

# Thistle TALK



THE END OF AN ERA:  
CELEBRATING  
GARY J. NIELS

Winchester Thurston School  
**BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES**  
2017-2018

**Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89**  
*President*

**Cindy Akers Gerber**  
*Vice President*

**Paul Rosenblatt**  
*Vice President*

**David L. Porges**  
*Treasurer*

**Kerry Bron '84**  
*Secretary*

**Gary J. Niels**  
*Head of School*

Henry S. Beukema

Kristen A. Burns

Manny Cahouet-Rotondi

Simin Yazdgerdi Curtis

Rosanne Isay Harrison '56,  
*Emeritus*

Elizabeth S. Hurtt '74, *Emeritus*

Janet Harrison Kuzmishin '87

Kenneth M. Lehn

Elsa Limbach

Carole Oswald Markus '57,  
*Emeritus*

Kathleen L. Metinko '91

Illah Nourbakhsh

Henry Posner III, *Emeritus*

Martin E. Powell

Kelly Hanna Riley '91

MaryJean Rusak

Sharon Semenza

Kurt C. Small

Christine M. Stone

Philip T. Sweeney

Shannah Tharp-Gilliam

Jane Arensberg Thompson '57,  
*Emeritus*

Jian-Gang (Jimmy) Zhu



Coach Gary J. Niels

## Never a Better Time to be a Bear

As an All-American Lacrosse player and long-time coach, Gary Niels came to WT with a strong desire to build the athletics program. Today, WT can hold itself up as a “triple threat” institution that promises students an exceptional experience in academics, the arts, and athletics. Some important sports moments of the past 16 years include:

- 2004** Girls Lacrosse team earns first WPIAL playoff berth of any team in school history.
- 2005** Garland Field renovated and upgraded to a level, all-weather playing field.
- 2007** Boys Lacrosse team wins WPSLA championship.
- 2013** Field Hockey and Golf teams win first WPIAL Section Championships in school history.
- 2014** Athletics Hall of Fame established.  
Boys Soccer team wins WPIAL championship.  
Boys Cross Country team wins first of two State Championships (the second came in 2016).
- 2015** Girls Soccer team established.
- 2016** Boys Cross Country team wins first of two consecutive WPIAL Championships.
- 2017** Girls Basketball team wins first of two consecutive WPIAL Championships.

# Thistle TALK

## MAGAZINE

Volume 45 • Number 1 Summer 2018

*ThistleTalk* is published by Winchester Thurston School for alumnae/i, parents, students, and friends of the school. Letters and suggestions are welcome.

### Editor

Nancy-Rose Netchi, Director of Marketing and Communications

### Alumnae/i Editor

Amiena Mahsoob, Director of Alumnae/i Relations

### Contributors

Kathleen Bishop  
Michelle Wion Chitty  
Jason Cohn  
Maura Farrell  
Alaina Ferry '10  
Ashley Harper  
Dana Jackson  
Jane Schilling  
Michelle Zaffary

### Printing

Broudy Printing

### School Mission

Winchester Thurston School actively engages each student in a challenging and inspiring learning process that develops the mind, motivates the passion to achieve, and cultivates the character to serve.

### Core Values

We activate our Mission by creating a learning environment that promotes and instills appreciation for these five Core Values: Community, Empathy, Equity and Inclusion, Integrity, Intellectual Courage.

### Equity and Inclusion Statement

As a means to fulfill our credo, “Think also of the comfort and the rights of others,” Winchester Thurston will be an inclusive community and will pursue the social and pedagogical benefits that diversity brings. We will place the highest value on enabling students to understand their own cultural identity and those of others. It is our moral imperative to be courageous and intentional in promoting understanding, addressing bias, identifying and honoring qualities of justice, respecting multiple perspectives and contributions, and valuing the dignity of all.

Winchester Thurston School  
555 Morewood Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

North Hills Campus at WT  
4225 Middle Road  
Allison Park, PA 15101

412-578-7500

[www.winchesterthurston.org](http://www.winchesterthurston.org)

*ThistleTalk* content represents opinions, ideas, and perspectives of the authors that are not necessarily those of the Trustees or Administration of Winchester Thurston School. The editors reserve the right to accept, reject, or edit any content submitted for publication in *ThistleTalk*.

Winchester Thurston School is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools and is accredited by the Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools.

Winchester Thurston School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, or disability in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, financial aid programs, and athletics or other school-administered programs.

Copyright © 2018 Winchester Thurston School.  
All Rights Reserved.





*Ping pong diplomacy:  
Gary J. Niels in China  
in 2014*

## FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL | *Gary J. Niels*

<b>wt smart</b>	20
<b>wt sports</b>	24
commencement 2018	26
<b>wt alumnae/i news</b>	32
class notes	33

## Features

<b>"Great Energy Will be Found in this Place"</b>	6
<b>The Gary J. Niels Chair for City as Our Campus</b>	13
<b>In Celebration of Gary J. Niels</b>	14
<b>Design to Make a Difference: Incubating Awesome</b>	18
<b>"WT Prepared Me to Be a Leader"</b>	28



**THISTLETALK GOES DIGITAL**  
Get more news, photos, and fun at  
[winchesterthurston.org/digitalthistle](http://winchesterthurston.org/digitalthistle)

# Thanks for the Memories

By Gary J. Niels

“You could write a book!” It is a refrain I’ve heard often at WT in 16 years. Well, I don’t intend to end my *ThistleTalk* writing career by penning a book, but it does seem like a wonderful moment to share some of my favorite WT stories.

## In Which Marty Listens, and an Important Decision Is Made



Marty Powell (L) and Niels (R) at the North Hills Campus's Campus Center groundbreaking

It was my fourth week on the job and I was scheduled to meet with our Board President, Marty Powell. Something was really bothering me and I was nervous about raising it with him. I took the plunge and explained that while I understood why the Board had decided to build a new Lower School building at the City Campus, it was evident to me that the school needed instead to build a new Upper School. I expected Marty to put me in my place. I was a brand new Head of School, and the Board was well along in its planning. But, characteristic of Marty’s gentlemanly manner, he listened.

The Upper School student population was too small, I reasoned. To offer quality comprehensive extracurricular programs and a positive social experience for Upper Schoolers, we needed to grow from 45 students per grade to 60 students per grade. Moreover, I continued, the Upper School was dispersed throughout our Pre-K–12 building, hidden from view and prevented from shining as our flagship division. And by the time they reached eighth grade, students who had arrived in Pre-K were ready for a new place, a new experience; they needed a bigger world to move up to, which would entice more of them to stay at WT. (That year, we were facing 52% attrition from eighth to ninth grade.)

When I finished, Marty said, “This is your school now, Gary. If you believe we need a new Upper School you need to convince the Board.” So I set out to make my case, meeting with individual trustees and preparing a proposal to present at the next Board meeting.

At that meeting, the Board agreed with me, and voted to change their plan. And we built our beautiful Upper School at the corner of Morewood Avenue and Bayard Street.

In hindsight, I see that Marty’s support was the most important moment in my tenure and arguably one of the most important in the history of WT. Because he encouraged me to take the mantle of leadership, the Board made a good decision that had huge impact. Retention of ninth grade students increased to 92%; demand for new enrollment in

the Upper School has skyrocketed; each division at the City Campus now has differentiated space enabling it to define its program and community; and the quality of WT’s extracurricular programs improved dramatically, especially our athletics teams.



*The Puritan*, Augustus Saint-Gaudens

### In Which *The Puritan* Takes a Journey

In the fall of my first year, I discovered in the back office of the Upper School library *The Puritan*, a bronze sculpture by the celebrated American Beaux-Arts sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. It was a grand piece, but oddly enough no one seemed to know how WT had come to own it.

In those early days we were always bracing ourselves for unforeseen financial challenges that could threaten to knock us off our feet. One such challenge happened that winter, when our health insurance company informed us that our premiums were going to be increased to the tune of \$70,000; when we calculated what the cost would be to our individual employees, we knew we had to do something to soften the blow, but the cash reserves just weren't there.

We decided to engage Michael Malley, a highly regarded Pittsburgh appraiser, to assess *The Puritan*. He immediately identified the piece as part of the estate of the late Arthur Braun, who had been WT's first Board Chair. Mr. Malley appraised its value at \$60,000. When I told him we planned to sell it, he advised me to send it to Sotheby's in New York for auction. He also told me that to guarantee the preservation of the sculpture we would have to have it professionally packed and shipped. Trouble was, the packing and shipping would cost thousands of dollars. With that, the door closed on the sale of *The Puritan* to raise the needed cash.

