle School students in her chambers in 2013 and attending her great-nephew's graduation six years later. She had even agreed to deliver the Ben Cooper Memorial Lecture on November 18, 2020—committing to the event a year in advance—but she passed away just two months before the date. In her stead, the lecture honored the trailblazing justice with a panel featuring then-U.S. District Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, U.S. Circuit Judge Nina Pillard, U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin '79, and NPR Legal Affairs Correspondent Nina Totenberg.



Since its inception in the early 1990s, "Hill Day" has evolved into a cornerstone of the Middle School experience. It bridges the gap between the 8th grade history curriculum and the resources that the nation's capital has to offer.

The idea originated with history teacher Kathy Shollenberger and her colleagues, Sally Gilbert and Steve Cutts, who were brainstorming ways to bring the study of U.S. government to life. The team tapped into the School community's deep well of federal expertise and connected with GDS parent Rep. Jane Harman. The California Democrat agreed to host the 8th graders for a visit to Capitol Hill, where students could interview policy experts and hear views from both sides of the aisle regarding their specific areas of study.

"We ended up structuring the course around the Constitution," said Kathy, now retired, who believes the first Hill Day took place in 1993. "We wanted to get students thinking about the nuances of controversial issues."

Thus began a hallmark tradition that has remained remarkably consistent in its mission and impact. Early on, the Capitol Hill hosts expanded to include Sens. Ron Wyden of Oregon and Mary Landrieu of Louisiana. Eventually, the visits extended beyond the Hill, with 8th graders fanning out across Washington to also meet with nonprofit groups and civil servants.

Today, the entire fall semester serves as a build-up to Hill Day, which typically takes place in February. Starting in September, students explore the concepts of liberty, justice, and equality by choosing a specific track—such as freedom of speech. They take a deep dive into library resources and the finer points

of research, drafting the initial portions of a paper based on their findings. As Hill Day nears, visiting journalists speak to the class about how to ask probing questions respectfully, while High School students share insights from their past Hill Day experiences.

The off-campus interviews, now arranged by the GDS Impact Lab (see page 46), enable students to flesh out their research, form a policy position, and write a paper about it.

Kathy still remembers extraordinary moments of front-row access to democracy in action, such as when Sen. Wyden led the 8th graders into the Senate chamber while it was being prepared for President Clinton's impeachment trial.

"The adults were all kinds of agape," Kathy recalled, "but I don't think the kids at the moment knew what a privilege it was to see that kind of history in the making."

2000s

2003, November 9
Edith Nash, second Head of School, passes away

2004
First Pride Assembly

September 2007
Mandarin Chinese Language Program debuts

September 11:

Reflections from Campus



"It was picture day for our pre-K students. I was walking through the lobby with my nine little ones behind me when a colleague whispered to me that a plane had hit one of the World Trade Center buildings. By the time we were done, the second plane had hit. Quietly, [LS Principal] Gloria Runyon told us to go back to our classrooms, pull down our blinds, and stay put. For our kids, that meant snack time and play. They were confused when mom or dad came to pick them up early. The looks on the parents' faces were downright frightening. They were just coming in raw."

Jody Welsh, kindergarten teacher



"I was at a meeting with parents [in the LMS] when I learned about the first strike. I assumed it was a tragic accident, but then I heard about the second strike on the radio while driving to the High School. [Two locations back then.] Using my car phone, I immediately ordered a lockdown of both campuses and restricted access to TV for the younger kids. At the upper campus, everyone was gathered around televisions just when the towers collapsed. Rumors were flying about bombs in DC's subway system. We were stunned. In the heavy weeks that followed, the tight teacher-student bond kept us moving forward."

Former Head Peter Branch



"I'm remembering the times at Georgetown Day School when our world fell apart; when President Kennedy was killed, followed all too soon by Bobbie Kennedy and the murder of Martin Luther King. I remember explaining what happened to class after class of young children (we had no high school then), and feeling that nothing is so true as when you have to explain it to children."

Email excerpt, former Head Edith Nash to school administrators (Sept. 25, 2001)



"The events on September 11 have been most disconcerting to our young teachers. Our twenty-somethings barely have memories of the Cold War and believed that any future international conflicts would be resolved like the Gulf War. Those of us who grew up with duck and cover drills, assassinations, and Viet Nam have become middle-aged counselors, voices of calm and optimism in the future of humanity and civilization in much the way you, our parents, offered that vision to us as children and young adults."

**Former Assistant Head of School
Wes Gibson, responding to Edith's email
(Sept. 25, 2001)**



By noon, the [LMS] was empty, and we learned that Flight 93 had crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. When I finally left school, my own children in tow, Washington, DC, felt eerily deserted. Helicopters circled overhead, and smoke from the Pentagon was visible from the school.

Michael Desautels, MS science teacher



"I had divided my 9th grade class into groups for an activity, and I was about to have one or two groups work in the hall to free up space. I noticed that [HS Principal] Paul Levy and other administrators had gathered all the seniors there, and they looked serious. I felt something was wrong. I saw a senior boy place his hand on Paul's shoulder, like a comforting gesture. That moment stuck with me."

Lisa Rauschart, HS history teacher

Living Our Values

As the new millennium dawned, GDS doubled down on its commitment to identity and global citizenship—cultivating a rejection of bigotry, a broadly rounded education, and the capacity to bring change to a troubled world.

The next three stories show how these principles take root in the sanctuary of our hallways and reach the farthest corners of the globe.

Acceptance*

By Claire Pires '09

I remember the moment as if it happened yesterday. I was standing in the black box theater at the Lower/Middle School as a 7th grader in 2004 in front of all of the students and teachers. It was GDS's first-ever Pride Assembly. My hands were sweaty. My moms were sitting in the audience watching. And I spoke about what it was like to be raised by two moms. I spoke about how I had a normal family just like everyone else, even though I lived with two same-sex parents. I talked about how I split my time between my moms' house and my dad's house with his wife and how our family was just like everyone else's.

I was the only kid I knew with same-sex parents, and in that moment, I remember feeling nervous and relieved. As I stood there, I remembered how, just a few weeks prior, someone at GDS had asked me to speak, and I said no. I said I would write something about having two moms that someone else could read. But when I told my mom this, I saw the hurt look on her face. So I decided to speak in front of everyone. And despite being so nervous, I remember how proud I was to have my moms there with me as I spoke about our family. After I was done speaking, several

teachers and students came up to me with kind words, and I developed even closer relationships with people. That acceptance I felt in that moment and for the nine years I was at GDS truly made me into the person I am today.

...[T]wo in particular deserve a great deal of credit for pushing GDS to be more fully embracing of our LGBTQ teachers, students, and families: Peter Branch, GDS's fourth Head of School, and Richard Avidon, long-time High School history teacher.

... It was Peter who instituted our Free to Be Me Assembly at the Lower/Middle School and Pride Week at the High School and made it very clear and very public that all families and all staff were to be welcomed fully and completely.

... Prior to Peter's arrival when just the High School and not the School as a whole was wrestling with the simple question as to whether the High School faculty who identified as gay or lesbian (we didn't have much vocabulary thirty years ago) should come out, it was Richard whose voice carried the day. The issue as to whether such a step would affect admissions was indeed raised. The

discussion had been going on for quite a while when Richard's strong voice cut through the murk. "Does anyone think," Richard asked, "that back in 1945 the founding parents would have debated whether GDS should accept Black families? How is this different?" and that was that. Not all the High School teachers chose to come out following that meeting, but many did, and that was the first big step in this unfolding story.

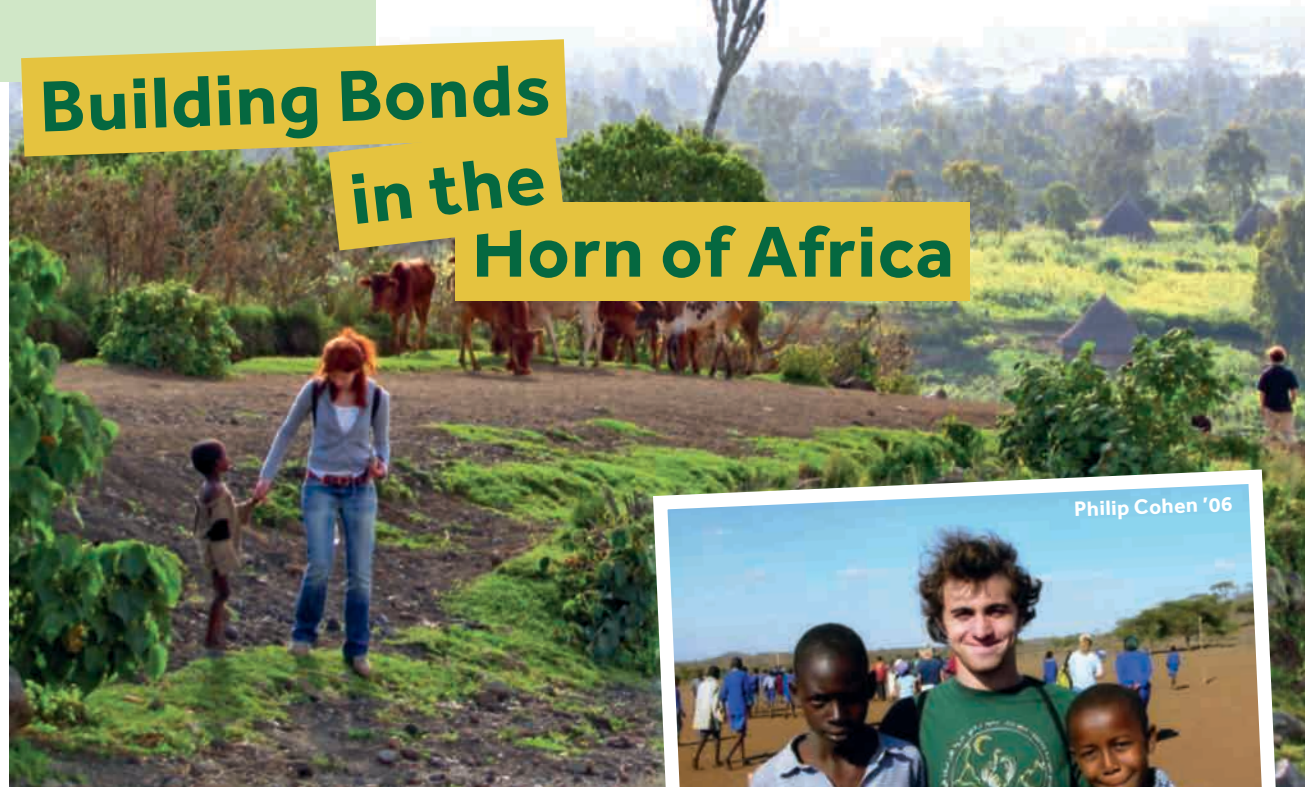


***Reprinted from 75 Years at Georgetown Day School**

NYC Pride Parade, June 30, 2019, (from left) Claire Pires '09, Claire's mom Kathy Lazear, Claire's mom Sheila Pires, Claire's wife Kate Rhodes

2000s

Building Bonds in the Horn of Africa



Every summer, teachers Bobby Asher and C.A. Pilling embarked on a two-week service-learning trip to Ethiopia and Kenya with GDS students in tow. The venture started in earnest in 2003, lasted more than a decade, and challenged the travelers to rethink their place in a complex, interconnected world.

For the first two trips, Bobby and C.A. took four students to Africa through LearnServe Ethiopia, an initiative founded by GDS parent Hugh Riddleberger. Two years later, they established the Horn of Africa Program (HOAP) in-house so they could offer the experience to more GDS students. The program's footprint grew immediately, expanding to include a cohort of roughly 15 students annually who raised funds year-round to support the local initiatives they would visit.

Their mission extended throughout the area and into Kenya, offering a broader perspective on East Africa and its challenges.

Writing for the Summer 2010 *Georgetown Days* magazine, Daisy Zeijlon '10 detailed her group's visit to Kenya's Sekenani



Primary School, where they helped plant a vegetable garden. The school served 760 children, ages six to 14, housing half of them in cramped quarters where students slept three to a bed. Yet despite these challenges, Daisy found a community defined by warmth and resilience.

"We saw kids with odds of success stacked against them cheering, smiling, laughing, and happy to see us," Daisy wrote. "The three-year-olds wanted high fives, the ten-year-olds wanted to know as much as possible about [President] Obama. These students, sitting three to a bench in the classroom, wanted to share their notebooks, soccer balls, and Swahili with us."

During their last day at the school, Daisy remembers the GDS students shouting their farewells in Swahili before retreating to their vehicles, "each of us quietly contemplating whether or not we could get the driver to turn around for one last high-five."

Editor's Note: Today, Bobby Asher is the Director of Student Community Programming and C.A. Pilling, who served as High School Principal, is an HS science teacher.



Navajo Nation Visit, August 2018

A meaningful historical connection formed between GDS and the Navajo Nation decades before students made their debut journey there in 2007.

In the early 1960s, while serving as U.S. Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, GDS co-founder Philleo Nash came to admire and befriend Robert and Ruth Roessel of Red Rock, Arizona. The Roessels pioneered groundbreaking concepts in Navajo education, helping launch the nation's first tribally controlled school in 1966 and the first tribally controlled college in 1968. Their work in Arizona provided a national template for tribal self-determination in education.

A generation later, that meeting of the minds turned into a personal connection when the Roessels' daughter, Faith, enrolled her son, Carl Slater '09, at GDS. It was Carl who sought to connect his classmates with his home community in Arizona, and Faith who helped arrange the inaugural journey—kicking off more than a decade of summer visits to the Navajo Nation.

The pilgrimages offered an immersive, personal window into the history, customs, and culture of the largest federally recognized tribe in the United States. Even Carl and his two siblings—Aaron '12 and Sam '16—felt more bonded with their Navajo community after taking part in the trip.

Sam wrote about his experience in 2013, and reflected on the Navajo teachings that his grandparents, Robert and Ruth, regularly imparted to the family: "If it is to be, it is up to me" and "You never know who is going to be the next friend of the Navajo." That spirit of individual responsibility and open-hearted friendship became the defining takeaway for the travelers, Sam said, as they witnessed how traditional Navajo ways remain a vital, everyday reality alongside modern struggles of reservation life.

"Wherever these students go, they will always carry with them that understanding," Sam wrote, "especially, I hope, back to GDS, and the Navajo concept of *t'áá hwó' ají t'éego*: 'If it is to be, it is up to me.'"

Field Notes

Originally published in the Fall/Winter 2013–14 edition of *Georgetown Days*.

"We volunteered at ADABI, a domestic abuse shelter, by putting on a car wash to help raise money for victims' assistance. We chopped firewood to be used for the traditional healing ceremonies that help families and also donated a much-needed CD/VCR player to occupy the children [at the shelter]. Off the reservation, we learned about urban Indian communities and in Santa Fe taught kids from many different tribes at a summer camp. We saw that it was a struggle for these kids to grow up away from their tribal homes, but that they found pride in creating an intertribal community."

— Griffin Colaizzi '14 and Tristan Colaizzi '16

"We accompanied [Round Rock Community School students] on a culture and wellness camping trip to the Lukachukai Mountains. We experienced Navajo life—making bread, learning the significance of traditional foods such as blue corn meal, and hearing Navajo women elders tell stories around the campfire. This experience opened our eyes to Navajo culture and the importance of passing on the traditions."

— Sarah Shine '15 and Rachel Risoleo '15

2010s

2010, July

Russell Shaw succeeds
Peter Branch

2012, April 13

Russell Shaw declares first-ever
HS Hopper Holiday, a surprise
day of celebration

2015

GDS Policy Institute opens

2017-18

Students gain access to
global study through School
Year Abroad (SYA)

2018

CEEL (now The Impact Lab)
launches

2018, June

GDS drops Advanced
Placement classes

Mission in Motion

Since its founding, GDS has held a steadfast commitment to civic engagement and the belief that education should be a catalyst for social good. Today, that legacy of activism is anchored by two powerhouse initiatives: the GDS Impact Lab and its Policy Institute.



Fifth graders get their hands dirty at Miller Farms in Clinton, Maryland

The Impact Lab

In 2018, GDS unified its civic action efforts into one central hub: the office of **Community Engagement and Experiential Learning (CEEL)**—now known as **The Impact Lab**.

At the time of this consolidation, the High School already had a robust roster of programming. Beyond the 60-hour community service requirement, the Impact Lab was organizing the summer Policy Institute, an internship program for 11th graders, and off-campus field trips for older students.

More recently, the Middle School has undergone a vibrant programmatic shift driven by a partnership between MS faculty and the Impact Lab. The “GDS Corps” that once tied grade-level themes to corresponding

action-oriented activities matured over the past six years into “Middle School Impact”—a program that closely aligns class lessons with year-round excursions and activities.

Last school year, for instance, 5th graders studied food and farming vocabulary in their chosen world language class before visiting Miller Farms. Seventh graders met with local mental health practitioners after learning to gather and analyze mental health statistics in math class.

Building on this learning-by-doing philosophy, the Impact Lab set its sights on the School’s youngest learners in the 2023–24 academic year. The Lab now pairs each Lower School grade with a local organization that works in areas relevant to that grade’s curriculum,

creating a program that includes 40 distinct activities.

For kindergarteners, that meant getting a firsthand look at how Food Rescue US transfers surplus food to people who are food insecure; last year, they teamed up with High School students to collect leftover snacks from GDS and donate them to those in need.

The Impact Lab also serves as a vital bridge between divisions. During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lab kept Hoppers connected via Zoom through its Buddy Program. As the school community fully reunited on campus for the 2021–22 school year, the program blossomed into a robust avenue for cross-divisional mentorship. This year, more than 350 GDS students served as buddies with pairs connecting weekly after school.



Summer 2025

U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin '79 welcomed GDS Policy Institute scholars to his office in 2025 for a discussion on the evolving relationship between church and state. The congressman is part of a longstanding GDS legacy; two of his children and three of his siblings are also alumni.

The Policy Institute

What began as a modest pilot project for GDS High School students in 2015 has evolved into an incubator for inspired activism, helping the students—and now their DC-area peers—develop the skills they need to affect change in their communities and beyond.

The Policy Institute, a one-month summer program run by the Impact Lab, hosts roughly 50 fellows divided among five “tracks.” Each track explores a specific topic, such as the environmental justice movement or factors perpetuating socioeconomic inequity. For the program’s duration, fellows work alongside advocates, interact with policymakers, and travel to “ground zero” cities to learn from the people and places most affected by their focus issue. As the program wraps up, each track of students designs an action project to tackle a challenge in their core area of interest.

The Policy Institute reached a new milestone in the summer of 2025, when it officially opened its doors to students from schools throughout the DC region.

2023



2023





Born the son of sharecroppers on an Alabama farm, U.S. Rep. John Lewis rose to become a titan of the Civil Rights Movement and a respected statesman. A fearless proponent of "good trouble," he distinguished himself as a leader of the nonviolent struggle for racial justice, enduring brutal state-sponsored violence during the 1965 Selma march to ensure the right to vote.

In 2015, the congressman spoke at the GDS High School Forum, and two years later, he met with sixth graders at his Capitol Hill office (photo above). "You must keep your faith. Be hopeful. Be optimistic," Lewis said during his 2015 visit. "You see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have a moral obligation to speak up."



Selma to Montgomery

For the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery marches, a small group of GDS students traveled to Alabama to walk the path of civil rights pioneers whose historic demonstrations riveted the nation and forced the passage of landmark legislation that dismantled systemic barriers for Black voters.

Former HS math teacher Andy Lipps was the driving force behind the school's journey to Selma in 2015. He and seven students traveled South by squeezing onto a bus chartered by his GDS colleague Paula Young Shelton and her church group.

Two years later, Andy and Paula—daughter of civil rights icon Andrew Young—began co-teaching "From Freedom Rides to Ferguson," referring to the 2014 shooting of Michael

Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. They also formalized the Alabama trip into a cherished annual tradition that lasted until Andy retired in 2023.

The three-day trip, limited to about two dozen juniors and seniors annually, included visits to legacy civil rights movement sites, such as the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, where state troopers violently attacked peaceful demonstrators; the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, where four young Black girls were killed in a 1963 bombing; and the Dexter Avenue Church in Montgomery, where Pastor Martin Luther King Jr. preached.

"I struggle to put into words the impact of what we saw and learned," said Bryan Chapman '23. "I went on this trip twice to try and absorb the history and information. It was a very emotional experience."

The Hop Shop



Each year, the shop's profits go to a student-selected charity.

Where the Lower Middle School now stands was a Safeway—a de facto cafeteria for the snack-deprived masses of the High School.

When the grocery store closed in 2016, GDS purchased the site and eventually gained a unified campus. But Safeway's denizens lost their survival rations—kicking off an era of student-run commerce.

Without fanfare, a store named "Tabata"—after the high-intensity Japanese workout—appeared in the High School Internet Cafe the following school year. When Tabata struggled, founder Jonah Docter-Loeb '20 and his team pivoted. They expanded the offerings with weekly Costco runs and recruited student clerks who worked in exchange for discounts.

Eventually, Tabata proved too obscure a name, prompting a rebranding to Story McStoreface (an homage to the research vessel Boaty McBoatface). And then, finally, the Hop Shop.

Standardized Testing

GDS Drops Advanced Placement Courses

In June 2018, GDS and seven other DC-area independent schools jointly announced plans to stop offering Advanced Placement courses, clearing the way for "more transformative and rewarding" classes that align with students' interests and needs.

After years of collaborative deliberation, the schools agreed to phase out AP courses and their standardized exams by 2022. Moving away from this model, they said in a statement, would allow faculty to prioritize in-depth inquiry and rigorous analysis over the high-pressure memorization and "speed of assimilation" required by a timed standardized test. That test was so ubiquitous, it was no

longer "noteworthy" to colleges, they concluded.

Head of School Russell Shaw welcomed a future untethered by the AP framework. Without it, he said, GDS would be free to create more flexible scheduling, capstone projects, independent study, and co-curricular offerings.

"We are confident that an evolved curriculum," Russell said in a note to parents, "will create a more intrinsically valuable learning experience, while still ensuring that our graduates are prepared to thrive in college and beyond."

2020s

The Road to Unification

2020, March 13

COVID-19 forces a shift to remote learning, reshaping the next two academic years

2020, Fall

GDS unifies on a single campus, realizing a decades-long vision

2021, Fall

Four instructional coaches hired to fuel faculty and student growth.

2021, November 14

Third Head of School Gladys Stern passes away at 104

2022, June

HS Commencement moves to campus after decades at GW's Lisner Auditorium

2022, Fall

Enrollment contract adds formal commitment to combat bigotry and hatred

August 2024

GDS achieves carbon-neutral electricity via wind energy credits

2024, Fall

GDS unveils strategic plan to navigate long-term goals

2024-25

\$12 million raised for GDS Scholars Financial Aid Endowment

2026, January 20

Tori Jueds named sixth Head of School

2026, July 1

Fifth Head of School Russell Shaw Departs; Tori Jueds begins tenure

For decades, Georgetown Day School operated as a school of two halves, separated by four miles of city streets. While the High School had called 4200 Davenport Street home since the 1980s, the Lower Middle School was tucked away on MacArthur Boulevard. The dream of a unified PK-12 campus remained just out of reach—until the One GDS campaign.

This multi-year initiative became the School's rallying call, mobilizing more than 2,000 community members to raise \$52 million—the largest sum in GDS history. These funds provided for an expansive new Lower Middle School building in Tenleytown, finally allowing GDS to bring its three divisions to a single campus.

Finding the space ...

JUNE 2014

GDS acquires the Safeway and the Martens Volvo/Volkswagen dealership across from the High School for \$40 million, creating the contiguous space needed to add the Lower/Middle School to the Tenleytown campus.

2014-2018

"One GDS" becomes a rallying cry as the School's trustees and leadership launch a massive multi-year mobilization. They navigate complex zoning and Advisory Neighborhood Commission approvals, conduct feasibility studies, and execute an ambitious capital campaign to unite all three GDS divisions.

APRIL 2018

GDS breaks ground, initiating the campus's physical transformation.

MARCH 9, 2019

At a celebration at The Hamilton Live, Head of School Russell Shaw announces to 800 guests that the campaign has reached its initial \$50 million goal. Joining the festivities were campaign chairs Kate Koffman and Sid Banerjee, and Board Chair Jenny Abramson. The night featured a star-studded alumni showcase with acclaimed singer Anna Berman '79, comedian Gianmarco Soresi '07 as emcee, Broadway's Noah Robbins '09, and Tony nominee Ethan Slater '10. The campaign ultimately raised \$52 million.

An Unwelcome Surprise ...



By the fall of 2020, as the new building stood ready to welcome the younger divisions to Davenport Street, Head of School Russell Shaw reflected on the high expectations—and the sudden, jarring reality—of the School's 75th anniversary and the long-awaited milestone of a unified GDS:

By Russell Shaw, Head of School
Georgetown Days magazine, Fall 2020

All the stars were aligned. We would celebrate Georgetown Day School's 75th anniversary in our first-ever PK-12 unified campus, a year punctuated by an array of firsts—our first Country Market Day in Tenleytown! Our first High School musical attended by Lower and Middle School students who only need to walk across the street to be in the audience! Our first sports season with an expanded fan section to accommodate our younger students! The ribbon cutting would bring together hundreds—or even thousands—of community members, past and present. Together, we would take pride in our School's new home... We had it all figured out.

And then, COVID. A pandemic which demanded that we remove the new collaborative furniture from classrooms and replace it with single desks and chairs, arrayed in rows in order to accommodate distancing requirements and reductions in classroom density. Instead of lunch in our state-of-the-art dining facility, students would eat in the parking garage, and later, their classrooms, sitting silently at their desks. Instead of magnificent papier-mâché art projects to decorate our beautiful new stairwells, there would be hand sanitizer. Lots and lots of hand sanitizer.



2020s

The Road to Unification: A TIMELINE ... continued



As seniors, artists Addie Lowenstein '22 and Annabel Williams '22 created a mural for the HS glass stairwell that chronicles the defining events of their high school days—from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement to the 2020 election and the January 6 insurrection.

The COVID Era ...

MARCH 13, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic forces a shift to virtual learning, and the MacArthur Boulevard campus – home to the LMS for 55 years—closes without a final farewell gathering due to strict in-person restrictions.

APRIL 2020

The Board of Trustees launches the One GDS Community Crisis Fund to support GDS community members struggling with pandemic-related financial and logistical strains. The effort raises nearly \$1 million in eight weeks.

JUNE 7, 2020

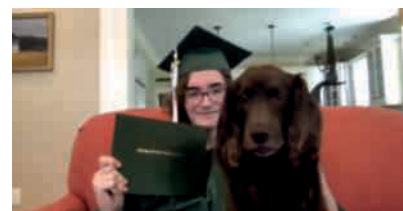
GDS celebrates graduating seniors with a “Summer Send-Off Drive Thru,” during which students receive their diplomas, a gift basket, and cheers from faculty and staff who stand well-distanced along the sidewalks.



PHOTO BY JASON PUTSCHÉ

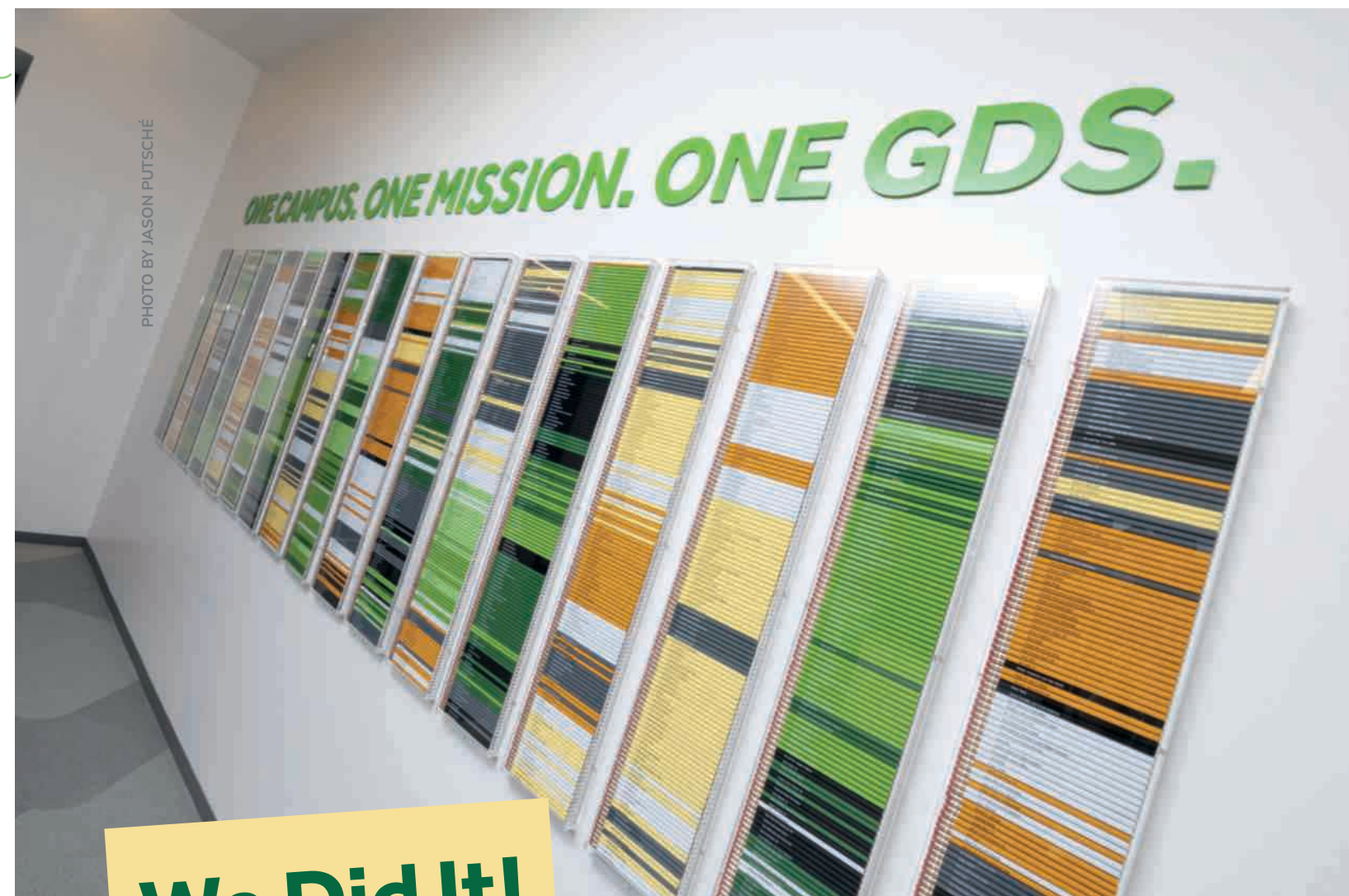
AUGUST 2, 2020

Adhering to DC health guidelines, GDS hosts its first-ever all-virtual graduation ceremony with a mix of live and pre-recorded content.



FALL 2020

The new LMS building is complete, but the school year begins virtually, with students barred from campus for the first two months. Starting in November, students return in staggered cohorts on alternating days, and the “unified” experience is defined by strict testing and safety protocols for the remainder of the year.



We Did It!

2021–Present

The 2021-22 academic year marks the first full year of in-person, unified learning. A hallway installation of 2,055 yellow and green pencils in the new LMS honors the donors who made the One GDS vision possible. While the 75th anniversary passed quietly during the pandemic, GDS marks its 80th year in 2025–26 with a year-long celebration of its history and its new home.



Investing in the Future

At GDS, innovation isn't just a buzzword. It's a commitment backed by investment. From providing seed capital for student entrepreneurs and faculty pilot projects to ensuring a GDS education is accessible for generations to come, the School is uplifting the people and ideas that will shape the future.



GDS Scholars

Following a \$12 million fundraising effort in the 2024-25 academic year, the School established the GDS Scholars Financial Aid Endowment to fund a four-year High School education for two new GDS students every academic year, in perpetuity.

The endowment marked a major milestone in the School's commitment to equity and access. The funding—provided by a circle of donors who each committed at least \$250,000—supports high-achieving DC middle school students from historically marginalized groups. The first scholarships were awarded for Fall 2025.

"Georgetown Day School was founded as an act of access. The founders had the vision that we should be a school that attracted students from across the DMV," said Head of School Russell Shaw when the funding was unveiled. "I am delighted that this program will broaden access to our School for generations to come."

Assuming a 3.5% annual draw from the endowment's total value, the funding will cover the Scholars' tuition plus equitable participation costs, such as college admission testing fees and sports equipment for student-athletes.



Team Paycheck displays its winning check. (From left) Coach Ella Maas '28, Aliana Cromer '29, Morgan Laryea-Crawford '29, Naomi Netter '29, Elise Wosinska '29

Hopper Tank: Pitch for a Purpose

For five consecutive years, select groups of budding High School entrepreneurs have pitched their business ideas at the Hopper Tank competition, where winning teams each walked away with a \$1,000 check to launch their ventures.

The annual competition is the culmination of a 16-week extracurricular program run by GDS's Patty Abramson Social Venture Lab. Throughout the term, students receive mentorship and coaching to develop financially sustainable startups and learn to sell their vision to an audience. The experience culminates in the Shark Tank-style Hopper Tank event, where teams present their ideas to the entire Middle School. A winning group emerges based on the audience's vote, cast using "gold coins" or "Patty Bucks."

This year, the winning team—Aliana Cromer '29, Morgan Laryea-Crawford '29, Naomi Netter '29, and Elise Wosinska '29



(coached by one of last year's winners, Ella Maas '28)—earned the top prize for Paycheck. The venture provides employers with reliable profiles of formerly incarcerated job seekers, using publicly available records to verify their work history, good behavior, and other factors.

GDS parent Jenny Abramson '95 created the Venture Lab to honor her mother, Patty, who is widely credited with founding one of the nation's first venture capital funds devoted to investing exclusively in women-owned businesses. Jenny, a former Trustee, enlisted GDS-connected business leaders, teachers, and former Hopper Tank participants as coaches and organizers.

"Student participation has grown 10-fold since the program's launch," said Jenny, the founder of Rethink Impact, a venture capital firm that backs women. "The broader GDS community—from alumni and parents to Middle School judges—has embraced it. I started the Lab in honor of my Mom, but I think what would excite her most is that it has taken on a life of its own."

2020s

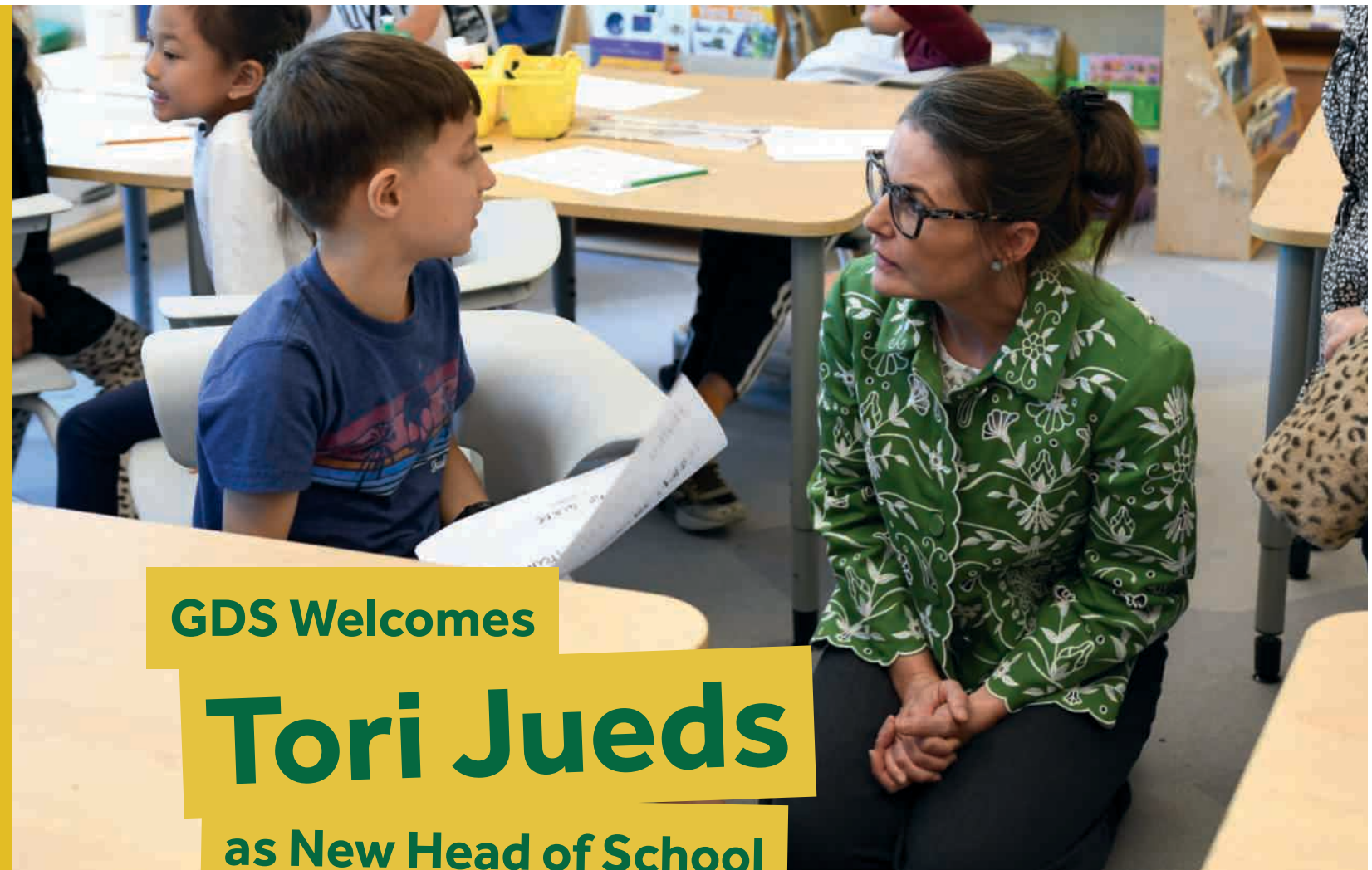
YOU ARE PART OF THE GDS STORY!

While the GDS campus has evolved in amazing ways during the past 80 years, its founding principles remain constant. The School continues to be an intellectual hub where students love to learn and learn to change the world.

As always, GDS's remarkable community shapes our story. We invite you to make your mark on the future by contributing to the Hopper Fund today.



Visit gds.org/giving
to celebrate 80 years of GDS!



GDS Welcomes

Tori Jueds as New Head of School

Georgetown Day School named Tori Jueds, former head of the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, as its sixth head of school in January 2026, capping a yearlong search that drew on input from leadership, faculty, and students alike.

Tori emerged from a field of four finalists to succeed Russell Shaw, whose extraordinary run at GDS spanned 16 years and officially ended in the summer of 2026.

At Lab—a school of roughly 2,000 students in nursery through 12th grade—Tori led a diverse community through a period of growth and innovation from 2021 to 2025. Previously, she headed Westtown School in the Philadelphia suburbs and served for a decade at Princeton University, where she ascended to the role of Senior Associate Dean of Undergraduate Students.

A graduate of Harvard University and Harvard Law School, Tori worked earlier in her career as a clerk for a federal judge, in private practice, and as a lecturer at George Washington University Law School.

“Tori has earned a reputation as a charismatic and principled leader, listener, decision-maker, and steward for some of the most well-respected academic institutions in the country,” Board Chair Donald Saelinger wrote in a message to the GDS community. “She brings a profound respect for educators and students; a strong commitment to inquiry-driven learning that prioritizes fairness, belonging, and success for each student; and a deeply held conviction that diversity and the advancement of social justice are GDS’s defining strengths.”

Tori inherits a school that is thriving academically, financially, and culturally. As she moves into her new role this summer, she expressed a desire to carry the GDS mission forward, honoring its storied history while evolving to meet the challenges of the future.

“My first priority will be to listen and learn,” Tori said in a statement. “For 80 years, GDS has expertly prepared thoughtful, principled students to thrive in an ever-more complex world and make it a better place. I want to learn everything I can from the students, faculty, staff, parents, and alumni who know and love this school.”