Weeks later, I was preparing for a trip to New York for a WT event, and my flight was canceled. I decided on a whim to drive, and gave Mr. Malley a quick call to see if there was any chance he could arrange for Sotheby's to accept *The Puritan*. He did so, and with that, our problem was solved: I would chauffeur the sculpture to Sotheby's myself.

That evening, I drove my Jeep Cherokee to school and recruited the evening cleaning crew to help me prepare *The Puritan* for its journey. We found an old box in the basement and lifted the heavy bronze sculpture into it; we stuffed the box with rolls of toilet paper, maybe 20 in all, to insulate it, and off I went. The next day as I approached Sotheby's in Manhattan, a tall, elegant woman with flowing attire emerged from the auctioneer's offices, followed by a team of white-gloved men in handsome uniforms, pushing a rolling table toward my Jeep. I popped open the tailgate as the agent and her uniformed associates looked with horror at the face of *The Puritan* peering out among the rolls of toilet paper. I have to admit, I was embarrassed.

Well, *The Puritan* went on to more dignified days. He was selected for the cover photo of Sotheby's glossy auction magazine and was situated at the entrance as the guests arrived. He sold for \$100,000, which covered the cost of our insurance increase and gave us a cushion of reserve.





Niels (L) honoring Barbara Holmes (R) at Reunion 2015 for her work transforming the Performing Arts Department at WT

## In Which Barb Has an “Aha” Moment

The 2007 Boys Lacrosse Division II Championship game against Kiski School at Charles Knox Field at Quaker Valley will always be one of my most special memories of WT. Put aside the fact that I am a big lacrosse fan and that the game was intense, ending in a sudden death overtime win for WT. It was the significance of the team and this game that made it so important. And a remark made to me by the legendary Barb Holmes, architect of WT’s status as a performing arts powerhouse, made this winning moment even more important.

The team was a compendium of WT grown talent, a serendipitous influx of quality lacrosse players from other schools, and a group of athletes who wanted to play for Coach Darrell Schmitt.

The most interesting of them was the young man who would score the winning goal, Pete Buongiorno ’07. Pete was a transfer to WT from Kiski. His one-handed overhead hook shot that floated over the goalie’s stick and into the far corner of the goal was graceful and gritty.

The build-up to that moment as the season progressed had been tremendous. The community had rallied around this team of interesting personalities, and a sports scene had taken hold, the likes of which WT had never seen before. There were tailgates before, during, and after games; attendance ballooned at each match, culminating in an estimated WT audience of approximately 500 at the championship game. This was new for WT, a school that had had little history of athletics success. Few seemed to understand that sports teams could bring camaraderie and enthusiasm to a school community.

When Pete’s shot drifted into the far corner of the goal, a melee ensued. WT fans went hysterical with joy! In the midst of the excitement, Barb turned to me and said with a mix of wonder and jubilation, “I had no idea what a great sports team could do for WT!”

Barb was right, and we have seen more moments like this one since the spring of 2007, as many other WT teams—notably Boys Soccer, Girls Basketball, and Boys Cross Country—won section, WPIAL league, and State Championships and, as that Boys Lacrosse team did, rallied school spirit!

## In Which Gary and Marty Have a Bewildering Day

Fundraising visits were a new adventure for me in my early years at WT. To build the Upper School and to complete the third phase of the North Hills Campus Master Plan, we had undertaken the first major capital campaign at WT since the 1980s. There were many relationships to rekindle, which usually provided me with great pleasure as people shared their stories, filling out the history and personality of what was becoming my beloved WT. I relished sharing our vision with people, and igniting their passion for the school.

Not every fundraising visit was immediately successful. One of my most memorable occurred when Marty Powell and I drove to a small town in Ohio to visit a prominent philanthropist with Pittsburgh ties. His son had been a WT Trustee at one time, and had passed away at a young age. There was some sense that this gentleman might consider a gift to WT in his son's memory.

Marty and I arrived at a 1950s office building in the middle of a desolate rust belt town, and were called upstairs to an empty office. We milled around the room until our host burst through the door and hastily marched to his desk, where he sat down and grimaced at us. Marty sat in the chair immediately in front of the large desk and I grabbed the only chair left, which was off to the side.

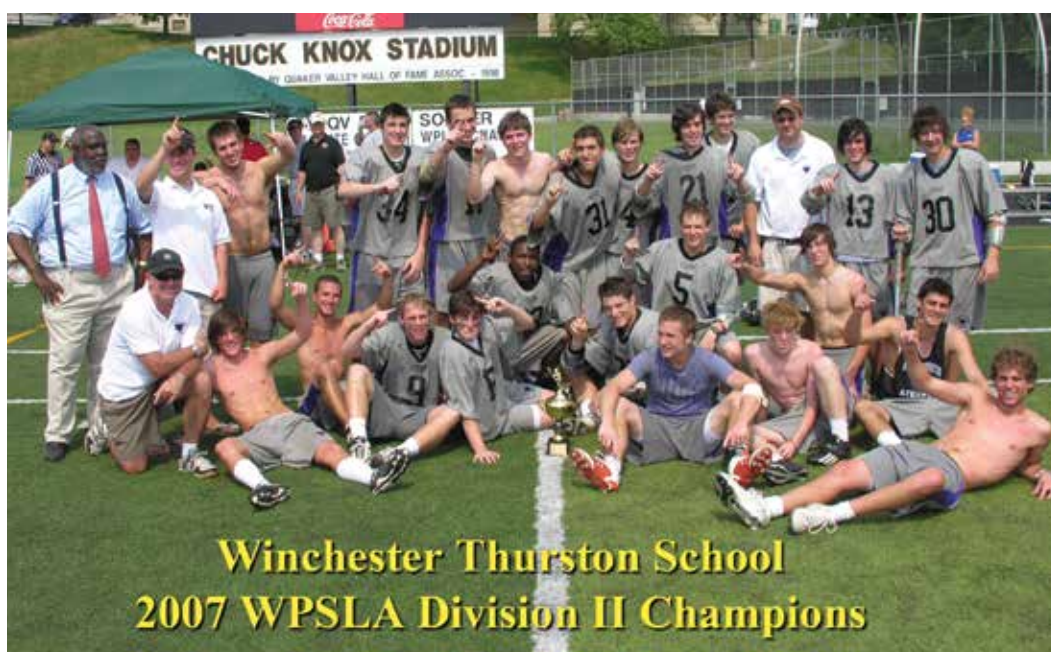
Our prospect was clearly annoyed with us; he began to express his frustration in a gruff, profanity-laced lecture. It took a few minutes to follow the train of his loud accusations, but eventually I gathered that he had apparently given the school some advice about a personnel matter, and we had not honored it. And now we had the temerity to come to him and ask for money! I was baffled. Unable to make eye contact with Marty because of the awkward position of my seat, and with no knowledge of the situation, I sat silently on the side, unnoticed by the prospect while Marty took the brunt of his salty language. Within a few minutes, our host dismissed us unceremoniously.

We walked down the corridor dumfounded and humiliated. Why, I wondered, had no one told me about the past

experience with this prospect? How could anyone have thought it was a good idea for us to visit him and ask for a gift?

Just then, an assistant stepped into the hallway and gently beckoned us into her office. She had overheard the conversation and was very apologetic. It seemed that our prospect had mistaken us for representatives of another local organization—one with whom he obviously had had an upsetting disagreement.

The drive back to Pittsburgh was quiet. After preparing for what we'd hoped would be a fruitful visit and being met with such hostility, we were both deflated. It would take us some time to look back on that bewildering experience and laugh—but eventually, we did.



And apparently it all got straightened out for our prospect, because he sent WT a generous gift later that year, and did so annually for many years to come!

\* \* \*

Sixteen years is a long, long time, and it is also the blink of an eye. Heading Winchester Thurston has been a sacred trust. It has been an honor to tend the garden that was tilled by two incredible women, Miss Thurston and Miss Mitchell. Thanks to the efforts of my colleagues and the generosity of countless people, we have fulfilled the promise that I made in my first *Thistle* letter: to make the WT community proud. I want to thank you for your enthusiasm and your support. And for the many, many stories I will remember, tell, and cherish.