80th Anniversary Celebration

The year-long celebration of GDS's 80th anniversary reached its spectacular conclusion on the evening of Saturday, May 2, as hundreds of parents, alumni, faculty, and staff gathered at the National Portrait Gallery.

The soirée honored the School's rich history while looking toward a bright future. Guests enjoyed a live band, dancing, and curated food stations. GDS student artwork was displayed on high tables throughout the venue, bringing the School's artistic vibrancy into the historic museum. The evening's program included remarks from Board Chair Donald Saelinger, MS history teacher Julia Blount '08, and the three most recent heads of school—Peter Branch, Russell Shaw, and Tori Jueds, who begins her tenure in July. It was a night that perfectly captured the spirit of the GDS community, bridging eight decades of tradition with a joyful celebration of the present.

PHOTOS BY JASON PUTSCHÉ

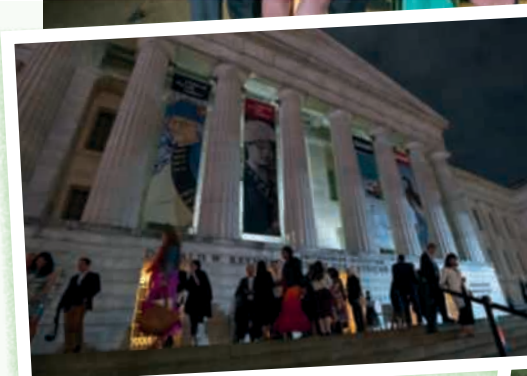
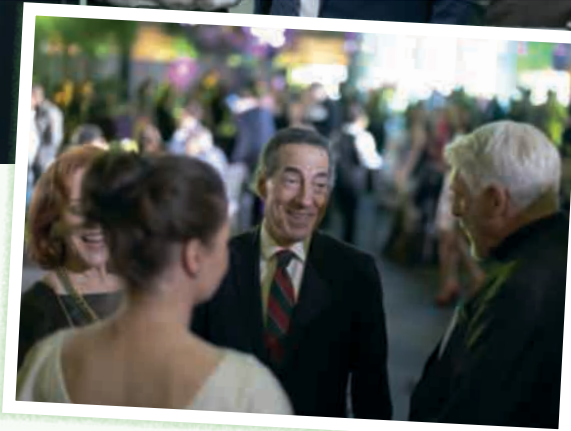


PHOTO BY JASON PUTSCHÉ

Tribute
**Farewell,
Russell**

**Honoring 16 years
of Leadership**



Russell Shaw

A Man Who Dives

By Kevin Barr, Former Associate Head of School

In a letter to his friend Evert Duyckinck, Herman Melville wrote: “I love all men who dive. ...Any fish can swim near the surface, but it takes a great whale to go down stairs five miles or more; ...I’m not talking of Mr Emerson now—but of the whole corps of thought-divers, that have been diving & coming up again with blood-shot eyes since the world began.”

When it comes to men who dive, Melville would have recognized a boon companion in Russell. Former GDS Board Chair Jenny Abramson '95 recalls a gathering of GDS families by the banks of the Potomac, during which Russell plunged into the river’s murky waters and then popped back up, beaming with delight. That scene captures something essential about Russell: a readiness to take a leap into the unknown, believing there is a good to be gained; a willingness to brave the mud; and a capacity to bring joy to others. With his charm and his intelligence, he could have been a politician, but like Ahab, Russell had his “humanities.”



Russell celebrates with Kevin Barr (center) and Kamal Ali '80 at the One GDS groundbreaking ceremony.

The Depth of Connection

Russell learned quickly that the waters of GDS and Washington, DC, are rarely transparent, that swimming in them requires perspicacity, patience, and endurance. Handed a list of multiple items by the Board that had to be done, some that were new, some that had been brewing, all of which were pressing, he had no choice but to do a deep dive.

Russell understood implicitly why GDS’s first Head, Aggie O’Neil, had put relationships at the heart of the School’s educational mission; it was not because feeling good about oneself is the end of an education, but because children cannot do their best work unless they feel safe, seen, and known. That first summer, notwithstanding a broken collarbone from a literal dive, Russell took the time to study the names and faces of the students and the faculty. As if by wizardry, when the school year opened, he seemed to know the name of every kid. And if that was just a Jedi trick, by the end of the first semester, the memorization was complete. More than that, he took the time to know them, to notice who was sad or grumpy or a little lost or scared.

As he settled in, Russell also left his desk and dove into the quotidian but endlessly alive moments in the School’s life—playing guitar in kindergarten music classes; performing the ever-evolving annual GDS Christmas Blues at the HS Christmas assemblies; joining Middle School math games during classroom visits; welcoming seniors into his office for pizza and conversation; and perhaps most importantly, allowing himself to be playful, silly, and even foolish whether live or in the dozens of videos announcing snow days and other matters of equal weight. In these moments, Russell modeled what the School hopes to teach: a willingness to take risks, an ease with oneself, a desire to spread joy, and an appreciation of tradition. Russell’s accessibility and sheer presence in the life of the kids was a form of culture-building—a dive into the actual lifeblood of the School.

Charting One GDS

That willingness to engage on a deeply personal level allowed Russell to tackle the seemingly insurmountable challenge that had befuddled Boards since the High School was created in Keegan’s hardware store in 1969: how to unify the three divisions on a single campus without moving out of the city. Only a very optimistic person could look at a dilapidated Safeway grocery store and a small parking lot and envision a unified campus alive with children ages 4-18. The project required endless hours of conversation,

(from left) Russell with former Board chairs Brad Vogt, Michael Gottdenker, and Jenny Abramson '95 at the Tenleytown campus during the construction phase of what is now the Lower/Middle School.



compromise, disappointment, patient explanation, thick skin development, and skillful balancing of multiple constituent needs. It required Russell to master nearly every element of the project, take a very deep dive into the complex work of merging institutional cultures, fundraise at an unprecedented scale, and reimagine how GDS could and should function as a single community.

And it required Russell to inhale the School so deeply into his lungs that he could make others breathe the possibilities that he saw and invest philanthropically in his vision, giving rise to the One GDS campaign. The campaign wasn’t just about bricks and mortar. It was about Russell’s commitment to keeping the School as affordable as possible to a diverse mix of families, a concept central to the School’s identity. Under his leadership, GDS’s endowment ballooned, and nearly a quarter of the students received the support they needed through the financial aid program. Russell also made sure that this aid would cover the cost of a laptop, athletic uniforms, and SAT preparation, because failure to address these needs can isolate students from the full life of the community.

Unifying a campus might seem like the greatest magic trick of all, but for me, watching Russell navigate the waters swirling about curricular matters was equally impressive. Tackling the thorniest curricular issue of all, whether the AP program, put him in the crosshairs of the faculty, the parents, the College Board, and eventually the Justice Department! (It is DC after all.) Diving once more, Russell instinctively understood that

PHOTOS BY JASON PUTSCHÉ

Russell's "sheer presence in the life of the kids was a form of culture-building."



moving away from the AP curriculum would require getting our peer schools on board. Some had already been thinking along these lines; some hadn't imagined the possibility. The "thought-diver" in Russell went deep below the surface and steered the conversation among school leaders to an end that satisfied just about everyone. Russell made a convincing argument for why a curriculum created and graded by an external agency, a curriculum that too often constricted rather than expanded a student's approach to learning, was in many ways anathema to the very idea of what an independent school should be.

The Steadying Anchor

One would think that having accomplished so much calls for a well-deserved swim in clear, unruffled waters, but then came COVID. "Managing crisis became the job, and I don't think it ever really let up after that," said former Board Chair Jeff Blum. "It was a brutal stretch for independent school heads, and many walked away. But I watched Russell dig in." It was during that once-in-a-lifetime pandemic that the true diver in Russell came to the fore. In an echo of the very Melvillean "I try all things. I achieve what I can" philosophy, Russell and the teachers did, in fact, try everything. They made sure that every student had a laptop at home for virtual learning; regularly communicated with families; kept up with the changing, often confusing and contradictory, messages from the government; and held the community together through virtual meetings.

All that diving in both clear and muddy waters brought Russell a hard-won wisdom. He emerged as a public intellectual, a role held by Aggie at the founding of the School. He presented nationally on the intersection of parenting, technology, and education at several venues, including the Aspen Ideas Festival and the National Association of Independent Schools Annual Conference. He started regularly contributing to *The Atlantic* on themes of parenting and resilience, diving into conversations about how we raise children in an age of anxiety. In one article, Russell reflected on his own parenting, recalling how his toddler son would frequently run down the driveway and fall, instantly looking to gauge his father's reaction. "If my face betrayed worry or if I audibly gasped, he would wail," Russell wrote. The observation became a meditation on how adult anxiety shapes children, and what it might mean to parent differently—to be what he called a "lighthouse parent," guiding from a respectful distance rather than hovering.

During his 16 years at GDS, Russell's leadership served as a steadying anchor for the thousands of children and adults who flowed through the School's doors. He taught us, through example, not to fear the unknown. He assured us that we possess the resilience needed to weather challenges. As the ultimate thought-diver, he also encouraged us not to back away from tough discussions but to embrace them with genuine curiosity. As Russell departs for new seas, he leaves GDS securely moored in its founders' vision of an education driven equally by the heart and the head.

The Russell Fund for Community Impact

Each of us had the privilege of serving as Board Chair during Russell Shaw's tenure as Head of School, and our profound gratitude for his 16 years of service unites us all.

Russell has led with conviction and humility, positioning GDS as a driving force for equity, community, and the common good. Generations of students to come will no doubt see his snow day videos or hear his witty holiday blues parodies and intuitively understand that joy and seriousness of purpose can—and do—coexist in one school.

To honor his legacy, Georgetown Day School has established the Russell Fund for Community Impact to invest in the priorities that Russell championed during his time at the School, including:

- Expanding Tuition Access
- Advancing the Policy Institute
- Embracing Emerging Opportunities

We hope you will join us in celebrating Russell's legacy of leading with integrity and purpose.

Jenny Abramson '95
Jeff Blum
Katherine Borsecknik
Lisa Fairfax
Michael Gottdenker
Donald Saelinger



Your gift to the Russell Fund will advance the GDS mission and support our work today and into the future.

Sixteen Years of First Days

By Julia Fisher '09, HS English Teacher

In the spring of 2010, towards the end of my freshman year of college, a GDS senior solicited letters to give to the newly hired head, Russell Shaw, in a big bundle when he took office over the summer. I meant to write. All summer, I thought I'd send something, even late. In the waning hours of Labor Day, I realized that it was my last chance to write something before the school year started at GDS. I dashed something off and sent it at 1:39 a.m.

I wrote about the day, during the fall of my senior year, when a teacher asked my class to picture our favorite place in the world, and I realized I was there. I wrote about serendipitous conversations that lead to a yearlong study of James Joyce or triumphs over censorship that fuel a production of *The Producers*. I told the new guy that I hoped he would come to love GDS as much as I did.

In the weeks that followed, I heard that Russell had read excerpts from my letter at various talks. My former teachers reported Russell's triumphs: He was studying the history of the school, he was humble, faculty morale had never been so high.

I swear I wasn't, that night, trying to secure the job at GDS I would land eight years later. I had no idea. I just loved the school and wanted to say so. Two of my teachers—both of whom would later become my colleagues—took to summarizing my letter to Russell: "Don't [screw] it up." That wasn't what I meant to say, at least not consciously, but I suppose it is how I felt about my beloved school that would be entrusted to a stranger's care.

Russell wouldn't stay a stranger. On my first trip home to Washington that fall, for Thanksgiving, I met Russell for a walk. He talked about an idea to build a student-driven think tank, to take advantage of GDS's setting in the nation's capital. I was politely skeptical—of course I had no idea that, a little more than a decade later, I'd be leading a track in the Policy Institute.

And Russell asked me for another letter.

Thus began a ritual. Every year, on the night before the first day of school, I compose a letter to Russell. Its subject line: "First day."



In the early years, the essays aimed to introduce Russell to GDS, a school I'd known for most of my life but to which he, its leader, was still relatively new. I wanted him to understand its soul. (I believed—I still believe—the school had a soul.)

By the time I took my first teaching gig in the fall of 2014, the letters were more meditative. I mused about what made GDS GDS, about what it meant to leave it behind. Walt Whitman made an appearance. Two years later, I wrote about wandering alone around European cities. The letters were about GDS, sure, and about the first day of school—but year by year they came to feature Chaucer, Hannah Arendt, a movie called *Didi*, whatever was on my mind.

GDS teaches its students to pull everything they encounter into their thought, to try to make sense of the world and their place in it. When a student mentions her physics homework in my English class, I tell them all they must keep studying physics because—see?—it will make them better at English. In class or in casual conversations in the hall, GDS students come to be good at riffing. In my letters, I'm always riffing.

In retrospect, it looks inevitable: I loved GDS as a student, wrote letters to Russell spurred by that staying love for the school, and then worked my way back there to teach English and try to impart that love to other students. A coherent story. It didn't feel that way at all: It felt improvised, even happenstance.

My ritual approach to those letters feels immutable now, but it developed over time. The night before the first day of school, after I prepare for my classes, I go for a run and think about the letter. When I get home, I start to write. The piece never matches quite what was in my head as I ran—new thoughts pop up and change the letter's contours. I write to figure out what I think. As longtime GDS English teacher

John Burghardt says, language has a mind of its own. As I put thoughts on the page, they take on meanings that had always been there but that I hadn't known to see.

I think it's the same with my letters to Russell, and maybe of my friendship with Russell. I had no idea, in September 2010, that I was doing anything more than writing a single email. Now, it seems that I was writing so much of my life into existence.

Recently, I told students that writing under weird constraints can be generative. I told them about my letter-writing ritual, what fun I find it to let the artificiality of my rules shape the structure of my thoughts. I don't know what letters I would write if I outlined and edited over days or weeks. But the First Day letter is a ritual that celebrates newness, possibility, and staring out at what's ahead and embracing what comes, as it comes. Each new school year, we figure out what we want to say, and in saying it, we make ourselves who we are.

I think Russell understands that about GDS. He has from the very beginning, and I think that's part of what has made him such a good head of school. He studies the past but also the present, greeting it as it comes. He walks through the halls every day, looking to see what stories are unfolding.

GDS inheres in its stories—not just the letters I write every year, or the speeches Russell writes, but in the stories its thousands of alumni tell their friends, lovers, and children who've never set foot in the place. We tell stories that make our lives seem inevitable, because, when we utter them, they become so.

Thanks to Russell for writing so many stories for us all these last sixteen years. And thanks for asking me, each year, to write mine.

Russell's Rituals

Russell's addresses to the GDS community—whether in “State of the School” talks or his commencement speeches—were never mere formalities. They were deeply considered reflections on our mission, our values, and above all, our students. We present here the traditions he created and what he had to say about the ideals he championed

A Parting Gift

At commencement rehearsals, Russell often provided departing seniors with a book he loved.



Let It Snow!

The first snow of the year brought out Russell's showmanship, as demonstrated in the videos he starred in to mark the school's closure. Whether channeling Mister Rogers or leading a Broadway-style anthem, he injected an extra dose of fun into the day.



Hopper Holiday Happiness

At the end of an assembly on April 13, 2012, the High School Forum shades were lifted to reveal a carnival of rides and games. And just like that, Russell declared the first-ever Hopper Holiday, a surprise break from the school day. Teachers and staff fired up the grill, and an afternoon of fun unfolded. The annual tradition recently leveled up with an ice rink in the gym.



Singing the Christmas Blues

For every Christmas Peace Assembly, Russell arrived with guitar in hand and a fresh lyric specific to GDS, performed in the talking blues style.



What Will You Take With You?

Toward the end of every school year, Russell invited seniors to write to him about what they would take with them from GDS.



In His Words



On disruption

“Sometimes the kids who make us crazy go on to do amazing things, and we'd be well served to remember to, [as Second Head Edith Nash said], ‘Respect some disorder in the service of learning.’ That doesn't mean chaos. It doesn't mean no boundaries. But it does mean we make space for students to take risks, to fail, to try things that might not work. Because that's where real learning happens.”

On purpose

“I want every GDS student to connect to a sense of purpose—to some animating ‘why’ that gives them a reason to feel like their life, and what they bring to the world, their unique gifts, matters.”

On parenting

“Our kids will inevitably have their ups and downs. This is part of growing up. Our job as parents is not to be on the rollercoaster with them, but on the ground, ready to provide a hug or simply to listen when the ride pauses.”

On diversity

“For real growth, what young people need to see reflected back to them is not only a mirror image of themselves, but also difference. It is a difference that can lead young people out of life's developmental gridlocks. We need diversity not just in its traditionally considered manifestations—race, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, religion—but also of perspectives, experiences, approaches.”

On friendship

“As you're finding your way in life, your friends won't be able to provide you with a roadmap to your destination—they won't even be able to tell you what that destination should be. But they may provide you with a compass by helping you to discern what's most important to you and then holding you accountable to those values.”

On curiosity

“An open mind means not only accepting what we don't know, but acknowledging that the things that we DO know could be proven wrong as we gain more knowledge, experience, and learning.”

On joy

“Some schools treat joy with suspicion, as if academic rigor and happiness are somehow at odds. GDS has always known better. We understand that the hum of purposeful activity can coexist with laughter. That you can have high standards and high spirits at the same time.”

PHOTO BY JASON PUTSCHÉ

Gratitude, Good Wishes, and a Diploma

The joyful tributes continued on Saturday, May 30, at a community-wide, on-campus event filled with heartfelt reflections from Russell's closest friends, colleagues, and family. Russell was presented with an honorary diploma and other meaningful keepsakes, including a GDS memory book and memento box, an engraved clock from the Board, and a custom, commissioned artwork by Lower School teacher Todd Carter.

The Saturday event also marked the unveiling of the Russell Shaw Civic Engagement Panel. This panel will bring together thought leaders and community members every spring to discuss vital issues surrounding democracy and engaged citizenship. The event will prioritize dialogue across differences, deep listening, and principled action rooted in empathy and integrity. Stay tuned for more information!

We wish Russell the best as he moves to Colorado to join his wife, Shira, and embark on his next adventures—writing a book and pursuing other new projects.

PHOTOS BY MATT RYB



PHOTOS BY JASON PUTSCHÉ



RussellMania A Knockout Send-Off

Pumping bass, a roaring crowd, and a deafening chant of "Russell, Russell, Russell!" transformed the LMS gym into a heavyweight championship arena for "RussellMania" on May 29. Russell took his seat in a velvet-tufted red throne for the ultimate celebration of his 16-year legacy. Students from every division showered him with skits, songs, gifts, and many kind words. Announcer (aka HS science teacher) Greg Dallinger brought true big-stadium energy to the event, hyping the crowd with this roaring introduction:

AND NOW...PLEASE RISE...FOR THE REIGNING...
DEFENDING...UNDISPUTED...CHAMPION
OF GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL
RUSSELLLLLL SHAAAAWWWWW!



GDS at 80

HONORING
COMMUNITY
AND TRADITION

At Georgetown Day School, celebrating each other’s traditions is itself a time-honored tradition, one rooted in the belief that sharing cultural and religious practices is essential to helping students respect the dignity of others.

School performances, assemblies, and informal gatherings bring these practices to life, whether they mark religious holidays, such as Christmas and Passover, or observances shared by families from across the United States or around the world.

“I feel that it is most important that we should try in every way to understand each other,” said Aggie O’Neil, the School’s founder and its director for 16 years. “One of the best ways is through participation in each other’s days of joy. ...We are not trying to impose religious belief on anyone; only to show them the beauty of other nationalities and religions.”

While these founding celebrations remain cornerstones of our calendar, the GDS story has expanded over time to include new traditions. Some are born of celebration or student-led advocacy. Others—such as the speaker series that honors the memory of former GDS student Ben Cooper—arise from a desire to turn shared grief into a lasting intellectual legacy. These gatherings exemplify our commitment to building connection and recognizing our shared humanity.



CELEBRATING
PEACE AND
FREEDOM

In the early years, when the School was small, the entire GDS community gathered for Christmas carols and a Passover seder. As the School grew, each division began holding its own celebrations, refining them in age-appropriate ways while reaffirming their central values.