October 4, 2002: Niels with the presenters who welcomed him at his Installation as WT's 18th Head of School. (L-R) Henry 'Skip' Flanagan; Judith Hoover '74 representing alumnae/i; Janice Harrison representing WT parents; Niels; Michael Della Vecchia '03 representing students; Marty Powell, President, Board of Trustees; and Sally Allan, representing faculty

# “Great energy will be found in this place. Good things will happen in this place!”

In 2018, 2002 Predictions Prove True

By Maura Farrell

*On July 1, 2002, Gary J. Niels began his tenure as WT's 18th Head of School, Maura Farrell walked through the pillared portals as the school's first Director of Communications, beginning her own journey through a series of roles, culminating as Associate Head for Strategic & External Affairs. Now, as Niels departs, Farrell reflects on his leadership from the vantage point of having worked alongside him during a remarkable time of growth.*



I remember especially the warmth and dazzle of a perfect autumn morning, which underscored a sense of promise for WT, as the community gathered to formally welcome and recognize Gary J. Niels as Winchester Thurston's 18th Head of School.

It was October 4, 2002. Just three months into the job, by his own account Gary had already grown to love the “palpable positive Winchester Thurston culture you feel when you walk through our doors.” He had read and embraced the school's history—its evolution from a fine school for girls with world class standards ahead of its time, into a multiple-campus, co-ed school with both urban and rural settings. He had studied WT's unique approach to teaching and learning. He had assembled his Cabinet and we had begun to bond as a leadership team. He had published his first op-ed in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. He had begun to work closely with the Board on the school's first capital campaign in 20 years.

Installation Day wove together ideas of community and pride, providing us with a moment to imagine what future this new leader might guide us toward.

Henry ‘Skip’ Flanagan, long tenured Head of Western Reserve Academy and self-described “friend, mentor, and fan of Gary Niels,” introduced my new boss, assuring us that

WT had found a person who embodied the motto, “Gentle in Manner, Strong in Deed,” and whose greatest ally was stamina.

As a visionary, educator, leader, manager, and listener, Flanagan continued, Gary “lends passion to all that he and you will undertake ... He will take up the charge as few have done ... Great energy will be found in this place. Good things will happen in this place!”

Board President Marty Powell rounded out the introduction, describing Gary as “a coach—the kind you feel you don't want to disappoint because he believes in you.”

### Aspiration for WT Greatness

In his own address, Gary asked us the essential question, “What matters most?” He centered his talk on the many possible defining elements of a WT education, concluding with an answer that touched on various definitions of wisdom grounded in ancient Hebrew and Greek cultures. He gave a nod to Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*, and resoundingly endorsed Miss Mitchell's timeless mandate, “Think also of the comfort and the rights of others.” He closed with the first of what would be countless rousing “Go Bears” cheers, instigating the Lower Schoolers in the audience to join him.



May 24, 2005: Trustees celebrate the groundbreaking for the new Upper School. Kneeling, Carole Oswald Markus '57; Standing (L-R) Simin Curtis, Marty Powell, Russ Boehner, Linnea Pearson McQuiston '69, Vincent Johnson, Steve Robinson, Doug Campbell, Henry Posner, Anita Prizio '81, Sue Friedberg, Dan Cohen, Ellen Kessler, Laura Dutch Dinkin '79, Betsy Hurr '74, and Niels



December 6, 2007: Dedicating the Emily E. Dorrance Library.  
(L-R) Niels, Molly Dorrance '01, Susan Sharp Dorrance A'63,  
Roy Dorrance, and Abby Dorrance '00



December 15, 2006: WT Development Committee celebrates reaching  
the Many Voices, One Vision capital campaign goal.

Soon afterward, Gary wrote in a letter to the WT community that in the children's shouts he had "heard... enthusiasm and unbridled aspiration for WT greatness." After recounting a series of things about WT that could already be considered great, particularly our students, faculty, and alumnae/i, he made his case for why and how WT ought to aim higher:

---

*As to why: WT can't stand still! WT has unrealized potential! WT has a long heritage of academic innovation built on the foundation of college preparation! Finally, WT must model a desire to excel!*

*As to what: WT aspires to offer a program which is creative and dynamic in its use of the unique resources in our vicinity and to further develop programs enabling students to explore interests and passions beyond their academic courses. WT aspires to further challenge its students to make a difference in their world. WT aspires to employ inspirational teachers and to offer them opportunities to continue their development. And WT aspires to deliver its program in a facility that reflects the excellence of its program.*

---

Skip Flanagan's predictions, Marty Powell's reflections, and Gary's own expressed aspirations proved to be a sort of blueprint for how the next decade and a half would unfold. Not only would WT realize greatness in a number of forms, but, as Powell had described he would, Gary would coach, develop, and challenge this school that he so believed in, and leave a lasting impact on many of us as professionals and human beings.

Gary indeed "took up the charge" with passion and energy. Over the years, he would hold fast to a vision that was already taking shape in his 2002 installation address

and follow-up letter. One can see in those writings glimmers of many "good things" that were to come: a new Mission statement and Core Values. A commitment to transforming City as Our Campus<sup>SM</sup> from an idea to a robust model for community-based learning. An unswerving belief in faculty and an early nod to what would become the Talent Initiative in 2011. A relentless pursuit of high quality facilities—from a gleaming new Upper School and Campus Center at the North Hills Campus, to revitalized spaces in Molloy Posner Hall. A hint of the significant advances we would make in reputation and resources as a result of these accomplishments. And, finally, a knitting together of his own ideals and convictions about character with the school's enduring credo.

## The Gift of Challenge

From the very beginning of his headship, Gary took the "chief cheerleader" role to heart. Nonetheless, there were daunting challenges facing WT when Gary arrived. (This is where the stamina would come in!) They included double-digit attrition, an anemic endowment, overcrowded and inadequate facilities, an alumnae/i community that needed reconnection, and a Pittsburgh economy that was still recovering from its 1980s implosion. There was a professed commitment to diversity embedded in our ethos and our history, but the principles and structures to support it needed to be strengthened. While there was a strong sense of mission internally, our external image was murky.

Transitions, of course, are natural times for wariness—we fear what we might lose or what we might be challenged to confront. There were skeptics, there was zero-sum thinking, and there were scarcity mindsets: The school ought to play to its strengths and become a K-8. Why try to build a strong sports program when it's obvious that our claim to fame is the arts? WT will never compete with the great facilities at our competitor schools. WT is nurturing,





September 2, 2011:  
WT celebrates its  
125th birthday. Ben  
Chait '12, Mayor  
William Peduto and  
the WT Bear join Niels  
at the ceremony.

not challenging. What is wrong with just being a really strong, good college preparatory, academic school?

Looking back, it's clear that the early challenges were in fact a gift. There was no mistaking that WT, while not in crisis, was teetering. It would take scrappiness and bold moves to position it for a great future.

Gary's approach to WT's challenges and potential was in all likelihood shaped by his experience as the "unsung hero" of the 1975 NCAA men's lacrosse championship team, which won the tournament in an upset. In the early years of his headship, I was learning that he thrived on the challenge of being an underdog—or, more accurately, an underdog with a clear vision, a strategy, and a good chance of prevailing!

Gary understood that we were on a long journey and he recognized the importance of early and

meaningful action. He understood that we had an uphill climb and he knew he had to galvanize us all to ascend in the same direction. He understood that being an underdog meant sometimes having to make pragmatic compromises in order to stay the course for the long haul and that even as we made these compromises, we could not give up on the overarching goal. He welcomed others to the table and he knew that if we didn't have the expertise or resources we needed, it was up to him to go out and find them. And (especially six years into his tenure, when we experienced the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression), even though our friend Elliott Oshry frequently reminded us that "hope is not a strategy," Gary sometimes led us from a place of raw hope, from the sheer desire to prevail which was so necessary to scaling the next hill.



October 21, 2006: At the dedication of the new Upper School building.  
(L-R) John Kanter '07, Mick Gee, Board President Victor Roque, Barbara Holmes,  
Barbara Johnson '10, and Niels

# Books We Read with Gary

Faculty, staff, and administrators read and discuss books on a regular basis for professional development, team building, and inspiration. Here is a selection of books and articles discussed with Gary:

*Active Literacy Across the Curriculum*, Heidi Hayes Jacobs

*Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct*, P.M. Forni

*Colleges that Change Lives*, Loren Pope

*Curriculum 21: Essential Education for a Changing World*, Heidi Hayes Jacobs

*Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan



*Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time*, Susan Scott

*Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't*, Jim Collins

*Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck – Why Some Thrive Despite Them All*, Jim Collins

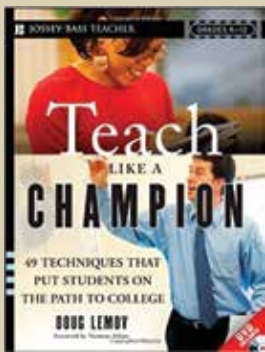
*Harvard Business Review*, “Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail,” John P. Kotter

*Harvard Business Review*, “How Managers Become Leaders,” Michael D. Watkins

*Harvard Business Review*, “Discovering Your Authentic Leadership,” Bill George, Peter Sims, Andrew N. McLean, and Diana Mayer

*Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, Martin E.P. Seligman

*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Carol S. Dweck



*Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College*, Doug Lemov

*The Colors of Excellence: Hiring and Keeping Teachers of Color in Independent Schools*, Pearl Rock Kane and Alfonso J. Orsini

*The Other Side of Innovation: Solving the Execution Challenge*, Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble

*The Road to Character*, David Brooks

*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race*, Beverly Daniel Tatum



March 14, 2012: Principal Yin Chao of Peking University Elementary School visits Winchester Thurston, where she and Niels begin the friendship that will lead to an annual visit to WT by PUES fifth graders, and eventually a formal sister school relationship.



August 27, 2015: WT welcomes the first EQT Scholars to Pre-K.



October 13, 2017: Niels is named an Honorary Alumnus of Winchester Thurston, receiving this formal designation from his son, Brawley, Class of 2027.



### Timeless Leadership Qualities

The world looks nothing like it did on October 4, 2002. Surrounded by what has become the cliché of relentless change, we imagine that effective leadership today requires new skills and dispositions.

Certainly this is true. But there are timeless qualities to strong leadership, too. Gary has led us through 16 years

celebrate the many parents, students, and alumnae/i who have passed through the pillared portals and left their own imprint on WT, and who continue to do so with their service to and support of their school as well as the mark they are making on the larger world.

**Purpose Building:** On that bright October day in 2002, I began to see that my new job was not going



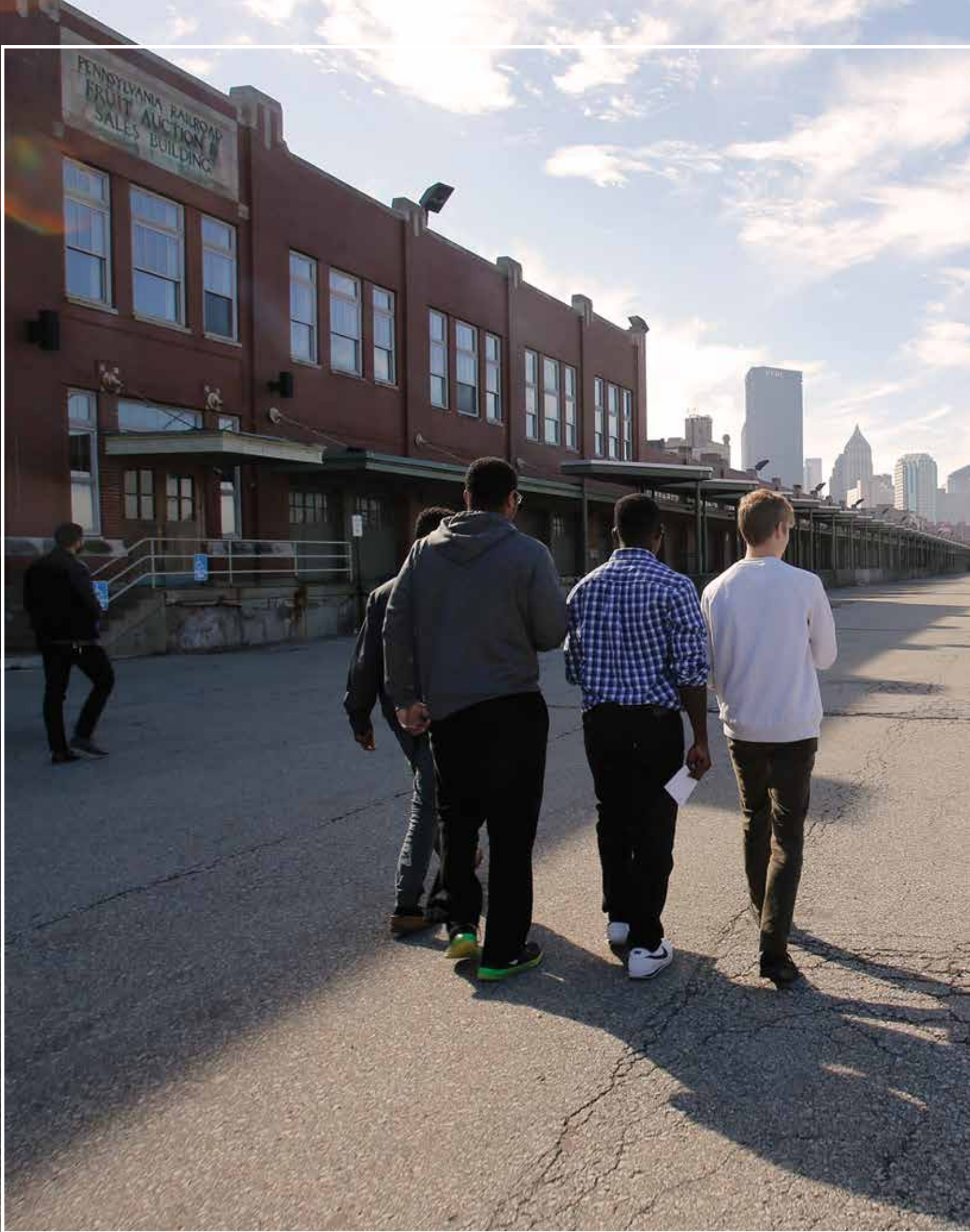
October 13, 2017: Farrell and Niels at WT Reunion

of radical change, in times of near-peril, times of relative stability, and in times of victory, in part by drawing on two of these qualities: Team Building and Purpose Building.

**Team Building:** Gary would be the first to say that no leader generates or navigates momentous change alone. In those early days and thereafter, he cultivated a sense of team. For this, WT today can celebrate a generous Board that has rolled up its sleeves and worked alongside Gary while keeping its eye on the longer term horizon. WT can celebrate a close-knit, talented, accomplished, innovative, dedicated faculty, staff, and administration that has never shied away from the challenges of change. And WT can

to be just a job at all, but a calling, fueled by a leader with whom we would all join to breathe life into WT's potential for greatness. Reflecting on the Flanagan, Powell, and Niels predictions of October 2002, I add this sense of calling to the list. For if there is anything I have taken to heart in my time working for and with Gary and at WT, it is this passage from his October 2002 letter to the community: "There are few things in life more delightful than an awareness of growing, improving, and expanding. We have this yearning within us ..."

Thanks, Gary.





# The Gary J. Niels Chair for City as Our Campus<sup>SM</sup>

On May 3, WT Board President Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89 presented The Gary J. Niels Chair for City as Our Campus at a Leadership Dinner honoring and thanking Niels for his 16 years of service as Head of School. The first endowed chair at Winchester Thurston, it was established with nearly \$1.3 million in contributions.

The endowed chair honors Niels's service and leadership, recognizing that he was the longest tenured Head of Winchester Thurston School other than its two founders, Alice Maud Thurston and Mary A. Graham Mitchell. The Gary J. Niels Chair for City as Our Campus will be held by the senior administrator who oversees City as Our Campus.

Niels's far-reaching legacy at Winchester Thurston includes many accomplishments, such as the transformation of our campuses, many years of record enrollment, enhancement and growth of important programs for students and faculty, and remarkable advances in philanthropy. But as they considered how they wanted to officially thank Niels, the Board of Trustees determined that the most significant and lasting impact of his Headship is the development of WT's signature innovation, City as Our Campus.

Once a nascent idea embedded in a strategic plan, today City as Our Campus is the defining identity of Winchester Thurston; it is the way in which students and faculty live the mission of "active engagement." It is the way that rigor and relevance are married in a dynamic educational program that not only expands each student's intellect, but also imbues him or her with important values. It is the locus of opportunity, of civic engagement, of research, of invention, and of problem solving.

Moreover, through his wise guidance and leadership, Gary has positioned WT in the national spotlight as an example of progressive education for our 21st century students, and placed us in the company of some of the most highly regarded independent schools in the U.S. Winchester Thurston was the first school in the nation to receive both the Malone Family Foundation Malone Scholars grant and the Edward E. Ford Foundation Leadership Grant, and held that accolade for six years. Today, City as Our Campus serves as a model for other schools, and has been celebrated and promoted by the National Association of Independent Schools as an example of a school's achievement of innovation that set it apart from other institutions. The program has attracted more than \$4 million in philanthropic support, and is named by WT parents as a key differentiator in the educational experience offered to WT students.