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
JUSTICE ASSEMBLY

Shortly after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination in 1968, the GDS community gathered to reflect on the weight of his message and the future of his mission. Author Milton Viorst, a GDS parent who knew King and wrote a book chronicling the civil rights movement, spoke at the solemn gathering. Inspired by this powerful meeting, GDS established an annual MLK assembly dedicated to justice, human rights, and equality.

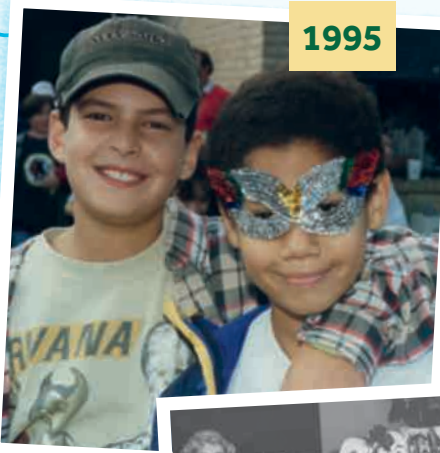
The LS assembly, which takes place around the time of King’s birthday, has traditionally focused on his life by reciting freedom songs and King’s own writings. Past programs were enriched by speakers who shaped the civil rights movement. Many were GDS parents, including civil rights icon and DC’s first congressional delegate Walter Fauntroy; pioneering educator Bennetta Washington, wife of DC’s first elected mayor; Dorothy Gilliam, the first Black woman reporter at *The Washington Post*; Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and legal scholar Roger Wilkins; and Frank Smith Jr., co-founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and a former DC councilmember.

Each assembly closes with the sing-along of “We Shall Overcome.”



HALLOWEEN

An oft-repeated GDS Halloween story recalls Philleo Nash’s response to a self-described “free thinking” parent who stood up at a Board meeting to protest the School’s emphasis on religious holidays. After offering a thoughtful preamble about GDS’s carefully balanced approach to community traditions, Philleo, first president of GDS’s Board of Trustees, delivered the line now etched in GDS’s collective memory: “For the free thinkers, we celebrate Halloween.”



Second Head of School Edith Nash with students.



ONE DAY THREE TRADITIONS

One October day in 2025, GDS celebrated three distinct heritages, centering on what connects us across cultures and honoring what we have to learn from each other's practices.

While planning the October 10 events, the School's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion office actively engaged teachers, students, and even parents, ensuring they served as genuine co-creators of each presentation, according to Ariana Abadian-Heifetz, Associate Director of the DEI office.

"The day ended up being a microcosm of the kind of learning and engagement we see across campus all year," Ariana said. "We're engaging our students as citizens of the world, fostering a sense of wonder, gratitude, and curiosity across differences."



Thaja Huidrom '34 wears special clothes, prays with her family, and enjoys her mom's homemade sweets.



(from left) Lyla Ranjeet '36, Samaya Kapoor '36, and Penelope Murali '36, performed the Bharatanatyam a classical Indian dance.

DIWALI

Diwali, also known as the Festival of Lights, is a five-day celebration that originates from the Hindu story of the Ramayana. In the Hindu tradition, Diwali symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and the inner strength that helps individuals move through hardship. At an LS assembly, students marked the celebration with dance, an informative presentation, and a slideshow showcasing how various GDS community members observe the holiday.



Samyuktha '32 and Rohan '35 Narayan enjoy celebrating their culture with family and friends by lighting sparklers and diyas (oil lamps), creating rangolis (decorations typically in front of home entrances), and savoring sweet laddoos.



Githa Natarajan (far right), LMS Admissions Director, says her son Roshan '23 and daughter Somwya '25 (center) carry on the family's Diwali traditions in college, including saying prayers and lighting diyas to welcome knowledge, enlightenment, and prosperity

William Carr '31, Jacob Castillo '31, and Kaely Castillo '31 shared stories of their heritage and family traditions.



HISPANIC AND LATINX HERITAGE MONTH ASSEMBLY

The Middle School Hispanic and Latinx Heritage Assembly offered a rich blend of history, family traditions, and a dynamic demonstration of Capoeira—an art form developed by enslaved Africans in Brazil that blends martial arts and dance. Capoeira became a powerful vehicle for cultural expression, resistance, and community building under slavery.

The assembly was one of a series of celebrations that took place over several weeks during Hispanic Heritage Month. Others included an LS program on October 3 featuring the Grammy Award-winning duo 123 Andrés and a September 12 HS assembly, where Roberto Molina, business manager of Breads Unlimited and Edith's Pizza, shared how his family emigrated from El Salvador and created a multi-generational business.

The Afro-Brazilian group Abadá-Capoeira DC led a dynamic Capoeira demonstration and had GDS students join them on stage.

SUKKOT

To celebrate the seven-day Jewish festival of Sukkot, the GDS Jewish Student Coalition partnered with American University Chabad to bring a mobile *sukkah* or "hut" to campus, perfectly timed for the Middle School and High School lunch breaks. Also known as the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths, Sukkot commemorates the fall harvest and the temporary shelters that the Israelites used during their journey after leaving Egypt. The holiday invites reflection on gratitude, hospitality, and the sustenance that nature provides.

Students stood in front of the *sukkah* with Rabbi Shua Hecht, Director of Chabad AU. Observant Jews shake the *lulav* (palm branch), *etrog* (citron), *hadassim* (myrtle), and *aravot* (willow) in a ritual symbolizing unity within the Jewish community and connection to nature.



Esti Hecht, Director of Education and Youth Initiatives at Chabad AU in Washington, DC, spoke to students about the *sukkah*, which symbolizes temporary housing for the holiday of Sukkot.

Benjamin Cooper Memorial Lecture Series

On November 19, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson delivered the 28th Benjamin Cooper Memorial Lecture at GDS. Justice Jackson shared reflections on her life experiences, offered an inside look at the inner workings of the Supreme Court, and spoke warmly of her years as a GDS parent and Board Trustee.

The lecture series was established in memory of Ben Cooper in 1998 by his close friends David Goldberg '98, Jennifer Miller '98, Megan Palmer '97, Jacob Remes '98, Dan Sharfman '97, and Jessica Wolland '97. Ben was a rising senior at GDS when he was killed in a tragic accident on August 12, 1997. Endowed by the Cooper-Areen family, the Lecture Fund enables GDS to host a renowned guest each year to stimulate the kind of rigorous, thoughtful dialogue in which Ben loved to participate.

PHOTOS
BY
JASON
PUTSCHÉ



(front, from left) August Cooper '36, Penelope Cooper '34, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, Richard Cooper, Judith Areen
(back, from left): Kate Heinzelman, Jonathan Cooper '01

Past Speakers

GDS has welcomed a distinguished array of leaders, authors, and activists to honor Ben's legacy, including:



2024
Eric Liu Co-founder and CEO of Citizen University and author of *The Gardens of Democracy*



2023
Andrea Elliott Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* journalist and author of *Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival & Hope in an American City*



2022
Ed Yong Pulitzer Prize-winning science writer for *The Atlantic* and author of *An Immense World*



2021
Jodi Kantor Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* reporter and co-author of *She Said*. Her reporting on Harvey Weinstein helped ignite the #MeToo movement



2020
The Legacy of **Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg**: A panel discussion featuring then-U.S. District Judge **Ketanji Brown Jackson**, U.S. Circuit Judge **Nina Pillard**, U.S. Rep. **Jamie Raskin** '79, and NPR Legal Affairs Correspondent **Nina Totenberg**



2019
Jacqueline Novogratz Founder and CEO of Acumen and author of the bestseller *The Blue Sweater*



2018
Ambassador Samantha Power Former U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Pulitzer Prize-winning author



2017
B. Gentry Lee Chief Engineer for the Solar System Exploration Directorate at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL)



2016
Justice Sonia Sotomayor Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court



2015
Jose Antonio Vargas Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, filmmaker, and founder of Define American



2014
Michele Norris Peabody Award-winning journalist, former NPR host, and founder of The Race Card Project



2013
Ta-Nehisi Coates National correspondent for *The Atlantic* and National Book Award-winning author of *Between the World and Me*



2012
Franklin Foer '92, Jonathan Safran Foer '95, and Joshua Foer '00 Acclaimed authors, brothers, and GDS alumni





2011
David Shipler Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*



2010
Zainab Salbi Author, humanitarian, and founder of Women for Women International



2009
Julian Bond Civil rights movement leader, professor, and former Chairman of the NAACP



2008
Greg Mortenson Humanitarian and author of *Three Cups of Tea*



2007
John Hope Franklin Renowned historian and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom



2006
James C. Scott Sterling Professor of Political Science and Anthropology at Yale University



2005
William McDonough Architect, designer, and pioneer of "Cradle-to-Cradle" sustainable design



2004
Sherman J. Alexie, Jr. Award-winning poet, novelist and filmmaker



2003
Senator George J. Mitchell Former Senate Majority Leader and lead negotiator of the Good Friday Agreement



2002
Anna Quindlen Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist and bestselling novelist



2001
Elie Wiesel Nobel Peace Prize laureate, author, and Holocaust survivor



2000
Dr. Maya Angelou Acclaimed poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist



1999
Dr. Harold Varmus Nobel Prize-winning scientist and former Director of the National Institutes of Health



1998
Taylor Branch Pulitzer Prize-winning historian of the civil rights movement



(from left) Adrienne LaFrance, Russell Shaw, Jennifer Griffin, Jeffrey Goldberg

THE
FUTURE OF
DEMOCRACY
AND THE FIRST
AMENDMENT

On March 16, the GDS community gathered to hear from a panel of distinguished journalists about the future of democracy and the First Amendment. The panelists—Jeffrey Goldberg (Editor in Chief of *The Atlantic*) and Jennifer Griffin (Chief National Security Correspondent at FOX News Channel)—discussed how they navigated their roles as watchdogs in an era of stark polarization. Adrienne LaFrance, *The Atlantic's* Executive Editor, moderated the well-attended, hour-long conversation, which took place in the LMS Flexible Performance Space.

STEPHANIE BURT '89 VISITS GDS



Stephanie Burt '89 (right) speaks with Sosi Audain '26, Montgomery County Youth Poet Laureate.

On January 22, Harvard Professor Stephanie Burt '89 was on campus to discuss her newest book, *Taylor's Version*, which examines Taylor Swift as both a master songwriter and a cultural icon. Stephanie's visit was a true community affair, featuring a lunchtime gathering with High School students, an afternoon session with HS English teachers, and an evening keynote address to a wider GDS audience in the HS Forum. Stephanie's former GDS English teacher, John Burghardt, introduced her at the evening event.

Stephanie's message focused on the enduring power of art to build community—a phenomenon she sees vividly in Swift's fan base. She reminded us that our truest selves are found not in isolation, but in connection with one another. Stephanie closed the evening with a direct charge to the school that shaped her: "Teachers, I want you to look for that sense of community in art forms."

80TH ANNIVERSARY PICNIC & PEP

GDS blasted into its 80th school year united in community and buzzing with spirit.

The festivities kicked off August 23 as families rolled onto campus with blankets, lawn chairs, and big energy for a picnic *en vert*—a cheerful spread across the bright green LMS field.

In September, when GDS officially opened its doors for the school year, students went all in on Spirit Week. High schoolers rocked Monochrome Monday, Twin Tuesday, “Woke Up Like This” Wednesday, Jersey Thursday, and Class Shirt Friday—which led into that day’s All-School Assembly, with a special nod to GDS’s 80th birthday. The Hopper trotted in on horseback to a roar of cheers.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUMAN

GDS PICNIC



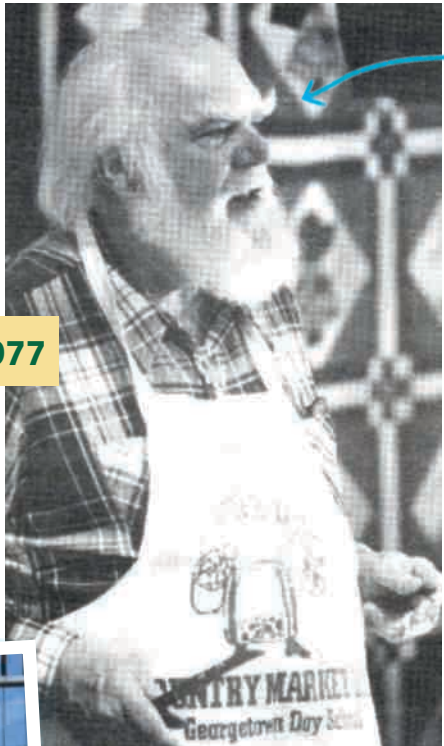
SPIRIT WEEK



COUNTRY MARKET DAY

Country Market Day, the School's annual fall festival, has drawn crowds since 1969. This year was no exception. Hundreds showed up to enjoy rides and games, food trucks, a Sweet Shoppe, the haunted house, the Used Book Store sale, and live entertainment. An 80th anniversary sheet cake made the day just a little bit sweeter, and our first-ever Alumni Tent helped alumni reconnect with one another, catch up with their former teachers, and pick up some fun swag. A huge thank-you to Liz Levine '02, Carolyn Rosenthal '05, and Rachel Yavinsky '01 for hosting the tent!

1977



Philleo Nash, master chef, at Country Market Day in 1977



PHOTOS BY KAIDEN YU '23



Anthony Belber (left) has organized the alumni run for 23 years.



ALUMNI RUN

Anthony Belber, GDS's Cross Country and Track and Field Coach, created the cherished Two-Mile Alumni Run/Walk nearly a quarter century ago to unite GDS runners of all eras in celebrating the School's long tradition of running.

This year's 23rd annual competition drew 60 participants on August 17—pitting alumni runners against current GDS runners, with men and women scoring separately. Anthony reports that nearly two dozen spectators showed up to cheer them on alongside the C&O Canal.

The men's and women's alumni teams emerged the winners. Noteworthy performances came from Jake Maas (the fastest parent at the race, who finished second overall) and his son Alex Maas '34 (the fastest Lower School runner). Head of School Russell Shaw improved upon his personal best, running 13:27 for the two-mile course. The top female finisher was Ava Blum '24; Oliver Wolin '26 won the men's division.

MEET THE NEW TRUSTEES

We welcomed six new members to the Georgetown Day School Board of Trustees in the 2025–26 school year. They joined an active board composed of parents, alumni, and other members of the GDS community who work closely with the Head of School to oversee the financial health of GDS and reinforce its commitment to an equitable and inclusive community.



Hilina Kebede

Hilina brings over a decade of experience in leading technology and business transformation for Fortune 500 companies. For the past four years at Edelman, a global communications and strategy firm, she has served as vice president of technology strategy, partnering with technology, finance, healthcare, and retail organizations to shape their digital futures and advising CTOs, CIOs, and CMOs on aligning technology investments with brand visions and business goals. She recently joined Real Chemistry as vice president of digital and technology, focusing on healthcare and pharmaceutical digital innovation. She serves on the board of Saint Albans Early Childhood Center and served as an advisor at the University of Maryland's Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship, where she mentored student-led startups. She also partners with the Score 3 Foundation to support founders in the technology space. Hilina holds a BS in biomedical engineering from Southern Methodist University.

For a complete listing of the trustees, go to www.gds.org/about/leadership-and-faculty/board-of-trustees

WHAT ASPECT OF GDS'S MISSION RESONATES MOST WITH YOU? GDS's founding principle of bringing together young people of different races, religions, nationalities, and backgrounds to challenge the segregated norms of 1945 remains as vital today as it was 80 years ago. I believe that building understanding and appreciation through proximity and shared experiences is essential for addressing our world's most complex challenges.

WHAT EXPERTISE DO YOU BRING TO THE BOARD? I'll draw upon my experience in strategic planning and digital transformation, particularly implementing innovation while honoring core values. My work guiding organizations through change—balancing competing priorities, translating vision into action, and building consensus across diverse stakeholders—directly supports GDS's strategic waypoints. My board service at Saint Albans Early Childhood Center provided practical experience in educational governance. Additionally, my advisory role at the University of Maryland's Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship taught me how to nurture entrepreneurial thinking in emerging talent, which is directly relevant to cultivating student agency.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HOPE STUDENTS WILL LEARN AT GDS? I hope students develop the tenacity to tackle complex problems with analytical rigor, creative thinking, and intellectual humility. Most importantly, I hope they graduate with the confidence and agency to be architects of positive change and a lifelong joy of learning.



Tarun Chhabra

Tarun is the head of national security affairs at Anthropic, an artificial intelligence company. He is also a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford. Tarun previously served in the Biden administration as deputy assistant to the President and coordinator for technology and national security. During the Obama administration, he was a director on the National Security Council staff and a speechwriter to the Secretary of Defense. Tarun also has been a fellow at the Brookings Institution, Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology, and Harvard University's Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Ethics. Tarun holds a BA from Stanford, an MPhil in international relations from Oxford, and a JD from Harvard.

WHAT ASPECT OF GDS'S MISSION RESONATES MOST WITH YOU? Our core commitment to imparting wonder, curiosity, self-reliance, and a lifelong love of learning.

WHAT EXPERTISE WILL YOU DRAW UPON IN YOUR ROLE ON THE BOARD? I currently work at a leading frontier artificial intelligence company and hope to support GDS's ongoing work to not only deploy AI in our day-to-day operations, but, more importantly, help prepare our students to shape and guide the potentially transformative impacts that AI will have on the workforce, economy, and security. I also hope to draw on experience from the White House and National Security Council, where I had the privilege of advising the President and National Security Advisor on policy, communications, personnel, and a fair share of crises, too.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HOPE STUDENTS WILL LEARN AT GDS? I hope we realize the wisdom of the GDS founding charter: "In a world in which cooperation and flexibility of approach are increasingly more necessary and difficult, we believe children should begin as early as possible to learn about their relationships to the wider world of community and nation."



Adrienne LaFrance

Adrienne LaFrance is the executive editor of *The Atlantic*, where she oversees the editorial team across all platforms, reporting to the editor in chief. She has helped lead *The Atlantic* to win three Pulitzer Prizes and numerous National Magazine Awards, including three consecutive years of the General Excellence award, the industry's highest honor. Adrienne frequently writes for *The Atlantic*, often focusing on issues related to free speech, political violence, artificial intelligence, social platforms, comedy, and other subjects. Before joining *The Atlantic* as a staff writer, Adrienne worked as a reporter at several local and national news organizations, covering politics, technology, government, and media. Adrienne received her BA from Michigan State University and her MS from Boston University.

WHAT ASPECT OF GDS'S MISSION RESONATES MOST WITH YOU? That the diversity of our community is our defining strength, and that each child should be challenged intellectually and creatively in an environment that demands self-reliance and integrity.

WHAT EXPERTISE DO YOU BRING TO THE BOARD? An understanding that achieving excellence as a collective in any mission-driven environment requires tremendous ambition, transparency, tenacity, and generosity—and that it's always best to run toward complexity and nuance in attempting to understand the world and how best to improve it.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HOPE STUDENTS WILL LEARN AT GDS? How to think, speak, and write for themselves



“GDS remains what the founders wanted: a community that celebrates the diverse stories of its families, while uniting students around a shared goal that education can help us better understand and improve the world.”

Elizabeth Lewis



Elizabeth Lewis

Elizabeth is the global head of sustainability for Blackstone’s Infrastructure Group, which invests in large companies in energy transition, transportation, and digital infrastructure. She works with companies that operate ports, generate renewable energy, and transport carbon dioxide for sequestration underground. Prior to joining Blackstone, Elizabeth was at the International Finance Corporation (IFC) leading engagement with investors, NGOs, and governments on climate change. Earlier in her career, she served as the first head of sustainable investing at the World Resources Institute, an environmental NGO. Elizabeth holds an AB from Harvard College and an MBA from Harvard Business School. She and her husband, David Fahrenthold, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter at *The New York Times*, are the parents of Alexandra ’30 and Stella ’34 Fahrenthold.

WHAT ASPECT OF GDS’S MISSION RESONATES MOST WITH YOU?