"This endowed chair indicates the extraordinary esteem in which we hold Gary, not only as a leader who has brought our school to an unprecedented level of success, but also as an educator with absolute dedication to students and teachers, who has acted always with the school's Mission and credo at the center of every decision," said McComb. "Endowing the City as Our Campus chair in Gary's name is the highest honor we can bestow, as it will ensure we recognize his leadership and legacy in perpetuity."

Along with the endowed chair, the Board also unveiled A Celebration of City as Our Campus, an interactive digital installation that will showcase the history, projects, and impact of real-world learning at WT, as well as thank Niels for his leadership.



# CELEBRATIONS

*The WT community came together for three special celebrations in honor of Head of School Gary J. Niels.*

## *Celebrating* GARY J. NIELS

### Leadership Dinner Celebration, May 3, 2018

Trustees, former Trustees, administrators, alumnae/i, and friends gathered for a festive celebration at the Pittsburgh Golf Club to celebrate Niels's remarkable leadership and to thank him for his 16 years of service. Nearly 150 guests honored his achievements and reflected on the tremendous success of WT during the Niels era. The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Gary J. Niels Chair for City as Our Campus [see page 13].



Photos depicting a timeline of events over the past 16 years hung from the balcony of the Pittsburgh Golf Club.



Niels with his wife, Elizabeth Patterson



(L-R) Carole Oswald Markus '57, Emeritus Trustee, with Mick Gee, former Director of Upper School



(L-R) Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89, President, Board of Trustees; Paul McComb; and Gaylen Westfall, Honorary Alumna



The WT Bear joined Director of Equity and Inclusion Diane Nichols and Dean of Students Matt Bachner in presenting a cake to Niels at the end of the evening.



(L-R) Rosanne Isay Harrison '56, Emeritus Trustee; Barbara Abney Bolger '52, former Trustee; Phyllis Coontz; and Brooks Follansbee, Director of Admission and Enrollment



Jane Arensberg Thompson '57, Emeritus Trustee



Dan Gilman, Chief of Staff to Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, presenting a proclamation from the Mayor.



Vincent Johnson, former Trustee



Niels's son, Bill



(L-R) Ashley Harper, Director of Advancement; Anne Fay, Director of eLearning; Martin Powell, Trustee and former President, Board of Trustees; and Nancy-Rose Netchi, Director of Marketing and Communications



Henry Posner III, Emeritus Trustee, and his wife, Anne Molloy, raise a toast to Niels.





Trustee Kristen Burns and her daughter, first grader Lila, volunteer their time as fifth grader Nicolas Binet tries his luck at the paper airplane toss.



Parent Mary Lee Stenson helps third grader Clara Gordon select a prize.



Third graders Amiel Robinson (L) and Meri Black (R) enjoying festival favorites.

## **GARY J. NIELS** AND FAMILY DAY at **SPRING FLING**

The Parents Association welcomed the WT community to the City Campus for a special twist on a WT tradition, Spring Fling – they declared his year's event “Gary J. Niels and Family Day at Spring Fling.” City Councilperson Erika Strassburger attended to formally commemorate May 11, 2018 as “Gary J. Niels Day” in District 8, the City of Pittsburgh, and Allegheny County. The event included Gary-themed attractions like Gary-oke, a lacrosse shootout, and a mini-golf course built by Middle School students from the RAPID Lab elective. Families also enjoyed Spring Fling staples including musical cakes, carnival games, and delicious treats from area food trucks.



Niels with his wife, Elizabeth Patterson



PA President-elect Allison Grodin (L), PA President Kate Underwood Herron (C), and first grade Room Parent Susanna Finke (R) work the Parents Association Booth.



Second grader Logan Monahan (L) and first grader Harrison Gropp (R) enjoy the Chaotic Kingdom obstacle course.



Second grader Aniya Padiath (L) and first grader Amy Zhang (R) create spinart on Patterson's Pedal-powered Pictures, sponsored by the Citiparks Spinart Cart.



Fourth graders Evan Burns (L) and John Koepl (R) prepare to belt out a favorite on the Gary-oke stage.



Parent Adam Koe Leong and alum parent Steve Berman manage the Gary-oke soundboard.



District 8 Councilperson Erika Strassburger proclaims May 11, 2018 “Gary J. Niels Day.”



Parent Doug Dorsey and his daughter Juliana test their luck at the Gary J. Niels-themed mini-golf course.



# Employee Celebration

Roasts, toasts, and a special welcome by “Miss Mitchell” and “Miss Thurston” provided a humorous and affectionate look back at Gary’s tenure. Metz Catering provided an old-fashioned picnic dinner, and employees outdid themselves to supply an overflowing Pittsburgh Cookie Table. The afternoon ended with the presentation of a book of letters to Gary from many grateful WT community members.



Niels enjoys the fun.



Employees, past and present, joyfully react to the depiction by “Miss Mitchell” and “Miss Thurston” of Niels’s time at WT.



(L-R) Upper School teachers Mike Naragon and Josh Andy, and Upper School Dean of Students Matt Bachner



Director of City as Our Campus Adam Nye (L) and Kindergarten assistant teacher Brianna Nichols (R)



“Miss Mitchell” [Director of Athletics Kevin Miller] (L) and “Miss Thurston” [health and physical education teacher Steve Cooper] (R) praised Niels for carrying on their legacy.



Upper School math teacher Mike Davidson (L) and performing arts teacher John Maione (R)



Performing arts teacher Barb Holmes (L) and Associate Director of Middle School Dan Sadowski (R)



Lower and Middle School teachers (L-R) Nicole Hartung, Dave Piemme, Mary Arcuri, Brian Swauger, and Bill Fitch



Long-time Advancement Department consultant Marcia Arnold (L) and her husband, Bob (R)



First grade teacher Desiree Jennings (L) and Lower School performing arts teacher Janna Lettan (R)



Lower School faculty and staff from both campuses (Front row, L-R) Taryn Haluszczak and Krista Balzer; (Back Row, L-R) Mimi Cooper, Kate Weber, Katie Pless, Kim Rovnan, Tisa Schuit, Susan Ferguson, and Gina Ruiz



# A Culture of Team, Moments of Greatness, 2002-2018

Through an enviable partnership among the Head of School, Board, administration, faculty, staff, students, alumnae/i, and parents, WT has ascended to new heights over 16 years. Here are a few of the important moments that propelled the school forward:

- 2003** Board of Trustees approves Many Voices One Vision capital campaign, which raises \$15 million to build a new Upper School and complete the Campus Center at the North Hills Campus.
- 2004** WT receives grant from the Edward E. Ford Foundation (E.E. Ford) for seed funds to build the City as Our Campus program.
- 2006** WT achieves highest enrollment in its history, beginning a nine-year trend of record enrollment.
- 2007** WT named one of only three Malone Schools in 2007, receiving a \$2 million grant to endow scholarships for gifted and talented students.  
The first class graduates from the new Upper School building.  
WT welcomes the first class of ninth graders to surpass 60 students.
- 2008** Roy and Susie Dorrance designate their leadership support of WT to name the Upper School Library the Emily E. Dorrance Library in memory of their daughter, Emily '93, a distinguished young alum.  
WT Advisory Board formed.
- 2009** WT is one of only four schools nationwide to receive the E. E. Ford Foundation Leadership Grant, becoming the first school to have received both the E. E. Ford Foundation Leadership Grant and the Malone Foundation Scholarship Endowment grant.
- 2010** Director of City as Our Campus position created.  
Board of Trustees approves the Celebrate WT capital campaign, which raises more than \$21 million for endowment, facilities, and annual giving.
- 2011** The Talent Initiative established to support WT's efforts to hire, retain, develop, and reward a uniformly talented and dynamic faculty.  
Dean of Faculty position created.  
Board authorizes an increase in the WT budget to realize competitive faculty salaries and professional development resources.
- 2012** WT celebrates its 125th anniversary.
- 2013** Outdoor Classrooms developed at the City and North Hills Campuses.  
Computer Science department established.
- 2014** Athletics Wing renovated and Hall of Fame established.  
Director of eLearning position created.  
WT joins the Malone Schools Online Network, offering students and faculty opportunities to participate in online courses offered by schools in the Malone network.



Ribbon cutting for the North Hills Campus's Campus Center.

- Sister School partnership with Peking University Elementary School established.
- 2015** Number of named scholarships reaches 13, allowing more than 40 gifted and talented students to attend WT each year.  
Falk Auditorium renovated.  
WT is first awardee of EQT Scholars Program, providing two students with full tuition for the entirety of their WT career through the generosity of the EQT Foundation.  
Board approves Equity and Inclusion statement.  
In a survey administered by the National Association of Independent Schools, 89% of parents report they are likely to recommend WT.
- 2016** Director of Equity and Inclusion position created.  
Board approves new WT Master Plan for facilities.
- 2017** Main Building dedicated and renamed Molloy Posner Hall in honor of the remarkable dedication of Anne Molloy and Henry Posner III.  
Athletics Wing dedicated and renamed Glimcher Athletics Wing in tribute to Rob Glimcher's mother, Nona Glimcher.
- 2018** Endowment reaches nearly triple its 2002 value.  
With the support of another E.E. Ford grant, WT develops and hosts coLearn Conference to provide guidance for educators nationwide to discover the power of community-based learning.



This winning team from Butler High School created a skylight using up-cycled soda bottles and custom 3D printed solar panel “caps.”

# Design to Make a Difference: Incubating Awesome

For WT students, a confluence of rigorous curriculum, advanced lab equipment, and access to established STEM professionals creates an organic environment in which they are able to research, design, and create high-level integrated science projects – everything from an interactive exercise mat for torn ACL rehab to a pothole detector designed to make the streets safer. Now, after building and fine-tuning this experience at WT, Science Department Chair Graig Marx and Educational Technology Coordinator and computer science teacher Dave Piemme are sharing their knowledge through Design to Make a Difference (D2MD), a collaborative new program that helps fellow Pittsburgh-area middle and high school teachers improve their own Maker Education practice through an array of free resources.

“We saw a need in the local community and beyond,” says Marx, noting that while WT’s robust program evolved through much hard work, it also benefited from assistance, both from colleagues and—thanks to City as Our Campus—organizations like TechShop and Daedalus, Inc. Today, notes Piemme, “We are ahead of many schools with our approach to STEM work. They may have the money and equipment, but they may not know what to do with it. We created this group to help them build their programs.”

Design to Make a Difference revolves around product-based learning, driven by a common challenge: creating a product to benefit others, inspired by a particular theme—this year, Health and Wellness—and culminating in a community-wide D2MD Design Showcase.

“This challenge is exactly the kind of problem solving skills our students need today,” observes Chris Lisowski, Shaler Area Middle School STEAM teacher. “It’s really their first exposure to wide open, real world problem solving. They are used to handouts and being told how to solve the equation by reading directions.”

Lisowski and teachers from 13 other area schools dived into hands-on learning during professional development days focused on making, engineering, and design pedagogy. Planned and implemented by Marx and Piemme, assisted by Remake Learning (a network of interconnected organizations that ignites learning practices) and Patrick Williams (a technology teacher from Obama Academy), and hosted by the Children’s Museum and Carnegie Science Center,



participants learned CAD modeling and design methods for 3D printing, collaborated on projects, and shared best practices. WT contributed Maker Bundles—a 3D printer and printing filament, glue guns and glue sticks, digital calipers, rotary tool, and hand tool kit—to many of the schools, and Creation Labs provided tech support.

Mindful of their purpose to make a difference, one project the teachers worked on involved an open source project, Utility Bands, developed by Havenlabs, to create assistance devices with interchanging parts designed to help amputees—a project Marx uses with his Research Design students to teach the design process.

“The goal is for each teacher/school to take back what would work in their school with their

traditional hard chairs. Lisowski’s students produced a 3D printed pill case for the blind and a solar-powered food cooker. Among the projects created by WT Middle School students were a device to help those with Parkinson’s or arthritis insert a key into a door, and an exercise band for those afflicted with Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. Upper School students combined upcycling with affordable prosthetics to devise attachments to help users in developing nations accomplish everyday tasks.

Pleased with D2MD’s results, Marx and Piemme are already planning for the future: they are eager to get more schools on board, to include WT Lower School students, and to involve more public/private makerspaces. They’d also like students to work with people to identify needs.

---

“We should give back.  
City as Our Campus speaks  
about giving to the community.  
This is exactly what Graig  
and I are doing: sharing our  
knowledge, building a great  
cohort of teachers, and  
making a difference.”

---



Keynote speaker Matt Dietz, MD, an orthopedic surgeon from Ruby Memorial Hospital at West Virginia University



WT Middle School students created an assistive device that helps people with fine-motor skills disabilities more easily access locks in doorknobs.



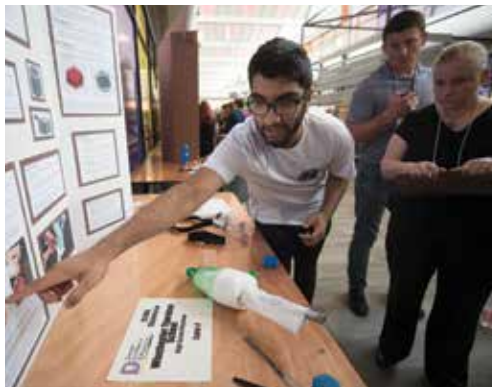
Students from Northgate High School collaborated with local artist Jen Costello to develop personalized canes with easy-grip handles.

students, schedule, and resources,” emphasizes Marx. “The Maker Movement is not one-size-fits-all.”

Marx and Piemme developed D2MD resources to be available every step of the way, from a website and several online design and engineering tutorials, to providing troubleshooting support via email and in person at schools. Declares Marx, “We didn’t want to give anyone a reason not to participate.”

“We’ve been fortunate to collaborate with Graig and Dave during the entire process,” asserts Christina Beaufort, Library Media Specialist at Deer Lakes Middle School. “They’ve been helpful answering questions about the printing layout of the item students created, and sharing things to keep in mind when creating their D2MD project.”

Students working toward the D2MD Design Showcase created an impressive range of work. Beaufort’s students designed a comfortable classroom chair to replace



WT Upper School students up-cycled soda bottles to be used as sockets for below-elbow amputees and then designed custom attachments to improve everyday life for these patients.

“I got into teaching to help students,” states Marx. “I look at this as a way of helping more students. The Maker Movement was originally marketed as a way to lower the achievement gap, but with the rush to adopt technology, it has only widened it. I thought this would be a way to level the playing field.”

“We should give back,” agrees Piemme. “City as Our Campus speaks about giving to the community. This is exactly what Graig and I are doing: sharing our knowledge, building a great cohort of teachers, and making a difference.”

“You don’t have to be special to do this,” says Marx. “You have to think your students are special. We know our students are awesome. We know their projects are awesome. That’s our secret. Be awesome. It will start small, but then other teachers in other schools will join in, and the program—and its impact—will continue to grow and evolve.”

# FANNING THE FLAMES OF WONDER

In every science class, whether exploring ecosystems or energy, watersheds or weather, Lower School students at both WT campuses are immersed—and united—in a longstanding tradition. “Ruth Grant, former WT science teacher, said it best,” declares North Hills Campus science teacher Brock Perkins. “At Winchester Thurston, science is something we do. We read, write, watch, and listen, but most importantly, we do.”

“I’ve inherited an amazing curriculum that has stayed true to the original vision while adapting to meet today’s demands,” continues Perkins, recipient of both of the school’s teaching awards, the Jane L. Scarborough Award and the Mary Houston Griffin Award, during his 19 years at WT.

WT’s North Hills Campus has always inspired inquiry and discovery; the curriculum has steadily expanded, adding and enhancing design and engineering units, incorporating new technologies, and leveraging community connections to maximize hands-on learning. This year, Perkins introduced the Mystery Scientist contest, which allows children to see scientists who look like them. He notes, “Each scientist provides a mirror for some students, while giving others a peek into the life of a person whose experiences may be quite different from their own.”

Also new at the North Hills Campus: Trout in the Classroom, introduced by Middle School science teacher Peter Frischmann. In October, fifth graders began caring for brook trout, releasing them into Pine Creek in the spring. Perkins knows that caring for these trout elevates the significance of monitoring the water quality on the campus’s pond (a project fifth graders have undertaken for

many years, most recently incorporating work with Aquatic Edge and Penn State Extension, City as Our Campus partners) since the pond is a part of the Pine Creek Watershed.

And for the future? “I hope to begin more citizen science projects. I want to engage students in choosing real-world problems where they can truly effect change and have them research the issue, develop solutions, and present their work in hopes of making this change happen,” adds Perkins.

“Projects where students build prototypes that move, that allow them to easily measure successes by testing, are a great hook for students,” says City Campus Lower School science teacher Dan Mendenhall, who introduced one such project to first through fourth graders during February’s National Engineers Week: designing, building, and

testing downhill vehicles, all constructed from recycled materials provided by the Pittsburgh Center for Creative Reuse (PCCR).