GDS’s founding story resonates deeply with me. I admire the huge ambitions that the founders had to build a more just and peaceful world through education. One of my favorite GDS moments came when I visited Stella’s class during the 3rd grade immigration unit. I was there to talk about the Ellis Island journeys of four of Stella’s great-great-grandparents. I also learned about the journeys through Ellis Island of Stella’s classmates’ ancestors. GDS remains what the founders wanted: a community that celebrates the diverse stories of its families, while uniting students around a shared goal that education can help us better understand and improve the world.

WHAT EXPERTISE DO YOU BRING TO THE BOARD? I’ve spent the last 20 years volunteering in leadership roles with nonprofits near to my heart. I’ve watched my parents be active volunteer leaders in independent schools my entire life. School governance is what we talked about at the dinner table in my house!

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HOPE STUDENTS WILL LEARN AT GDS?

I hope that GDS students graduate with the skills to develop a purposeful life and a strong obligation to make the world better. I hope they feel compelled to invest in society in the same measure as GDS invested in them.



Jonathan Cooper '01

Jon is a partner at the law firm Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP, where his practice focuses on complex and high-stakes commercial and government-related litigation at the trial and appellate levels. He has helped secure landmark Supreme Court rulings for charitable organizations in *Americans for Prosperity Foundation v. Bonta* and for immigration rights in the Abrego Garcia case. Earlier in his career, Jon served in the Department of Justice and clerked for Judge Frank Easterbrook. Jon received an AB from Harvard College, an MSc from the London School of Economics, and a JD from Harvard Law School.

WHAT ASPECT OF GDS’S MISSION RESONATES MOST WITH YOU?

What resonates most deeply with me is GDS’s founding commitment to offering the best in modern education, at a price government workers can afford, for students from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives. That commitment reflects a belief that rigorous, forward-looking education should not be reserved for a narrow slice of families, but should prepare an engaged community of students to participate thoughtfully in a democratic society.

WHAT EXPERTISE DO YOU BRING TO THE BOARD? As an alumnus and parent, I have experienced firsthand the school’s culture and traditions—and the lasting impact GDS can have on a student’s intellectual curiosity and sense of purpose. My legal career, in turn, has trained me to analyze complex problems, weigh competing considerations, and work collaboratively toward solutions that are principled and practical. Together, those experiences shape how I hope to contribute: by helping the board make thoughtful decisions that support students, teachers, staff, and the long-term vitality of the school.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HOPE STUDENTS WILL LEARN AT GDS?

I hope students leave GDS with the confidence and independence to think for themselves. GDS has long fostered intellectual independence, encouraging students to engage with ideas critically and creatively. Those habits of mind endure far beyond the classroom.



Marc Battle

Marc is a partner in the DC office of Taft, Stettinius & Hollister, where his practice includes representation of utilities, the construction and real estate industries, and professional sports. Previously, Marc served as chief legal officer and executive vice president of government affairs at DC Water and general counsel to the water utility’s board of directors. Before joining DC Water, Marc was region vice president at the Potomac Electric Power Company (“Pepco”) for the DC region and associate general counsel of Pepco Holdings. Marc has also been senior counsel and communications director to Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and the Council of the District of Columbia. In 2004, he was awarded the Fried Frank/NAACP LDF fellowship and later worked on civil rights matters at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Marc earned his BA from the University of the District of Columbia and his JD from Howard University School of Law.

WHAT ASPECT OF GDS’S MISSION RESONATES MOST WITH YOU? I most appreciate GDS’s goal of challenging students to bring out their best potential in all aspects of their educational journey.

WHAT EXPERTISE DO YOU BRING TO THE BOARD? Given the wide range of viewpoints and experiences of GDS board members, I will draw upon my ability to find consensus in diverse perspectives while shining a light on potential blind spots in an effort to make good decisions.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HOPE STUDENTS WILL LEARN AT GDS? That their potential is limitless as lifelong learners.

GDS Board Trustees 1945-2026

Patty Abramson
1984 - 1990

Jenny Abramson
2013 - 2020

Linda Adams
2004 - 2007

Beverly Alford
1992 - 1994

Kamal Ali
1995 - 2000

Adeline Altman
1946 - 1947

Ciera Ashley
2019 - present

Byron Auguste
2009 - 2015

Donald Baer
2005 - 2011

Stephen Bailey
2014 - 2020

Sid Banerjee
2016 - 2022

Jacqueline Barnett
1965 - 1966

Tom Barrows
1949 - 1950

Robert Bates
2002 - 2004

Marc Battle
2025 - present

Jeff Bauman
1979 - 1984

David Bell
1950 - 1953

Bernard Bell
1959 - 1962

Nancy Bernstine
1989 - 1993

Warren Blanding
1957 - 1963

Emily Bloomfield
2009 - 2015

Jeffrey Blount
1997 - 2003

Jeffrey Blum
2017 - 2025

Aisha Bond
2018 - 2022

T. Christopher Borek
2020 - present

Katherine Borsecnik
2007 - 2013

Deborah Both
1989 - 1994

Warren Brodey
1963 - 1965

Philip Bronner
2010 - 2017

Waveney Bryant
1965 - 1974

Dwight Bush
2005 - 2011

Dixon Butler
1982 - 1986

Louise Butt
1953 - 1954

Angel Cartagena
2002 - 2003

Jorge Castro
2024 - present

Tarun Chhabra
2025 - present

Audrey Choi
2022 - 2024

Mary Clute
1989 - 1993

Dianne Cogan
2006 - 2009

Edward Cohen
2001 - 2005

Dwight Collins
1945 - 1947

W. Randolph Compton
1945

James Cooper
2016 - 2019

Jonathan Cooper
2025 - present

Frank Correl
1975 - 1979

A. J. Creshkoff
1956 - 1959

George Crowley
1993 - 1999

Ralph Cunningham
2000 - 2006

George Dalley
1989 - 1992

Shawn Davis-Wilensky
2016 - 2022

Nicole DeYampert
2022 - 2024

Monica Dixon
2011 - 2018

Phoebe Dixon
1987 - 1989

Diane Dodge
1984 - 1990

Lowell Dodge
1993 - 1994

Norris Dodson
1991 - 1993

Leonard Downie
1988 - 1993

Karen Dunn
2024 - present

Marc Efron
1997 - 2004

Richard Ekman
1988 - 1991

David Eppler
2001 - 2007

Lisa Fairfax
2014 - 2016,
2017-2022

Julie Fernandes
2021 - present

Donald Feuerstein
1997 - 2003

Herbert Fierst
1957 - 1959

Lois Fingerhut
1994 - 2001

Linda Finkelstein
1999 - 2000

Marc Fisher
2007 - 2013

Franklin Foer
2015 - 2021

Marguerite Fogel
1962 - 1965

Sasha Fombrun-Rene
2021 - 2025

Mairie Foreman
1945 - 1947

Mosely Gaines
1996 - 2000

Samuel Ganz
1963 - 1964

Theodore Geiger
1954 - 1956

Susie Gelman
1992 - 2005

Dorothy Gilliam
1978 - 1983

Betty Glaser
1948 - 1952

Michael Glosserman
1982 - 1988

1991 - 1996

Marc Glosserman
2009 - 2015

Irwin Goldbloom
1966 - 1970

Arthur E. Goldschmidt
1945

María Gómez
2023 - present

Bob Gordon
1985 - 1991

Michael Gottdenker
2008 - 2015

Willis Gradison
1993 - 1996

William Gray
1966 - 1968

Marcia Greenberger
1991 - 1997

Clarence Greene
1952 - 1954

Reginald Griffith
1972 - 1980

Leslie Guildner
1964 - 1965

Elliott Hall
1993 - 1994

J. Emerson Harper
1963 - 1965

Louise Harper Schuchat
1976 - 1977

Ben Hecht
2002 - 2008

Barbara Heller
1972 - 1974

Mary Hoff
1985 - 1988

Eric Holder
2006 - 2009

Michael Horowitz
1976 - 1983

Charles Houston
1949 - 1950

Deneen Howell
2022 - present

James Hudson
1983 - 1986

Jeffrey Shields Hunker
2014 - 2017

George Idelson
1970 - 1976

Linda Jackson
2000 - 2004

Ketanji Brown Jackson
2019 - 2022

Amy Jeffress
2006 - 2010

Cheryl Johnson
2012 - 2015

Simon Johnson
2011 - 2017

Teresa Joiner
1994 - 1997

Gary Jonas
2000 - 2002

Donald Jones
1973 - 1979

Linda Kamm
1981 - 1985

Cecilia Kang
2022 - present

Joel Kanter
2003 - 2009

Jonathan Kaplan
2020 - present

Hilina Kebede
2025 - present

Betsy Keeley
2016 - 2019

Roy Kelly
1955 - 1957

Rosemary Kilkenny
2015 - 2021

Helen Kitchen
1955 - 1962

Todd Klein
2008 - 2014

Jennifer Klein
2009 - 2015

Eric Koenig
2010 - 2016

Leo Kolodny
1949 - 1952

Esther Kominers
1960 - 1964

Judy Kovler
1994 - 1999

Caleb Kramer
2024 - present

Laurie Kramer
1991 - 1994

David Krooth
1948 - 1949

Roger Kuhn
1977 - 1978

Sookie Kunst
2000 - 2006

Adrienne LaFrance
2025 - present

Arthur Lazarus
1965 - 1972

David Leary
2011 - 2017

Mortimer Lebowitz
1952 - 1954

Karen Leder
2007 - 2012

Jill Lesser
2010 - 2016

Faye Levin
2007 - 2013

Edward Levin
1987 - 1993

Joan Levitt
1988 - 1994

Elizabeth Lewis
2025 - present

Judy Lichtman
1986 - 1992

Reid Liffmann
2014 - 2020

Marc Lindsey
2007 - present

Linda Lipsett
1996 - 2002

Claire Lipsman
1974 - 1976

Matthew Lyons
2003 - 2008

Cathy MacNeil-Hollinger
2015 - 2018

Suzanne Magaziner
1996 - 1997

Frank Mankiewicz
1969 - 1971

Jim Margolis
2009 - 2013

Jaclin Marlin
1970 - 1976

Thurgood Marshall
1967 - 1968

Judith Martin
1975 - 1984

Gertrude Martin
1963 - 1965

Louis Martin
1968 - 1969

Carolyn Martin
2005 - 2011

Richard Mason
1947 - 1949

Kenyan McDuffie
2019 - 2025

James McHugh
1952 - 1954

John McLwain
1986 - 1991

Laurene McKillop
1997 - 2001

Herbert Miller
2004 - 2007

Sally Minard
1962 - 1963

Howard Moskof
1981 - 1986

Philip Mullenbach
1954 - 1958

Alan Naftalin
1964 - 1973

Philleo Nash
1945

Leroy Nesbitt
2009 - 2015

Mark Niles
2007 - 2010

Lawrence Nussdorf
1987 - 1993

John Oberdorfer
1985 - 1991

Carl Oppenheim
1985 - 1992

Barbara Ormond
2002 - 2006

James Page
1975 - 1976

Elizabeth Parker
1981 - 1987

William Parsons
1953 - 1954

Frederick Pelzman
1977 - 1982

Nicholas Penniman
2022 - present

Michael Pertschuk
1972 - 1974

Cabell Phillips
1953 - 1954

Steffen Plehn
1974 - 1981

Curtis Plummer
1965 - 1967

Mary Reed
1987 - 1991

Pamela Reeves
2012 - 2018

Dorothy Rich
1966 - 1969

Lucretia Risoleo
2009 - 2015

Alice Rivlin
1979 - 1981

Elizabeth Rose
2004 - 2007

Stanford Ross
1982 - 1985

Henry Ryan
1957 - 1960

Michael Sachse
2017 - 2023

Donald Saelinger
2022 - present

Susan Schaffer
1998 - 2004

Karen Schneiderman
1993 - 2000

Elizabeth Scrivener
1955 - 1956

Frances Seeger
1995 - 2001

Greg Selfridge
2023 - present

Joseph Sellers
2002 - 2008

Jim Shelton
2019 - 2024

Scott Shepperd
2011 - 2017

Jerry Shulman
1990 - 1996

Lindsay Simmons
1992 - 1995

Stephen Simon
1993 - 1996

Abha Sinha
2004 - 2009

David Smith
2013 - 2019

Otey Smith
2024 - present

Phyllis Smith
1965 - 1970

Sharon Smith-Jones
1993 - 1999

Roselyn Smith-Withers
1994 - 1995

Erik Smulson
2015 - 2021

Steven Snider
2004 - 2009

Davidson Sommers
1947 - 1949

Ben Soto
2016 - 2022

Louise Steele
1960 - 1963

Robert Stein
1990 - 1993

1996 - 1997

David Stern
2006 - 2012

Kimberly Stokes
2020 - present

Viyas Sundaram
2023 - present

Anu Tate
2014 - 2021

Eloise Taylor
1965 - 1966

Yolanda Townsend
2009 - 2014

Robert Tracy
1994 - 2000

Lou Trotter
1995 - 2002

Brenda Turnbull
2001 - 2007

Sanford Ungar
1992 - 1998

Milton Viorst
1977 - 1980

Rachel Vogelstein
2024 - present

Brad Vogt
2012 - 2018

Josh Wachs
2017 - 2023

Sarah Wartell
2019 - 2024

Adam Wegner
2004 - 2010

Peter Weitz
1983 - 1989

David Wellisch
2013 - 2019

Laura Wertheimer
2000 - 2006

Phil West
2016 - 2022

Elizabeth Westfall
2018 - 2024

Annie Whatley
1999 - 2005

Laya Wiesner
1962 - 1964

Marcy Wilder
2008 - 2014

Carolyn Williams
1983 - 1989

Page Wilson
1958 - 1959

Laurie Wingate
2017 - 2023

Wendee Wolfson
1998 - 2004

Mendelle Woodley
1960 - 1962

1965 - 1968

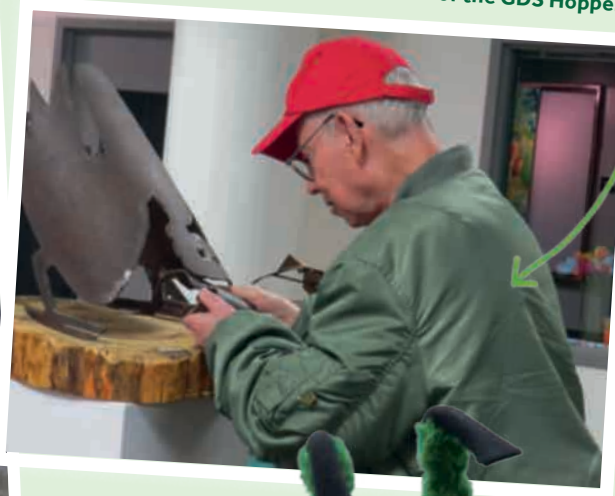
John Woodley
1965 - 1966

The Tale of the Mighty Hopper

Not the Cow. Not the Catfish.



Max Elias: Father of the GDS Hopper



The "Mighty Hopper" identity wasn't born in a marketing office; it was forged in the studio of Max Elias, a Lower School science teacher who shaped GDS minds from 1961 until his retirement in 2006. A gifted sculptor and son of two DC artists, Max often traded his lab coat for a welder's mask, creating steel pieces that graced both GDS and many art galleries.

By the late 1960s, he had set up a studio at his log farmhouse in Frederick, Maryland, where his love for the natural world took physical form. In the early 1970s, one of Max's creations—a prominent sculpture of a grasshopper—captured the imagination of the student body.

When Max passed away in 2015, longtime GDS administrator Kevin Barr shared a message with faculty that captured the man behind the art: "Those of you who knew Max will remember his 75-year-old turtle who liked to take walks down the hall to the kindergarten. Max was a magical man."

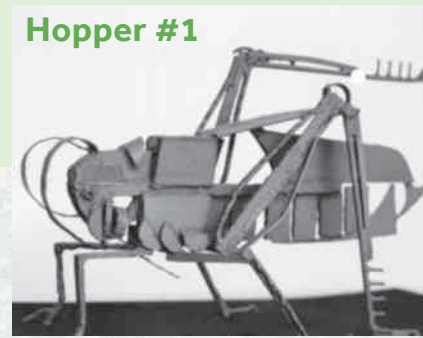
In the Spring 2002 issue of *Georgetown Days*, Max explains how the grasshopper became the School's enduring symbol.

The Hopper after a 2023 makeover



PHOTO BY CLAIRE SIMON '24

Hopper #1



Hopper #2



Hopper #3



By Max Elias

Georgetown Days, Spring 2022

First of all, let me start by telling you that the grasshopper became the School symbol by accident, not by intent. Back in the early 1970s, two famous American artists had children attending GDS. One was David Smith, a noted American sculptor. The other was Ken Noland, a greatly admired Washington painter. Both decided to donate a work of art to the School. These were to be sold, with proceeds going into the student scholarship fund. While considering how best to sell these prestigious artworks, someone suggested that GDS have an art show open to Washington artists. A gallery commission would be charged for each item sold, and this money would also go into the fund. A great idea, and it worked.

I entered three pieces of my sculpture and sold them all. One I remember was a cow, another was a catfish, and a third was a grasshopper. Unbeknownst to me, several people collectively bought the grasshopper and donated it to the School. For some time afterwards, the grasshopper sculpture sat on a pedestal in the school lobby [at 4530 MacArthur Boulevard]. This is grasshopper #1.

Time passed uneventfully for a while. One day, however, an unobservant adult walked into one of the clear glass panels bordering the front doors of the lobby. No serious harm was done, but it was suggested that we put something on the glass to make it more visible and thus prevent future bumped noses. Needing some kind of a picture, someone (not yours truly) made a drawing of my grasshopper, which sat nearby in the lobby. The drawing was then made into plastic decals, several of which were pasted up all over the glass panels. They worked fairly effectively.

And once the decals were available, they turned up in all sorts of places. On car windows, they became GDS parking stickers.

They appeared on book covers, lunch boxes, and backpacks. Before long, everything at GDS was being adorned with hoppers. Voila! GDS and the grasshopper were now inseparable.

GDS coach Tom Kelly recalled in a recent conversation that when he took over the (outdoor) basketball and flag football teams in 1977 or so, the grasshopper was already entrenched as the team mascot, perhaps from as early as 1974.

When the High School was built in 1987, Judy and Jerry Shulman (parents of Kate '95 and Tory '00) bought a grasshopper weathervane to adorn the new building on Davenport Street. This was grasshopper #2.

And when the LMS library was remodeled in 1988, the architect's plan called for a weathervane to be mounted atop the new copper roof. I was asked if I was interested in creating another one. I was, I did, and it proudly rides the winds today. This was grasshopper #3.

In recent years, the GDS logo has become something of a collectible in the clothing knock-off business. A sweatshirt sporting the School name and the hopper mascot appeared a few years ago in an Urban Outfitters store [which offers used and vintage clothing] as far away as Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Occasionally, GDS student athletes complain about the lack of a macho animal mascot. I point out to them that in the afflicted countries around the world, nothing is more feared than a swarm of locusts. And if the beginning of this story had been slightly altered, the GDS symbol today might have been a catfish or a cow.

Dallas Cowboys and Baltimore Ravens, move over. Here come the Mighty Hoppers!



Zora Dimbo '27 named Most Valuable Player of DCSAA tournament



Caycee Chhum '27 was selected as Gatorade District of Columbia Volleyball Player of the Year.



(back, from left) Assistant Coach Omar Visurraga, Head Coach Brandon Wiest, Alexa Telly '27, Tessa Fergusson '26, Fiona McDermott '26, Arielle Stopak '27, Julia Heinzelmann '28, Zora Dimbo '27, Gigi Wigglesworth '26, Assistant Coach Amber Matalus (front, from left) Caycee Chhum '27, Charlie Haft '27, Ella Higday '26, Farrah Maragh '28, Raquel Telly '29

DUAL TITLES FOR GDS VOLLEYBALL

The GDS Women's Varsity Volleyball team secured a dual-title sweep this year, claiming both the Independent School League (ISL) and District of Columbia State Athletic Association (DCSAA) championships. The Hoppers maintained their dominance from start to finish, ending the season exactly where they began: in the number one slot of *The Washington Post's* Top 10 ranking of the region's volleyball teams.

"I honestly think it was maybe one of the most dominant seasons that [a] team has had in the DMV in several years," Head Coach Brandon Wiest told *The Washington Post*. "We knew we had a good team coming into the year, but to perform at that level was, I don't want to say a shock but was certainly maybe a little unexpected."

The team amassed an incredible 22-1 record, with their only setback coming in an early-season match against James Wood High School, a powerhouse from Virginia.

From there, the Hoppers were unstoppable, powered by an undefeated run through the ISL that culminated in a championship victory over St. Andrew's in October 2025. They remained untouchable in the DCSAA tournament, securing the state title with a dominant three-set sweep over Georgetown Visitation. The victory, played before a sizable GDS fan section at the University of the District of Columbia, served as the final exclamation point on their season. After the match, Zora Dimbo '27 was recognized as the tournament's

Most Valuable Player and was later selected for *The Washington Post's* All-Met Honorable Mention team.

The accolades didn't stop with the tournament trophies. Brandon was named Mid-Atlantic Coach of the Year by the American Volleyball Coaches Association, and Caycee Chhum '27 was selected as Gatorade District of Columbia Volleyball Player of the Year. She is the third consecutive GDS volleyball player to win the title, following Jada Aksu '25 in 2024 and Clara Yu '24 in 2023.

For 40 years, Gatorade has bestowed the honor upon the nation's most elite high school athletes to celebrate their excellence on the court, in the classroom, and within their communities. Perette Arrington, Head Coach at Jackson-Reed High School, told the Gatorade selection committee that Caycee always gives a standout performance. "Caycee is a dynamic setter who brings tremendous energy, passion, and competitive fire to every match," he said. "As the setter and clear quarterback of the team, she sets the tone for Georgetown Day's offense and overall tempo of play."

The GDS volleyball program's depth was further validated by *The Washington Post*, which flooded its All-Met teams with GDS talent. In addition to Caycee being named the All-Met Player of the Year, the Hoppers saw Alexa Telly '27 selected for the All-Met First Team. Rounding out the honors, Tessa Fergusson '26, Fiona McDermott '26, and Gigi Wigglesworth '26 were all named to the All-Met Honorable Mention team along with Zora.



(from left) James Fitzgibbons '27, Gavin Solomon '28, Simon Kessler '26, Noah Kolker '26, Oliver Wolin '26, Leo Johnson-Goldfrank '26, Ben Altschuler '28

CROSS COUNTRY FINISHES STRONG

From a conference championship title at home to record-setting times in North Carolina, the GDS cross country team finished the 2025 season with significant milestones for both the men's and women's squads.

In October, the men's team won the Midwest Athletic Conference (MAC) championship and finished fourth in the District of Columbia State Athletic Association (DCSAA) meet.

Winning the MAC banner was a great accomplishment, and the entire team excelled that day. The women's JV squad finished in 4th (like the varsity), and the men's Varsity B and freshmen/sophomore squads swept to victory in both of their races.

The following month, some of the top athletes traveled to Cary, North Carolina, to compete in the Nike Cross

Country Southeast Regional meet (NXR SE), where they performed exceptionally well despite temperatures reaching an unseasonably warm 75 degrees.

Shira Wenthe '27, Ben Altschuler '28, Parker Dunbar '28, and Hugo Fine '29 all clocked personal-best times. Shira even broke her own school record, running 17:50 on the 5km course. She placed 16th in the day's most competitive championship race. "It's pretty exciting for GDS to have the 16th fastest female high school runner between Florida and Delaware," said Head Coach Anthony Belber.

Also in Cary, the Rising Stars team of 9th and 10th graders finished 13th among all boys' teams in the Southeast.

PHOTOS BY SARAH GOLDFRANK



(back row, (l-r): Ucheoma Ukaoma '26, Jacob Contee '26, TJ Jones '26
(second from top, (l-r): Nico Libby '27, Mikhail Westelius '26, Julian Lucas '26, Ryan Granowitter '27, Miles Barabino '29, Assistant Coach Sean Limon
(third row from top, (l-r): Head Coach Quinn Killy, Josh Vinik '29, Rafa Westelius '28, Benji Gold '26, Ryan Taybi '27, Arlo Rising '27, Assistant Coach Akeel Ali-Brannum ("Coach Ali")
(front row, (l-r): Justin Heffernan '28, Sander Kearns '26, Ares Osorio '26, Suli Ajmeri '26, Trey Tam '26, Brooks Newkirk '29, William Cromer '27, Lucky Dodge '28

SOCCER WINS MAC

ALL CONFERENCE (MAC) TEAM SELECTIONS

Trey Tam '26
Suli Ajmeri '26
William Cromer '27
TJ Jones '26

ALL MET TEAM SELECTION

Trey Tam '26



The GDS men's varsity soccer team secured its place in the rafters this year, taking home a banner as regular-season co-champions of the Mid-Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAC) alongside Potomac School.

With a stellar 8-2-2 record, the Hoppers finished the year in a dead heat with the Panthers for the league's best standing, marking the program's first regular-season title since 2017.

The two rivals met again to settle the score in the MAC tournament championship game on October 30, 2025. But in a hard-fought battle that remained scoreless through the first half, the Hoppers ultimately fell to the Panthers, 2-0.

Following the conference final, GDS's regular-season performance qualified the team for the DCSAA state tournament. After beating Calvin Coolidge High School, the Hoppers faced Washington International School (WIS) in the quarterfinals.

Though the Hoppers' season came to an end with a loss to WIS—the eventual state champions—

Head Coach Quinn Killy said he was proud of the team's performance.

"Coming into the season, I wasn't sure how it would go," Quinn said. "We had a few seniors who had a lot of experience at the varsity level, and many who did not. We also started the season without a goalkeeper. But everyone, the younger and older players, stepped up and contributed in really amazing ways."

The team's success was built on a culture of sacrifice. Benji Gold '26 stepped in as goalkeeper after training all summer and developed into a vital asset. Leadership also came from veteran players like Suli Ajmeri '26 and TJ Jones '26; both play at a high level outside of school and agreed to play out of their preferred positions to fill the team's greatest needs.

While 10 players graduated in 2026, Quinn is optimistic about the program's trajectory. "For the first time in years, we had three ninth graders on varsity, and we ended up calling two more to our roster for the postseason, which is great for our future," Quinn said. "I'm excited about the years ahead."



Honoring the Past Strengthening the Future

For 80 years, Georgetown Day School has challenged students to think critically, lead lives of purpose, and engage in the world with curiosity, integrity, and empathy.

When you include GDS in your estate plans, you help ensure that these values endure.

A legacy gift is more than a financial commitment. It is a statement about what matters most. It is an investment in future students who will carry the GDS mission forward.

A Legacy Gift Can Be Made Through:

- A provision in your will or trust
- A beneficiary designation from a retirement account
- A life insurance policy
- Other planned giving arrangements

Those who choose to include GDS in their estate plans are recognized as members of the Gladys Stern Legacy Society, honoring the remarkable legacy of educator and former Head of School Gladys Stern.

Gladys Stern Legacy Society

Anonymous
Jenny Abramson '95 and Jake Maas
Ciera and Trevor Ashley
Jeffrey M. Delozier
Laura Dickinson and Paul Berman
Cynthia Dunbar and Charles Cerf
Andrea* and James Hamos
Sue Ikenberry
Linda Jackson
Larry Kanarek
Elizabeth Lewis and David Fahrenthold
Judy and Elliott Lichtman
Jackie and David Marlin
Betsy McIsaac*
Susan Schaffer and Michael Rogan
Les Silverman
Laura Stone and Ezra Levine
Susan Tannenbaum and David Osterhout*
Elizabeth Wachs*

*deceased

To Learn more, contact:

If you wish to support a particular program, we ask that contact our Advancement Office. Our legal name should appear as Georgetown Day, Inc. The institution's federal TAX ID number is 5300204701.



Mary Ann Jones
Chief
Advancement Officer
mjones@gds.org
202-295-1060



Jeffery Delozier
Deputy Chief
Advancement Officer
jdelozier@gds.org
202-295-6239

The Creative Spark

From the earliest days, the arts have been an integral part of Georgetown Day School's curriculum, as first Head of School Aggie O'Neil made clear during a 1950 radio interview.

"The healthy child uses the creative arts to make himself a complete human being—almost by instinct," Aggie said. " ... Creative expression is not 'play' but work."

Here, we share a few snapshots of the people, moments, and places that helped shape the GDS arts program.

The OG's

PHOTO COURTESY OF BARBARA AND WILLIARD MORGAN PHOTOGRAPHS AND PAPERS, UCLA

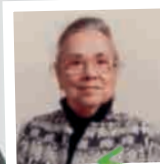


Ethel Butler (second from left) in Martha Graham's *Punch and Judy*.

Max Elias, sculptor and 44-year GDS veteran



Painter Myra Elias



Painter Dante Radice built GDS's arts program

Several founding teachers were professional artists. Dancers **Ethel Butler** and **David Campbell**—members of the renowned Martha Graham Dance Company—previously taught for Aggie O'Neil at a small DC school and brought their modern dance expertise to GDS when it opened in 1945. That year, painter **Dante Radice** wandered in from his job at a nearby art gallery and stayed for 20 years—founding the art department. Dante recruited painter **Myra Elias** to teach art in 1950. Her son, **Max Elias**, a beloved science teacher and artist, made a steel sculpture that inspired the school's mascot.



Founding parent Philleo Nash shares a folk song on his guitar

The Songsmith

Founding parent and **Board Chair Philleo Nash**, studied violin as a young man and took up guitar in his later years. At the Grasslands campus, he would typically show up on Friday mornings to play guitar and sing folk songs with the students. Burl Ives, John Jacob Niles, and Woody Guthrie were among his favorites. Pete Seeger would also show up on occasion to lead the children in song when his half-brother (and future icon) Mike attended GDS.

Creative Expression Required

In the early 1970s, GDS became one of the first DC-area schools to make the arts a graduation requirement. The High School was on the Mount Vernon College campus then, and the "studios" were in a rented dormitory. All students had to take at least one year of the arts. The School's reputation for excellence in the arts grew. In 1977, Second Lady Joan Mondale commissioned a GDS painting class—which included her daughter Eleanor—to create two original murals for the Vice President's Mansion.

Pure Drama



The High School's first Black Box theater was hailed as a design marvel when it was unveiled in 1987. Yet students produced ambitious theater even when the "stage" was a repurposed gym. Longtime **HS Theater Director Laura Rosberg** recalls a student-built turntable stage for 1974's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* that drifted toward the audience with every rotation. "We secretly drilled holes into the gym floor to secure it," she said, "and covered them with putty every night." When Laura retired in 2023, GDS was offering 20 performing arts courses, up from a handful four decades earlier.

GDS's first HS theater production, Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*, 1972

THE STUDIO & STAGE

The fall and winter seasons served as a vivid reminder that at GDS, the arts are not merely an elective, but a foundational commitment eight decades in the making. That legacy was on full display across the campus as students transformed stages and spaces into vibrant showcases of creativity.

Studio Arts

HS IDENTITY ART SHOW

After years of evaluating young talent as an AP Studio Art judge, Michelle Cobb noticed a recurring theme of self-inquiry that eventually sparked a GDS staple: the Identity Art Show. Launched in 2013, this annual display calls on high school students to explore who they are through art.

“I saw a perfect opportunity to create a dedicated ‘identity’ show based on eight core identifiers: culture, race, family, socioeconomic, sexuality, gender, ability, and mental health,” said Michelle, who retired in 2025 as head of the HS Studio Arts Department. “The challenge was guiding students to explore those aspects of themselves with depth and authenticity.”

To prepare, students interview family members about their names, heritage, and upbringing—often unlocking new layers of self-identity before finding the courage to share their discoveries with the broader community.

On display at the February 2026 show were paintings, digital photography books, mixed media collages, and sculpture.



Boaz Berman '29



Sophia Ingersoll '28



Maimouna Barry '27



Tessa Lipman '28



Karrie Hu '28

Theater

HS FALL PRODUCTION: *Diary of Anne Frank*

The High School's fall production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* on November 13-16, 2025, put Anne's experience of war and genocide in the context of other young people, throughout history, whose lives have been affected by conflict and tragedy. Six students, playing the role of “historian,” introduced the audience to teens and young adults who documented what they witnessed during genocides that have occurred since World War II. The set design featured walls plastered with notebook pages to reinforce the abundance of words written by children and youth, the most vulnerable victims of war. The production was created in close collaboration with HS history teacher Topher Dunne and the History Department.



MS FALL MUSICAL: *Disney's Dare to Dream JR.*

In November 2025, Middle Schoolers brought to life Disney's musical revue *Dare to Dream JR.* Through a medley of contemporary and classic Disney songs, the cast portrayed a group of trainees at the Walt Disney Imagineering Studio as they discovered the power of their own dreams—and the importance of helping others find theirs.

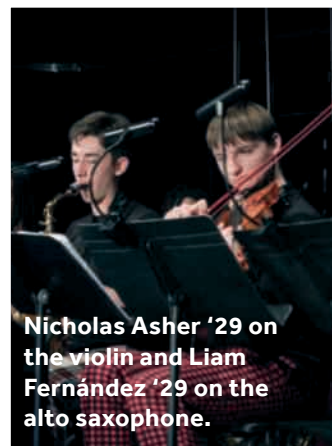


MUSIC, SONG, AND DANCE

PHOTOS BY KAI PARK '27



Paul Smith '26 on the bass and Alec Donath '26 at the piano



Nicholas Asher '29 on the violin and Liam Fernández '29 on the alto saxophone.

The High School's Jazz Band Concert in January featured the music of Gigi Gryce, an American saxophonist and composer who was born in November 1925. In addition to marking the jazz great's centenary by performing several of his works, students riffed to music by Horace Silver and Benny Golson.



The week prior to winter break, the Winter Choral Extravaganza featured singers from grades 4 through 12 at the LMS Gym. The combined choruses kicked off the evening with a soaring rendition of the South African folk song "Siyahamba" ("We Are Marching" in Zulu).

At the event, the chamber singers of Tolv—the Scandinavian word for "twelve," representing the group's original size—delivered their signature vocal blend (right).



Garland Gantt '30 finds his groove on the alto saxophone at the Middle School Symphonic Band's Winter Concert. The January program—featuring favorites like "Sleigh Ride" and "Winter Wonderland"—brought a seasonal glow to the LMS Performance Space.

PHOTOS BY JERI TIDWELL



The student-led Fata Morgana always puts on a crowd-pleaser, this time with its "Night Lights" performance in January at the HS Black Box, celebrating the camaraderie that comes with rooting for a favorite team.



The Middle School Winter Dance Assembly in January was a masterclass in the beauty of collective action. Students moved in lockstep to Janet Jackson's "Rhythm Nation," and showed off their school spirit in the "School Days" dance.



Even though he wasn't my teacher, he would smile at me in the hallways.
Ivie Previna '31

He was always a helpful Spanish teacher. Even though I only knew him for one year, I will always remember him.
Caleb Simon-Ratner '31

He was one of the best teachers I will ever have. Fly high, Victor!
Omer Edwards '30



VICTOR VAZQUEZ VINCENT

1961-2025

For more than two decades, Victor Vazquez Vincent filled the halls of GDS with the unmistakable warmth and generosity that defined his life.

The beloved Lower and Middle School Spanish teacher, who died of an aneurysm in October 2025, brought far more than language lessons to his students. He had a gift for connection, an open heart, and a love of sharing the rich cultural traditions of his native Spain—whether leading 8th graders on trips through his hometown of Madrid (as he did for a few years) or whipping up traditional Spanish dishes for them and his colleagues.

Victor came to the United States at age 35 through a teacher exchange program in North Carolina, where he met his wife, Patti. He earned a master's degree in foreign language from James Madison University and joined GDS in 2003.

Victor's presence was a daily kindness that helped young learners feel known and valued. For weeks, his handwritten notes remained on the whiteboard of his classroom—preserved just as he left them on his last day at GDS, a quiet testament to how deeply he is missed.

On these pages, you will find just a small selection of the many remembrances and notes the GDS community shared upon learning of Victor's passing.

Hola Victor, Fuiste mi profesor favorito. Eras servicial, trabajador y amable.
Ari Arora '31

I really loved how Victor would go out of his way to talk. He knew a lot about us and really cared. I miss how he would say *Qué tal?*
Jason Saferstein '31



PHOTO BY JASON PUTSCHÉ

In observance of *Día de los Muertos*, the LMS prepared a special altar in memory of Victor alongside a community altar. LS students read *The Invisible String* and created notes and paper hearts to honor him.

Victor went beyond teaching a language; he taught us about a culture and a people that he loved so much. It got us all excited about speaking Spanish. That's a gift that I've come to truly appreciate. I went to Barcelona my junior year in college, and I thought about Victor often—when I saw the Chupa Chups lollipops he gave us as prizes and definitely when I attended soccer games. He was a huge Madrid fan, and he'd have us watch their matches in Spanish on the big screen in class. I knew he'd be mad that I was sitting in that stadium and cheering for FC Barcelona. Everything felt weirdly familiar when I was in Spain. I felt like a piece of Victor's class was with me.

—Claire Cooper '22

We wish we could have had this year with Victor as our teacher, and we will miss him. He is one of the kindest teachers we have ever had. We wish we could have said goodbye to him one last time.
Molly Argintar '30 and Lila Fragale '30



Victor holds Cameron, son of LMS Chinese teacher Yi-Na Chung (right) and her husband Corey (middle), in 2023. Yi-Na introduced Victor to her son as "Da Shu," which means "Big Uncle" in Chinese

Before heading out [on the eighth-grade language class trip] to Cactus Cantina, Victor organized a special treat for the students: he asked the dance teachers to teach us salsa, and we spent the first half of the day learning and dancing—a fun and energizing start to the trip. He also made sure our restaurant reservation was ready, checked in with students about allergies and dietary needs, and quietly ensured that every student and teacher received their meal. At the end, he never forgot our security and bus drivers, always requesting to-go meals for them as well. It perfectly reflected who he was: thoughtful, generous, and deeply caring.

—Jorge Baez-Mora, LMS Spanish teacher

Victor preparing an oyster appetizer for his co-workers at his home in 2018.



Victor's Love Language

By Johanne Chevere, LMS Spanish teacher

Victor had a gift for bringing people together through food. Cooking wasn't just a hobby for him; it was an act of love, a way to share joy, culture, and connection. He was an exceptional cook and delighted in swapping recipes, recommending restaurants, and texting about great grocery store finds.

At school, his dishes were legendary. He would show up in our office with tortilla española (the best I've ever tasted), ensaladilla rusa, paella, shortbread, and churros, all lovingly prepared to be shared. He took such pride in introducing others to the flavors of Spain. For a couple of years, he even made paella on site for the entire Middle School, an enormous, golden feast that filled the air with saffron and laughter. Those meals weren't just delicious; they were moments of community and celebration.

Over more than 22 years of working together, we perfected our rhythm and collaboration when it came to food-related activities with the kids. We just knew what to do, who would handle what, and how everything would flow. Together we made perritos caribeños, churros, mallorcas, pizzadillas, alfajores, and, more recently, guacamole. During the COVID-19 lockdown, we kept the tradition alive, cooking with the kids over Zoom from our kitchens.

Victor's generosity was boundless. Sharing food was his love language, and through it, he shared pieces of his culture, his warmth, and his heart.

THE MASTER'S NEXT STROKE

MICHELLE COBB RETIRES AFTER 20 YEARS AT GDS



Michelle painting in Tuscany

Michelle Cobb approached her decision to leave GDS with the same intensity that defined her as both an artist and an educator. She did not want to quietly transition to her next chapter with a vacation; she wanted a challenge worthy of the note on her easel: *I have yet to create my greatest work.*

While Michelle was a practicing artist throughout her 20 years at GDS, the weekends and summers she carved out for her own work were no longer enough. At the end of the 2024–25 school year, she retired from her roles as Chair of the Studio Art Department and High School art teacher to devote her full energy to her craft. Her first stop: a 2025 summer residency at New York’s School of Visual Arts, where she applied her plein air techniques—traditionally practiced in the open air of the countryside—to urban environments.