After brainstorming ideas, students chose from CDs, bottle caps, jar lids, foam and plastic board, test tube holders, carpet, magnets, skewers, and dowel rods, then—supervised by parents and PCCR teachers—operated hand drills, saws, hammers and nails, and hot glue guns to craft vehicles small and large, some with



Kindergarten students at the North Hills Campus, Mark Steltzer (L) and Lotus Ewing-Beshai (R), test whether or not their nest construction will hold up to the wind.



Fourth grader Una Shen (L) works with Lower School science teacher Dan Mendenhall (R) to program a robot to retrieve a box and bring it back to its base.





Second grader Willa Elsas (L) and first grader Max Hwang (R) put their downhill vehicles to the test in Engineering Week's culminating event, the Nerdy Derby.

three wheels, others with four, still others boasting passenger seats, lights, or spoilers. Students worked diligently to design cars capable of hugging the racetrack, and conserving enough energy to overcome not just one, but two, hills.

"For cars to move straight, students learned that wheels had to be aligned and axles had to be parallel," explains Mendenhall. Moreover, "in order to reduce the force of friction, students learned that wheels had to freely spin, and that no parts of a car could rub against wheels or axles. They discovered that increasing the mass of their cars resulted in more stored energy at the start.

"Engineering is a great introduction into how to constructively deal with failures. There were no students who gave up. They consistently came to class trying to overcome failure and to make a prototype that could meet the challenge."

Mendenhall—also a Mary Houston Griffin Award recipient—describes engineering as "a great vehicle for getting students problem solving in a real-life context, and using math and science in an applied way."



North Hills Campus fifth graders Lily-Rose Peterson (L) and Meera Reddy (R) reference a circuit diagram written in electrical symbols to construct and test a circuit.

Both Mendenhall and Perkins incorporate design and engineering into the Lower School science curriculum in order to fan each student's spark of curiosity into a flame of wonder.

"Wonder, curiosity asking questions, and seeking and puzzling out answers are the qualities of a lifelong learner and are at the heart of science," reflects Perkins. "My work is to continue to foster the children's sense of wonder, their willingness to solve a problem no matter how tricky it may be, and their interest in the people and the world around them."

"People in STEM who make a difference in the world are full of wonder," adds Mendenhall. "They are surprised by an unexpected result in an experiment and use their curiosity to seek out answers to their questions. If we raise children who keep their natural curiosity and wonder of the world, and have the confidence to know they can make the world a better place, then they will be prepared to discover new things and solve the world's problems."

# STUDENTS CELEBRATE DIVERSITY, CONNECT ACROSS DIFFERENCES

Last year, when Middle School students read *March*, Congressman John Lewis's powerful graphic trilogy about the civil rights movement, they were galvanized by his leadership and commitment to human and civil rights—and decided to act.

"The class wanted to continue our discussion of the civil rights movement beyond the classroom," explains Middle School English teacher Betsy Lamitina. "Cate Sindler, then a sixth grader, came to me to talk about ways we could educate the Middle School and also make an impact on issues of diversity and racial justice."

The students' drive and passion coalesced into the Middle School Diversity Club (MSDC), dedicated to celebrating diversity, education, connecting across differences, and creating space for dialogue. Co-advised by Lamitina and



Middle School students Octavia Chitty (L) and Katharine Burns (R) participate in an Identity Circle activity which promotes better understanding of others through exploring one's own identity

Middle School Administrative Assistant Dana Woodruff, and developed in consultation with WT's Director of Equity and Inclusion, Diane Nichols, the club meets at least once every six-day cycle for discussion and projects.

"We discuss how the club is an extension of the Department of Equity and Inclusion and how students could be agents of change," says Lamitina.



Middle School students and faculty perform an African American Social Dance during "Showtime at the Apollo – Education Style."

Members spearhead activities that include the entire Middle School: from "I will" statements posted on a bulletin board suggesting ways to foster inclusion (I will stand up for someone being bullied"; "I will sit with someone in the lunchroom who is sitting alone"; "I will hold the door for anyone behind me") to activities like Cross the Line, where students step over a line in response to statements with which they agree, and learn there are others like them.

The club also sponsors special events like December's Heritage Advisory Luncheon, featuring foods important to the students' cultures. From babka to samosas, more than 40 international dishes were provided by students and shared with their advisory groups.

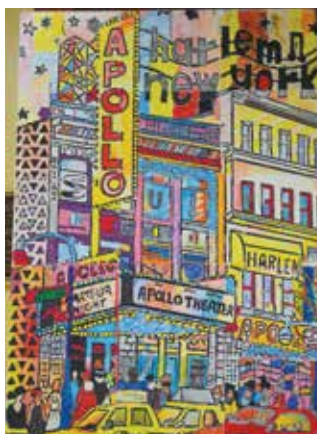
"It was a great celebration for the students, parents, and faculty," beams Woodruff. "It helped build trust in our leadership and the work of the MSDC."

Another hit: Black History Month,

highlighting heroes like Medgar Evers and the history of social dance within African American/Black culture, the latter culminating in a rousing Middle-School-wide performance of the Whip and Nae Nae. The club also created "Showtime at the Apollo – Education Style," modeled after the historic live talent competition at the Apollo Theater in New York City with student acts that included speeches, poetry, singing, and jazz.

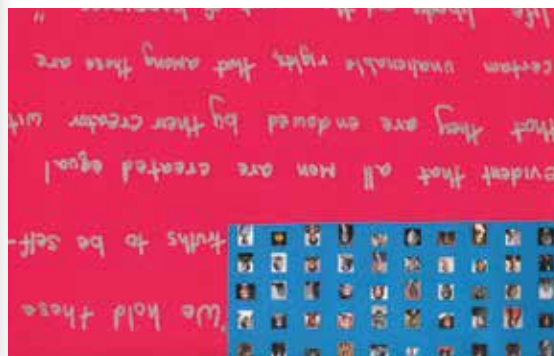
"Overall, there seems to be a greater awareness of identities in the Middle School," observes Lamitina. "Students have been more willing to actively participate in discussions around race and social justice and are also more willing to share who they are with others."

Future plans for the club include Spanish Heritage Month, a diversity conference, and producing a video about diversity: what it feels and looks like at WT, and why it's important. And, notes Woodruff, "Our future will go wherever else students' interests and identities lead us."



Each panel of this mural was created by a different Middle School advisory group under the direction of Middle School art teacher Steph Flati.





The student artwork on this page is from a collaborative poster project, *Let America Be America Again*, in which students were asked to create a poster to help them move toward a broader understanding of what it means to be an American.

## MULTICULTURAL AMERICA

Gender roles. Race. Identity. WT students explore issues like these—and more—in Multicultural America (MCA), a required course for ninth graders. In MCA, students work to construct a more accurate version of history with the charge of connecting with one another and their communities in new ways.

“This course isn’t supposed to leave you where you started, it’s not supposed to leave you alone,” declares Dr. Mike Naragon, History and Social Studies Department Chair. “It’s supposed to connect you – to your own truth and to the truth of who we are as a nation,” adds history teacher Callie Gropp.

Borne of Winchester Thurston’s desire to find a way for students to grapple with difficult, sometimes very personal, issues—and to ensure a safe space for engaging in productive, meaningful, heartfelt conversations around them—Multicultural America grew naturally from the school’s Equity and Inclusion Statement and a decision to give that statement legs in daily practice.

“It is about engaging self and society and where those things overlap,” says Naragon, who developed and teaches the course along with Gropp, fellow history teacher Josh Andy, and Director of Equity and Inclusion Diane Nichols. “We want students to see the way their perceptions of themselves and one another often come out of a specific historical context and how they possess the agency necessary to shape the contemporary issues around them.”

“We recognized the need for students to have baseline knowledge around how identity and experiences can shape perception of Self and perception of Other,” adds Gropp, whose students begin by thinking about their values and beliefs and what multiculturalism means to them. “Their ultimate dreams embraced and intersected with one another as well as with voices from our past. We pulled in foundational American history documents, current voices, and then students collaboratively crafted their dreams for America.”

That exercise yielded essays like *The Flag of a New America*, in which a group of students wrote: “Our American history is rich because it is interwoven with immigrants of different faiths, backgrounds, and abilities...We need an America where all people are given equal opportunities to participate in, and improve, society.”

Students glean multicultural, interdisciplinary information from newspaper articles, songs, documentaries, textbooks, and historical documents deriving from artists and thinkers of many eras and cultures, from Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie—who warns of the danger of a single story—to Chinese-American musician MILCK.