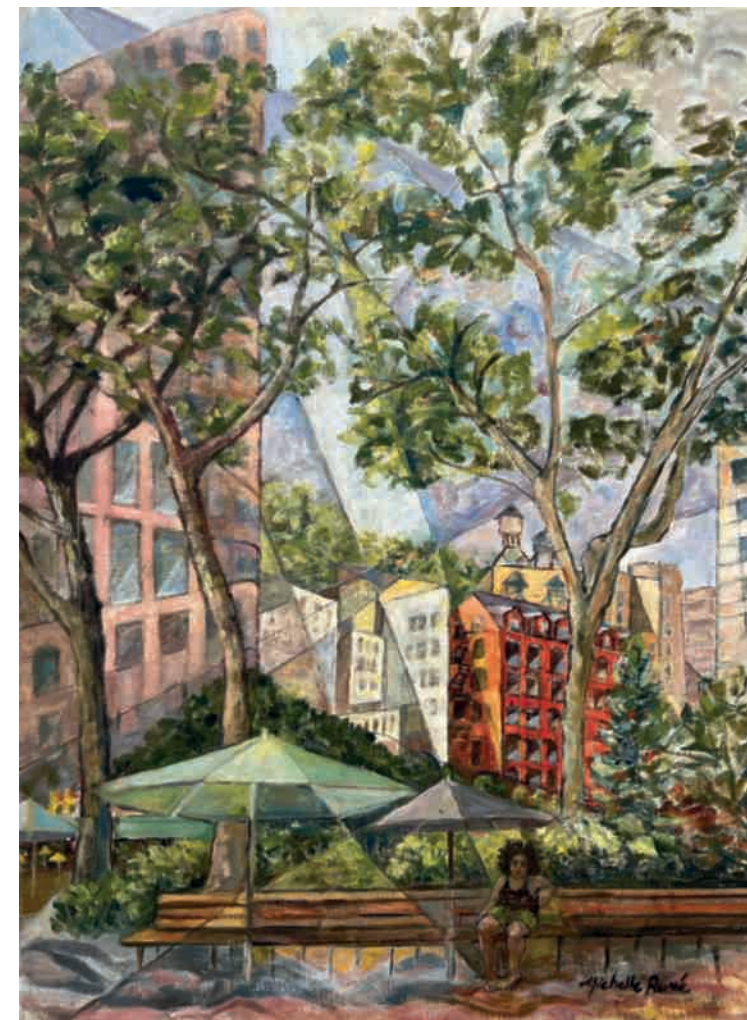
“I couldn’t believe that I was accepted into this program at my age,” said Michelle, 70. “But I think participating in art residencies around the world during the last 15 summers and having my own studio practice gave me an edge. I was up and running without any hesitation almost immediately after the residency started.”

This dual identity as teacher and working artist was Michelle’s superpower, many of her colleagues and mentees said. By maintaining a rigorous personal practice, she served as a living blueprint for her students. She didn’t just teach a curriculum; she modeled the discipline of a professional. This created a rare credibility in the studio, where her own artistic evolution fueled her ability to lead others through theirs.

“She didn’t expect anything from anyone else that she wasn’t expecting from herself,” said former HS art teacher Nick Ryan, who worked closely with Michelle. “Within a year or two of her taking over, the body of student work had jumped 10-fold in quality.”

THE ART OF SEEING

The artistic drive was there from the beginning. At age four, Michelle covered a wall in her grandmother’s Nashville home with a sprawling mural, certain that praise would



During her 2025 residency at New York’s School of Visual Arts, Michelle applied her traditional plein air techniques to the urban landscape of Madison Square Park to create this piece.

“Because you weren’t listening. You’re not here to learn. You just want to replicate pretty photographs.”

Shattered, she packed up her supplies and left. But after six months of persistence and reflection on both her own goals and Loper’s teaching, Loper allowed Michelle to return. The reconciliation marked the start of a 16-year mentorship that informed Michelle’s artistic vision and teaching style. Under his tutelage, she internalized the practice of seeing color and working from observation, principles she would later instill in students when she joined GDS in 2005.

Throughout her tenure at the School, Michelle evolved her craft by completing a circuit of international summer residencies—from the sun-drenched landscapes of Umbria, Tuscany, and El Bruc, Spain, to the Rhône Valley and Aix-en-Provence in France, as well as Martha’s Vineyard and across West Africa in Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, and Benin.

DEVELOPING ART WARRIORS

At GDS, Michelle brought a new level of rigor to the studio, epitomized by her insistence on using oil paints—a complex, slow-drying medium that carries prestige but demands careful handling and technical discipline.

“It was an indication that she wanted us to give students a professional art studio experience,” said Nick, then-head of the Studio Art Department. “She was highly structured about evaluating the work at every stage, setting clear objectives, and being very specific in her critiques.”

Among Michelle’s many signature contributions was the annual Identity Art Show (see page 98), inspired by her work as an AP Studio Art

follow. “But I got in a lot of trouble,” she said, laughing. By age 10, she declared her intentions to her parents: she was going to be an artist. Her father (a surgeon) and her mother (a psychologist) worried about that choice, citing the lack of opportunities for Black female artists at the time. But her father eventually gave his blessing with a single condition: that she strive to be the best. “That set my standard for life,” she said.

Guided by both passion and pragmatism, Michelle merged her creative ambitions with professional security. After earning degrees from Skidmore College and George Washington University, she launched a career at Time-Life Books. At age 28, she became the youngest—and first Black—promotion art director at *Sports Illustrated* in New York City. She developed campaigns for the Olympics, the U.S. Open, the Kentucky

Derby, and other high-profile sporting events. “But no matter how successful I became, I didn’t feel like a ‘real artist,’ so that constantly gnawed at me,” she said.

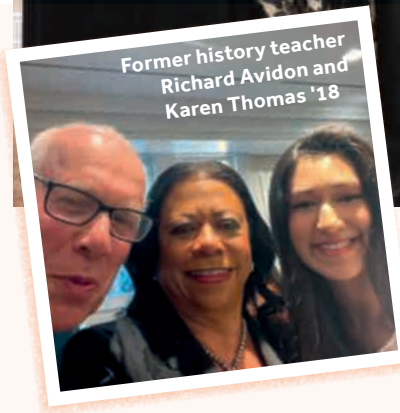
Seeking a new direction, she moved to Delaware to lead communications for Sanford School. But it was a chance encounter in Wilmington that truly shifted her trajectory. While wandering through the Delaware Art Museum, Michelle found herself transfixed by the work of Edward Loper, Sr.—the celebrated Black painter known for his vibrant plein air palette.

When Michelle realized that Loper was teaching a class for far more advanced painters, she pleaded with him to let her in until he finally relented. But the victory was short-lived. After several lessons, Michelle pressed Loper on why he was not providing her with much feedback. His response was biting:

PHOTO CREDIT JORDAN CATOE STRUDWICK



GDS community members, friends, and family gathered to support Michelle at her solo exhibition, *Global Perspectives*, held at the Woman's National Democratic Club in April 2026.



Former history teacher Richard Avidon and Karen Thomas '18



Studio Arts Chair Sarah Riley



Tristan Fulton '26

Reader—where she continues to evaluate portfolios for the College Board. Equally vital was the plain air course she created, which emphasized direct observation, a key component of her teaching. For that course, she took students to the park behind GDS and taught them to apply swatches of color side-by-side, never blending or relying on photographs.

Inside the studio, CJ Greenhill Caldera '10 remembers the “Ten Commandments-style list” that Michelle posted on the studio wall. Among them was a “don’t evaluate” mandate that called on students not to step back from the canvas—a habit Michelle said distracts from direct

observation and invites self-doubt. Eager to impress, CJ tied her Doc Martens shoelaces to a stool to train herself to stay still and focused.

“We had drill sergeant Michelle—the no-smile, no-A+ Michelle who made us art warriors,” said CJ, now a curatorial assistant at the Hirshhorn Museum.

But along with the tough love exterior came unyielding support.

When CJ exhausted the School’s Advanced Placement offerings as a sophomore, Michelle curated a two-year independent study, set aside studio space for her, and even helped her price her work for the open market. By

graduation, CJ said her portfolio was so formidable that Wellesley College lured her with the promise of private study under a prize-winning painter. “Michelle helped make this possible by giving me space to endlessly produce and be challenged,” CJ said.

As a collective thank you, several of Michelle’s students have donated more than 30 original pieces to the School at Michelle’s request—including CJ and Mai-Han Nguyen '17. These works are part of a permanent art collection displayed throughout GDS.

For Mai-Han, Michelle’s impact extended into the home. Her immigrant parents supported her talent, but an arts career felt abstract and risky to them. As Mai-Han’s advisor, Michelle helped bridge that gap, warming them to the idea of art school. Today, Mai-Han is a Background Animation Artist for Nickelodeon. “It’s really because of Michelle that I’m living my dream,” she said. “She is my mentor, my friend, and my biggest inspiration.”

That sense of possibility took on a specific resonance for Jazzmin Cox-Caceres '19, who found in Michelle a mirror for her own future. “Michelle taught me what life could look like as a Black artist and educator,” said Jazzmin, an Afro-Latina who recently taught history at GDS. This mentorship included practical training in everything from drafting artist statements to preparing digital files. Now an MFA candidate at Philadelphia’s Tyler School of Art, Jazzmin said, “Michelle helped me feel like I could be an artist in every sense of the word.”

“NOT FROM WHERE I’M STANDING”

While Michelle was busy helping students find their voices, she was just as intentional about listening to them. As she saw it, her teacher status did not grant her a monopoly on vision.

Marlo Thomas, Assistant Head of Equity and Inclusion, saw the power of Michelle’s approach through her son, Montez McNeil '20. While sketching a skeleton in art class, Montez was corrected by Michelle, who told him the angles and shadows were off. “Not from where I’m standing,” he replied.

Michelle didn’t pull rank. Instead, she climbed onto a stool, looked at the model from his sightline, and immediately understood. “Oh my God, you’re right,” she said.

“That was a beautiful moment of adult modeling,” Marlo said. “My son felt valued and heard because Michelle was willing to ask herself: What does it mean to continue to be a learner?”

It was a disposition Michelle knew well. Even after moving to DC, she

visited Loper, her mentor, every weekend in Delaware until his death in 2011 at age 95. Toward the end of his life, as Loper struggled with dementia, Michelle grew worried that her skills would diminish without his eye. As a test, she brought him a mixed batch of paintings: some created under his tutelage and others painted independently.

He could barely remember her name, yet his artistic eye remained sharp. He immediately separated the two groups. “I don’t know where you did that first batch, but they’re good,” he told her. “The second batch? Not so good.”

It was the confirmation she had feared, and in time, the gift she needed. The bar Loper set for her in Delaware hasn’t budged.

Her artwork and designs now reside in notable collections, including Stanford University’s Black Graphic Design History Collections Initiative and the U.S. Supreme Court chambers of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. For four decades, she has taught painting, drawing, and graphic design at various institutions, including the University of Maryland, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the University of Delaware. She continues to teach painting online at Smithsonian Associates and she was granted a solo show at the Woman’s National Democratic Club in April 2026.

Still, Michelle treats these accolades as merely markers on a continuing journey. She remains her own toughest critic. “I’ve come to realize that I may never be satisfied,” Michelle said. “I don’t know what the standard is that’s going to make me feel like I’ve arrived. All I know is I want to keep evolving. I don’t want to get complacent.”



The mural above—created by Michelle’s 2024–25 Master Class—is part of the GDS permanent art collection, which consists of pieces donated by Michelle’s students at her request. It was inspired by a French politician who facetiously suggested the U.S. should return the Statue of Liberty because the country no longer lives up to its ideals. The work visualizes this provocative proposal, depicting the iconic symbol being airlifted from her pedestal by French helicopters.

2026 MILANO CORTINA WINTER OLYMPICS

GDS Cheers on a Champion

GDS pride was on full display as students gathered in the HS Forum to watch one of their own compete in Milan on February 11. Cheers erupted and flags pierced the air as Conor McDermott-Mostoway '17 appeared on the big screen for the men's 1000-meter speed skating event. Though he didn't make it to the podium, his ninth-place overall finish did not dim the crowd's enthusiasm. Conor had missed the 2022 USA team roster by a fraction of a second, rendering this Olympic debut a long-awaited triumph.

Beyond the stats, Conor made history as the first openly gay man in speed skating. In April, Conor delivered a keynote address at the High School's Pride Week assembly, where he discussed coming to terms with his sexuality while navigating the competitive speed skating world. "In many ways, having to come to terms with being gay made me a better athlete," he said, "but being an athlete made it much harder to come to terms with being gay."

Conor, who began skating as a toddler, was still a young boy in DC when his thoughts first turned to racing. He was skating on the frozen C&O Canal when he saw someone glide past on a pair of speed skates and decided he needed a pair of his own. By age 10, he was honing his skills in short-track speed skating before transitioning to long-track seven years later. In 2018, his first full year of long-track, he secured a second-place finish in a mass start event at the Junior World Cup in Salt Lake City. The win was a definitive turning point when the possibility of the Olympics first felt within reach.



GDS students gathered in February to cheer on Conor McDermott-Mostoway '17 during his 1000-meter speed skating event in Milano. In April, the Olympian visited campus to address HS students during the Pride Week assembly.

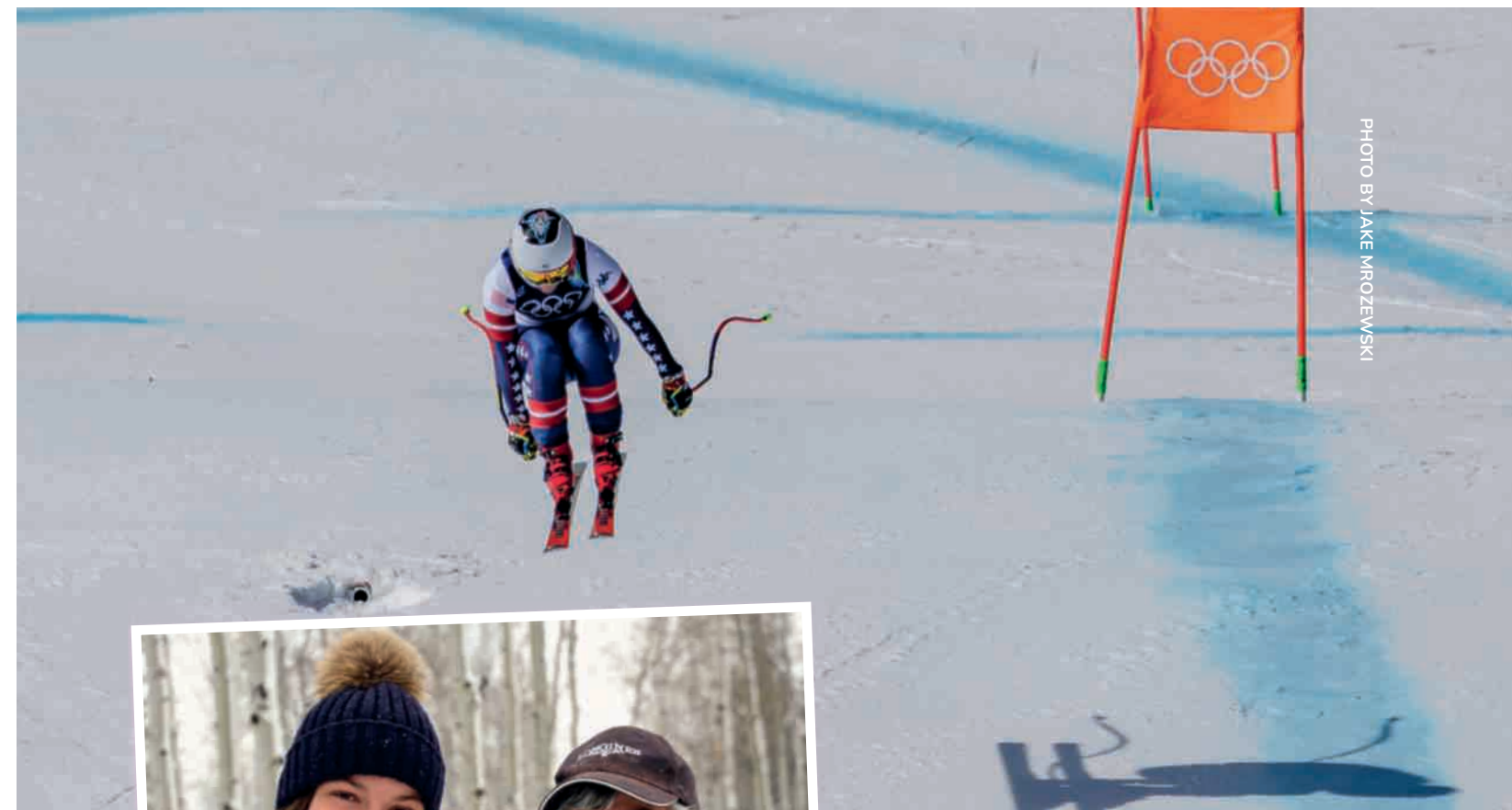
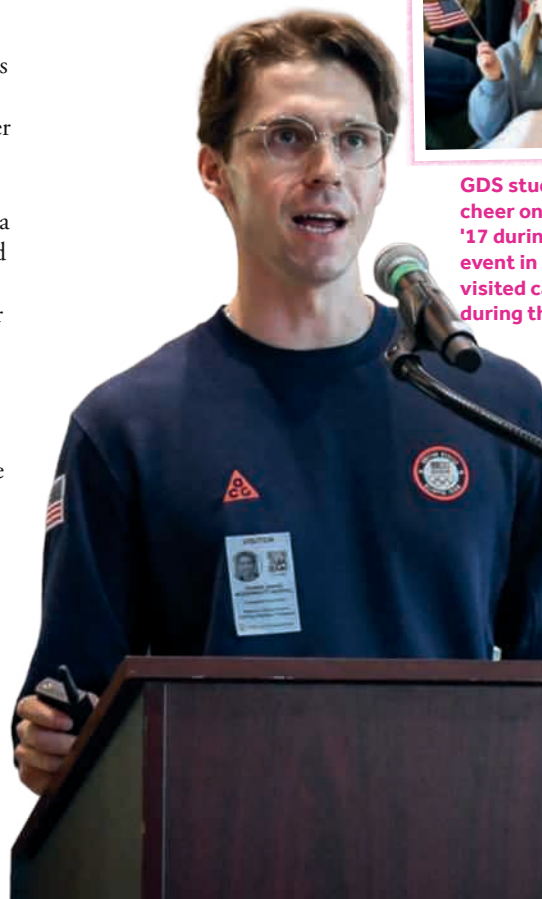


PHOTO BY JAKE MROZEWSKI



"Thanks for leading by example and showing me how to be a strong woman," Breezy Johnson (left) wrote of her mother, Heather Noble '72 (right), in a 2019 Instagram post.

A Golden February

Heather Noble '72 and her husband, Greg Johnson, had much to celebrate in February. Their daughter, two-time Olympian Breezy Johnson, captured the gold medal in downhill skiing on February 8—securing the first gold for Team USA in the 2026 Games.

The achievement was a proud moment for the extended GDS family, including Breezy's aunt and uncle, Allison Noble '78 and Andy Noble '75.

Heather and Greg tuned in at 3:30 AM from their home in Victor, Idaho, to watch their daughter attack the course in Cortina d'Ampezzo. As one of the first top-seeded racers out of the gate, Breezy (who also competed in the 2018 PyeongChang Games) set a blisteringly fast pace. She then settled into the leader's box to watch the world's best try to hunt her down. With every crossing of the finish line, the prospect of gold grew.

"We thought: Is this enough for a medal?" Heather recalled. "You never know who will come out of the woodwork with great results. ... At some point, they were still running more racers, but everyone who was thought to be a serious threat had gone. So I discovered we have a bottle of champagne. But it didn't seem appropriate to drink it at 5:30 in the morning. So we just kind of sat there and let it sink in slowly, and then my phone went nuts. Everybody in the world who had my contact information was pinging me on Messenger or texting me."

Breezy's victory makes her only the second American woman to win Olympic downhill gold since Lindsey Vonn in 2010. The celebration was made sweeter when Breezy said "yes" to her boyfriend, Connor Watkins, who proposed on the slopes following her final event on February 12. Mom and Dad knew he planned to pop the question. And Breezy suspected. "Let me put it this way," Heather said, "the day before she got a manicure."

ALUMNI GATHERINGS



(top right) Getting the weekend started right at Boardwalk Bar & Arcade.

(top left) At the BBQ, Head of School Russell Shaw and Amelia Bergman '20 ham it up in the photo booth, complete with cap, gown, and "diploma."

(bottom) Event organizers Bobby Asher (left) and David Gillespie finally get their moment in the (photo booth) spotlight!

CLASS OF 2020 REUNITES

Better late than never! Five years after logging off from their virtual commencement, the Class of 2020 finally got a festive in-person send-off. The weekend (June 20–21, 2025) kicked off with a happy hour at Boardwalk Bar & Arcade on the Wharf in Southeast DC. The celebration continued the next day on campus with a BBQ and a competitive trip down memory lane with a throwback 2020 quiz game.



On display at the BBQ were the 2020 athletic plaques, sidelined during the COVID-19 pandemic school closing.



YOUNG ALUMNI BASH

Home for the holidays! More than 70 young alumni gathered at Guapo's in Tenleytown on November 28 to toast old friends and reconnect at the annual Thanksgiving bash.

PHOTOS BY JASON PUTSCHÉ



Ethan Slater '10
with former HS
Theater Director
Laura Rosberg

HOPPERS HEAD TO MANHATTAN

In early March, GDS alumni gathered in New York City for a special performance of *Marcel on the Train*, then mingled at an after-party with the play's co-writer and star—Tony nominee Ethan Slater '10.

The play tells the story of Marcel Marceau who, long before he became a renowned mime, guided Jewish children in Nazi-occupied France to safety in Switzerland. Ethan said he was intrigued by the idea of "a young person that takes on responsibility that they feel they aren't equipped for." Throughout the play, Marcel makes faces and performs silently, honing his craft to keep the kids distracted and shield them from the terror of their circumstances.

In February, the seventh grade had journeyed to New York to catch the performance. Following the play, the students met with Ethan and other cast members to discuss how one man's refusal to ignore the plight of others—and his courage to act—saved lives.

The seventh grade's one-day round-trip by train was a memorable experience, one that they later reflected upon when they read *The Diary of Anne Frank* in the spring. "We are thrilled for the opportunity to make connections between these two works," said John Barnes, Middle School Assistant Principal.



Seventh graders in NYC
for *Marcel on the Train*

CLASS NOTES

HELP US KEEP OUR
ALUMNI CONNECTED!

Send your personal and
professional updates to the new
Class Notes section, or help collect
news for your graduating class.

Contact Dina ElBoghdady
at dina@gds.org.

1970s

Diana (Morgan) Gustafson '76 and her husband, Tom, recently bought a house in Santa Fe, New Mexico, after testing the waters for 10 months. Before the move, they lived in Washington for 12 years, where Diana served as a priest in several DC churches and Tom worked as a health policy adviser. See below for updates on her children, Julian '06 and Camilla '09 Grove.

1980s

Trevor Spradlin '86, a marine mammal biologist, has reached his 30-year milestone at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). He serves as a Supervisor in the agency's Office of Protected Resources, which oversees a suite of conservation issues for marine mammals, sea turtles, and other marine species. In his current role, Trevor works on programs for scientific research, documentary filmmaking, zoos and aquariums, wildlife viewing, emergency response efforts to rescue marine mammals in distress, and investigations into the health and health trends of marine mammal populations.

Natalie Adler '88 was named Woman of the Year by Washington Women in Public Relations, an honor bestowed on women who have shaped the communications industry through leadership, innovation, and impact. Natalie, currently a vice president at Fors Marsh, has led communications campaigns for federal agencies, nonprofits, and corporations for more than 25 years.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author **Andrew Sean Greer '88** is set to release his

latest novel, *Villa Coco*, on June 9, 2026. The comedy follows a naive young American who travels to Tuscany for a seemingly straightforward job cataloging an eccentric Baroness's art collection. The archival work quickly dissolves into a chaotic romp featuring a daring funeral heist and a frantic quest for lost love.

1990s

Michael Schaffer '91 has joined *City Cast DC* as a host and executive editor. His arrival comes as the national podcast network builds out a local Washington newsroom to complement and expand its daily audio and newsletter offerings.

Laura Wides-Muñoz '91 was selected for the 2026 George R.R. Martin Summer Intensive Writing Workshop at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Media, and Integrated Marketing Communications. Alongside nine other fellows, Laura will participate in a weeklong workshop, attend classes taught by award-winning novelists, join fireside chats with visiting authors, and have the opportunity to meet with literary agents.

Ruben Fleisher '92 directed his eighth feature film, *Protecting Jared*, an action comedy coming to Netflix starring Andy Samberg and Jason Momoa. Fleischer has worked on a number of star-studded projects. He directed *Now You See Me 3*, which was released in theaters worldwide last November. He also directed the pilot and is a producer on *St. Denis Medical*. The medical comedy was recently picked up for its third season on NBC.

J. Lester Feder's book, *The Queer Face of War*, offers a collection of



Honoring Jamie Raskin '79

Dan Hamilton '85 hosted a DC gathering for Rep. **Jamie Raskin '79** in September 2025 to celebrate Jamie's distinguished career in Congress, including his Democracy Summer program, which trains high school and college students in political organizing and leadership. The event attracted GDS alumni, students, and faculty spanning nearly five decades, from the class of 1979 to the present. "It was a raucous, transgenerational celebration of his career," Dan said. Check out Dan's latest endeavor on the magazine's back cover!

portraits and stories of LGBTQ+ Ukrainians on the front lines of Russia's invasion, revealing how queer identity and the fight for democracy have become deeply intertwined. An essay adapted from the book and published in *The New York Times* earned Feder '98 an Excellence in Journalism Award from NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists. For more information, go to TheQueerFaceOfWar.com.

Jennifer Miller '98 launched a limited series podcast, *Blood Will Tell*, which explores the story of 18-year-old identical twins in California arrested on murder charges, and what happens after the wrong brother is arrested and jailed. Jen spent six years earning the twins' trust and reports on how their identities and choices shaped their fate.

Writer and Director **Jamie Effros '99** premiered his film, *Big George*, on the YouTube platform, Omeleto, on December 23, 2025. The short film tells the story of a middle-aged actor who gains too much weight during the COVID-19 pandemic to

pull off his survival gig as a George Clooney impersonator. Jamie worked alongside Producer **Brady Kirchberg '01** during the film's production. The duo connected with **Jessica Granader '16** to help with marketing the film for its online release.

2000s

Shira Feldman '00 was promoted to Senior Director of Constitutional Litigation at the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, where she leads Second Amendment litigation and amicus work. *The Buffalo Law Review* recently published an essay by Shira and her colleague Tess Fardon: "The Meaning of Lawful Self-Defense: State Criminal Law and the Scope of the Second Amendment."

Architect **Ted Baab '01** was featured in *Dwell* magazine after he redesigned a quirky 1970s Cape Cod home for **Scott Lipnick '01**. The former classmates reconnected at a GDS reunion several years ago and discussed how Scott and his wife, Meredith, wanted to preserve the home's eccentric spirit while making it more functional for their family. "Ted made all the things we had usable, and all the new things fit in perfectly," Scott said.

Jill Delston '01, an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Missouri–St. Louis (USML), received the university's 2024 Gerald and Deanne Gitner Excellence in Teaching Award, which recognizes and honors early-career tenure-track faculty for outstanding and innovative teaching.

Dave Fischer '01 was recently promoted to Vice President and Partner at SEI Architects, a 65-year-old firm based in Rockville, Maryland. Dave's focus is in the educational sector, designing K-12 public school buildings throughout Maryland. He has devoted his architectural career to SEI, starting there as a summer intern in 2010.

S. Asher Gelman '02 is the Artistic Director of Midnight Theatricals, through which he produced and directed his first play, *Afterglow*. The

show continues to see productions around the world, including runs in Melbourne and Sydney. A 10th anniversary production is planned for 2027, at Midnight Theatricals' new home in New York City. Asher's next play, *The Zionists: A Family Storm*, premiered at the Colony Theater in Miami Beach, Florida, with a run from April 9-24, 2026.

Author **Ben Sheehan '03** is the host of the PBS series, *Civics Made Easy*, which won the People's Voice Award for Public Service and Activism in the Video and Film category at the 2026 Webby Awards. Episode 6—"Why Do So Many Americans Not Know How Their Government Works?"—was the winning entry. Each episode breaks down the complexity of the American government while encouraging civic engagement.



(from left) Isabel Kirsch '18, Adam Isaacson '09, Matt Jackson '10, Jenna LaFleur '17

Puzzling It Out Together

Last month, four GDS alumni connected at the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament, hosted by *New York Times* puzzle editor Will Shortz in Stamford, Connecticut. Out of more than 900 competitors, Jenna LaFleur '17 placed 11th overall and 2nd among competitors from the Mid-Atlantic region. Matt Jackson '10 won the event's C division and Rookie of the Year awards. Adam Isaacson '09 had a 90th percentile finish, and Isabel Kirsch '18 took home a trophy by placing 2nd in the event's E division. Between puzzles, the fellow Hoppers had a great time connecting and reminiscing.

Dr. Brandon Jackson-Baird '04, an otolaryngologist and laryngeal surgeon at University of Chicago Medicine, recently wrote and composed an original musical, *Code*. The musical follows the life of Ben, a young doctor whose future is uncertain after a complication during a biopsy for terminal cancer. The musical ran for two nights in May 2026 at the Instrumental Theatre Company in Chicago.

In 2025, **Erin Goldson '05** launched the inaugural Vineyard ICON Awards on Martha's Vineyard to honor leaders making an impact locally and beyond. In its first year, the event was featured in *Forbes*, *CNBC*, and *Ebony*, and welcomed guests including U.S. Sen. Cory Booker and Gayle King. Erin currently works in PR and influencer marketing at Unilever.

Mia Cioffi Henry '05 is the cinematographer of *COVER-UP*, the latest documentary from award-winning filmmakers Laura Poitras (CITIZENFOUR) and Mark Obenhaus (*Steeple*). The political thriller, which traces the explosive career of Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist (and former GDS parent) Seymour "Sy" Hersh, began its Netflix run on December 26, 2025. Earlier that year, *American Cinematographer Magazine* named Mia one of the "Rising Stars of Cinematography" following her acclaimed work on *SORRY, BABY*, which was screened at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival. Mia serves as the Head of Cinematography at NYU Tisch's Graduate Film program.

After more than a dozen years in journalism, **Brian Fung '06** joined Google, where he is an external communications manager helping the tech giant address what AI means

for news and the broader information ecosystem. Before Google, Brian was a technology reporter at CNN, *The Washington Post*, and the *National Journal*.

Julian Grove '06 recently accepted an assistant professorship in linguistics at the University of Florida after earning a PhD at the University of Chicago and completing postdoctoral work at the University of Rochester and the Centre for Linguistic Theory and Studies in Probability (CLASP) at the University of Gothenburg.

The Cobble Hill Walking Club, a brainchild of **Batya Feldman '07**, celebrated its one-year anniversary this fall. Since October 2024, this intergenerational group of Brooklynites has been meeting for a 45-minute walk-and-talk every weekday morning. Their lively WhatsApp group boasts more than 50 members and is a place for neighbors to share walking routes, post-walk selfies, tips about street parking, and more.

The New York Times praised **Gianmarco Soresi '07** for his "superb" stand-up comedy special, *Thief of Joy*, which premiered on YouTube on September 19, 2025. Gianmarco marries "the flair and showmanship of a Broadway baby with the ruthless irreverence of a club comic," wrote *Times* comedy columnist **Jason Zinoman '93**, who is also a critic at large for the newspaper's Culture section. Shortly before the premiere, Gianmarco performed a stand-up set on Jimmy Fallon's *The Tonight Show*.

MS history teacher **Julia Blount '08** is back at GDS after five eventful years in California. Julia left GDS in June 2020 to move to Los Angeles with her husband for his job. While away, Julia served as the Director of



Looking Back
Listen to Gianmarco Soresi '07 and Ethan Slater '10 reminisce about their GDS days on *The Downside with Gianmarco Soresi* podcast.

Upper Elementary and Director of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Echo Horizon School in Culver City, California. She also earned an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at the University of Southern California—and gave birth to her daughter!

Chloe Sarbib '08 was a 2025 Sundance Directors Lab and Screenwriters Lab fellow in June 2025, one of the most prestigious artist development programs in independent film. The fellowship offers hands-on mentoring to help artists refine their scripts and develop their visual directing skills.

Comedian, actress, and writer **Greta Titelman '08** was featured on *Late Night with Seth Meyers* on November 19, 2025.

HS English teacher **Julia Fisher '09** wrote for *The Atlantic* about how she helps her students navigate their assumptions in literature and in life.

Camilla Grove '09 is engaged to Lucas Shaw, with a wedding planned for June 2026. They live in Los Angeles, where Camilla is an Executive Vice President at Matt Tolmach Productions.

GDS Playbill

GDS talent crushed it at the 70th Annual Drama Desk Awards, which honors excellence across New York City's theatrical landscape. **Judy Kuhn '76** took home the award for Outstanding Featured Performance in a Musical for her stunning work in *The Baker's Wife*, while *Marcel on the Train*—co-written by **Ethan Slater '10**—clinched Outstanding Lighting Design of a Play. Applause is also in order for our spectacular nominees:



- **Gina Gionfriddo '87** Nominated for Outstanding Revival of a Play for *Becky Shaw*—marking its Broadway debut after a celebrated Off-Broadway run that made it a 2009 Pulitzer Prize finalist.
- **Leigh Silverman '92** Nominated for Outstanding Direction of a Musical for *The Seat of Our Pants*.
- **Quincy Bernstine '92** Nominated for Outstanding Lead Performance in a Play for *Well, I'll Let You Go*.

In February, **Lily Meyer '09** released her sophomore novel, *The End of Romance*, which *The New York Times* described as “endearingly sincere and tenderhearted.” The novel follows Sylvie Broder, who vows to renounce romance after escaping an abusive marriage, only to have her new approach upended by two very different men.

Charlie Pollinger '09 made his directorial debut with *The Plague*, which premiered in the Un Certain Regard sidebar at Cannes and hit theaters nationwide on January 2, 2026. *The Hollywood Reporter* praised the psychological thriller for capturing the terror of adolescent masculinity. Following the Cannes premiere, the film picked up awards at Fantastic Fest, Deauville Film Festival, and more. The *Washington City Paper* named it one of the Top 10 films of 2025.

Maaïke Ravesteijn '09 will soon open Dutch Darlings Stroopwafels & Sweets at 1003 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, in the heart of Georgetown. The shop will serve freshly baked, made-to-order stroopwafels, coffee and espresso drinks, and a curated selection of candy and sweets from the Netherlands and other European countries. To learn more, visit dutch-darlings.com and follow along on Instagram: @dutchdarlings

Noah Robbins '09 appeared alongside a star-studded cast in *Let's Love!*, the Off-Broadway comedy by Oscar winner Ethan Coen (*No Country for Old Men*), which played at Atlantic Theater Company last fall. Noah took on the role of “Boy” in a cast that included Aubrey Plaza (*Parks and Recreation* and *The White Lotus*), Chris Bauer (*The Wire*), and Dylan Gelula (*Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*).

2010s

Conor Bagley '12 directed Mark Rowe's *The Approach* at New York City's W. Scott McLucas Studio Theater, performed from April 3 through May 10, 2026, with set design by **Daniel Prosky '12**.

Jordan Friend '12 performed in the ensemble of *Inherit the Wind* at The Arena Stage in DC. The play, which ran from late February through early April 2026, is a fictionalized version of the 1925 Scopes Trial and explores the high-stakes clash between intellectual freedom and religious dogmatism in public education.

On November 6, 2025, **Clarke Smith '15** was the keynote speaker for an entrepreneurial workshop hosted by HQ DC House and moderated by Merge PR and Seed to Seen founder, Nicole Harris. Throughout their conversation, Clarke and Nicole discussed creative entrepreneurship, highlighting Clarke's impact and experience being a celebrity stylist and owner of a Consignment Shop and an upcoming clothing brand

It has been a busy year for **Maaïke Laanstra-Corn '17**. Maaïke starred as Maren in the Off-Broadway play *Calf Scramble* earlier this year, where her friends **Esme Levitch '18** and

Simone Liu '18 were spotted in the audience by former HS Theater Director **Laura Rosberg**. She also played Hedvig in Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, performed at DC's Shakespeare Theatre Company in late 2025. GDS seniors attended that show for a field trip in November, and Maaïke visited the high school two weeks later to discuss her portrayal and her career path.

Jenna LaFleur '17 was a contestant on *Jeopardy* on December 9, 2025. After a well-fought battle, Jenna finished in second place!

Jamie Hedlund '19 is an executive assistant to a partner at LBI Entertainment, a talent management firm that represents major Hollywood figures, including Martin Scorsese, Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence, and Reese Witherspoon. Jamie interned at LBI during his senior year at New York University before joining the firm's New York office in February 2025.

Jordyn Lemer '19 moved up the ranks at United Talent Agency (UTA), relocating from New York to Los Angeles this summer to join UTA Creators—the division representing digital stars like *Call Her Daddy's* Alex Cooper and TikTok's famed D'Amelio family. Jordyn now serves as assistant to the division's partner and co-head. One perk of the job: She gets to work with fellow Hopper **Erica Barry '15**. “We talk about GDS all the time,” Jordyn said.

Lucy Walker '19 joined the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice in July 2025. She provides research and administrative support as special assistant to the director of the center's Justice program, which works to end mass incarceration and other criminal justice policies that target communities of color.

2020s

Track star **Ziyah Holman '20** was back at GDS on April 28 and 29, 2026, visiting with each division to provide advice and reflections on being a collegiate athlete. After running in some relay races with our youngest Hoppers, Ziyah spoke at the High School's College Athlete Recognition Ceremony.

Dennis Kongoli '20 is a research analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's Research and Statistics Group, a position he has held since July 2024.

Eve Kolker '22 will join the Boston office of Qral Group, a life sciences consulting firm, after she graduates from Northwestern University in June 2026.



PHOTO BY TOM BRENNER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Pulitzer Pride!

Congratulations to **Hannah Natanson '15**! Hannah anchored *The Washington Post* coverage that won the 2026 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. The Pulitzer Board praised the articles for “piercing the veil of secrecy around the Trump administration's chaotic overhaul of federal agencies.” Earlier this year, FBI agents searched Hannah's home and seized her electronic devices as part of an investigation into a government contractor accused of unlawfully obtaining and sharing classified materials. A court fight ensued and continues. A recent *New York Times* article captured a truth we've long proudly claimed: Hannah's formidable journalism career began at *The Augur Bit*, where she was editor-in-chief.

Nuptials and Newborns



Jonny Dach '04 tied the knot on September 14, 2025, in New Haven, Connecticut! Jonny and his wife, Mollie Freedman-Weiss, a pediatric surgeon, celebrated their big day with a contingent of fellow Hoppers, including **Adriane Quinlan '03**, **Marc Tracy '03**, **Alex Hemmer '04**, and Jonny's aunts, **Carolyn Lewis '83** and **Kate Supron '84** (née Dickie). Jonny's former GDS teachers—**Richard Avidon** and **Andy Lipps**—also joined the festivities and delivered the motzi.



Jessie McIsaac '16 and Ethan Sorkin were married in West Tisbury, Massachusetts, on September 13, 2025. The celebration included her brothers, **Duncan '12** and **Jak '14**, as well as bridesmaids **Ava Kaufmann '16** and **Gaia Sartorelli '16**. Jessie shares a special legacy with the School: she is the granddaughter of the late **Betsy McIsaac**, who served as the head of the GDS Middle School from 1975 to 1980.



Neil Rustgi '08 (in car) and Daniel Dunn welcomed their son, Kieran Robert Rustgi-Dunn, in May 2026.



Rachel Jerome '10 married McLean "Mac" Dunmire on January 31, 2026, in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. Celebrating with the newlyweds was Rachel's sister, **Diana Jerome '12**, who was the co-officiant, **Caroline Kay '11**, and **Rebecca Sharer '11**. wRachel and her husband are moving to San Francisco in June. Diana now lives in Edinburgh, Scotland, where she is a Science Directorate Coordinator at the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.