This broad and deep reflection fulfills the course’s central goal: “Students are not just accumulating knowledge to regurgitate on a test,” notes Naragon. “They are now obligated as citizens of the world to go out and do something with this.”

## WINTER SPORTS: BEARS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

From individual triumphs to Girls Basketball's repeat WPIAL Championship victory, the Bears gave their all for WT this season. "Although the days are shorter, the students always seem to rise to the occasion during the tough winter season," noted Director of Athletics Kevin Miller. "Whether battling for a playoff spot or playing the crosstown rival, the Bears were always up for the challenge."

### GIRLS BASKETBALL: BACK-TO- BACK WPIAL CHAMPIONS

Following a historic 2017 season, this year Girls Basketball repeated their 2017 success—they were undefeated section champions, defended their Class A WPIAL title, and charged ahead to the PIAA playoffs.

With a record of 20-6, the Bears led the way in regular season play and secured an undefeated Section Championship along the way. The team earned a first-round bye in WPIAL playoffs, and decisively defeated both the Cornell Raiders in the second round and the Sewickley Panthers in the semi-finals to earn a repeat appearance in the 2018 Class A WPIAL Championship.

The Bears dominated throughout the Championship game to earn a 76-57 victory over the West Greene Pioneers, and charged ahead to States where their season ended in a hard-fought second-round loss.

In addition to team accolades, seniors Gia Thorpe and Ayanna Townsend reached two notable WT milestones this season: Ayanna became WT's all-time leading basketball scorer, and Gia earned her 1,000th career point, becoming only the fourth player in WT Girls Basketball history to earn 1,000 points in WPIAL action. Both Bears also received various WPIAL and State honors.



Girls Basketball celebrates their second consecutive WPIAL title.

"If I could sum this season up in one word I would say 'spectacular,'" declared Coach Monica 'Nika' Williams. "What made this season so spectacular is not just the fact that we won our second Section title or even our second Class A Championship. It was watching the girls overcome all the obstacles in our way to get there. We became a team, a family, we pulled together. We are not just coaching student-athletes, but friends that will last a lifetime."





Sophomore Dusan Krivokapic

## BOYS BASKETBALL MAKES FIFTH CONSECUTIVE PLAYOFF APPEARANCE

Led by a strong group of starters, Boys Basketball advanced to WPIAL playoffs for the fifth straight year. Sophomore Dusan Krivokapic led the team with an average of 22 points and 13 rebounds per game, and was named to the All-Section team, and junior David Canavan was the top marksman behind the three point line. Despite their best efforts, the Boys Basketball season came to a close during the first round of playoffs in a tough 44-41 loss to a perennial Class A power, Cornell. The team ended the season with a record of 8-12.

"It was a pleasure to coach this year's team," shared Coach Jordan Marks, "We secured a playoff spot yet again in one of the toughest Class A sections, a direct testament to our committed and hardworking student-athletes. Despite a heartbreaking playoff loss in overtime, we can build on this success during next year's campaign, as our entire team returns, and we hope to welcome some newcomers. The next season cannot arrive soon enough!"

## FENCING: FRESH TALENT SHOWS PROMISE FOR NEXT SEASON

Veteran fencers and coaches Iana Dakova and David Galinsky led the young talent that filled this year's Fencing roster. With a slow start, both the Boys and Girls Fencing teams worked hard to improve as the season progressed. "At each meet both teams looked better, picking up a win or two every time they fenced," noted Dakova. By the last meet of the season, the teams were fencing well, with standout performances from fencers Ian Frank, Class of 2020, and Kayla Zemek, Class of 2019. Despite marked improvements, both teams finished in fifth place, just missing a spot in the Pittsburgh International Fencing Association (PIFA) playoffs. But as Dakova points out, "The teams' progress this season gives us high hopes for next year."



Members of the 2018 Fencing Team



Senior Tristan Forsythe

### INDIVIDUAL ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT: TRISTAN FORSYTHE

Reigning Class A Individual Cross Country State Champion, senior Tristan Forsythe, continued his success on the track this winter. In February, Tristan won fourth place at the Boys' Mile race at the New Balance Indoor Grand Prix, a prestigious track and field competition in Boston, Massachusetts.

Tristan also finished fifth in the Boys 3000-meter race at the Pennsylvania Track and Field Coaches Association (PTFCA) State Indoor Track Championships. A decorated WT Athlete, Tristan is a WPIAL Champion and an Individual State Champion. He will run cross country and track at Georgetown University next year.



Aria Eppinger celebrates her success at the WPIAL Swimming Championship.

### INDIVIDUAL ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT: ARIA EPPINGER

Sophomore Aria Eppinger secured two top-ten finishes at the WPIAL Swimming Championship. In the Girls 500 Freestyle race, Aria swam her way from thirteenth to fifth place with a personal record of 5:23.37 and qualified for States. She dropped almost eight seconds from her time in the Girls 200 Freestyle race to swim a lifetime best of 2:02.87, earning a place on the podium with a tied, eighth-place finish.





## Commencement 2018

**“Recall the people and places who helped you get where you are, and remember to pay that forward and think of the students of the future.”**

—Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89, Board President

The 61 members of the Class of 2018 were encouraged to continue learning, to follow their passions, and to use their voices as the WT community celebrated the school's 131st Commencement exercises on June 3, 2018. Student speakers Joseph 'Joey' Scapellato, Amber'Nay Wilkins, Yijia Chen, and Harrison Grodin were joined by Board President Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89 and Head of School Gary J. Niels in addressing the students and their guests.



(L-R) Head of School Gary J. Niels, Director of Upper School Kristen Klein, Yijia Chen, Harrison Grodin, Joey Scapellato, Amber'Nay Wilkins, Board President Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89



Board President Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89 (R) congratulates Rae Prunty (L).

*“Seeing my peers refusing to be quiet and standing together shook me to my core and put one thought into my head: who is stopping me? So I decided to use my voice like all of you have.”*

—AMBER'NAY WILKINS



Lifers Emily, Isel, and Gordon Pollock, their parents John Pollock and Julie Goff, and family





Trustee Kelly Hanna Riley '91 (R) presents her daughter, Hanna Riley (L), with her diploma.

*"You all have shown me the value in forging your own paths and following your passions, and I wanted to tell everyone here to never lose that spirit."*

—JOEY SCAPELLATO, PRESIDENT, STUDENT COUNCIL



(L-R) John, Julieta, Chris, and Alexandra Uribe '15

*"Explore intentionally; learn what interests you; and whatever it is that you want to do, find a way to make it happen."*

—YIJIA CHEN AND HARRISON GRODIN



Board President Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89 (R) congratulates Gia Thorpe (L).



#### THISTLETALK GOES DIGITAL

Get a full gallery of photos from graduation at [winchesterthurston.org/digitalthistle](http://winchesterthurston.org/digitalthistle)



Lynne Irvin

*"What matters most is the kind of human beings you are becoming."*

—GARY J. NIELS, HEAD OF SCHOOL



Hefei Tu

## Winchester Thurston School Class of 2018

Arthur Jacoud Barelli  
Emily A. Bassett\*  
Ria Bazaz  
Jacob Robert Beiriger  
Katibeth Marie Blalock  
Siena Cara Belloch  
Julia Anne Bulova\*  
Madeleine Lucy Cahall  
Adriana Louise Catalano  
Yijia Chen 陈一嘉  
Sophie Olivia Choo  
Yanming Cui 崔晏铭  
Antonia Ingrid Dumitriu  
Anatea Carina Einhorn  
Tristan Gregory Forsythe  
Emma Parker Francis

Juliana Sofia Freeman  
Timothy Jacob Ganger  
Madeline Patricia Glackin\*✿  
Griffin Torchia Gordon  
Ashanti S. Grisham  
Harrison D. Grodin\*  
Jonathan Hansen-Kemp  
Elliot Parker Hare\*  
Maxwell Ethan Harlow\*  
Brenda Theresa Hayes  
Lynne Elizabeth Irvin  
Reilly Clemen Jackman  
Ellis George James\*  
Cameron Jamel Johnson  
Zihao Kong 孔子豪  
Hannah Gean Kwiecinski

Sophia Marie Lebiere  
London Lining  
Isibéal Eve McGough\*  
Dominique Nichole Mittermeier  
Donovan William Hanif Moore  
Nathan J. Moss  
Jivak Harbans Nischal  
Daniel Matthew Plaut  
Emily Kendall Pollock\*  
Gordon Avery Pollock\*  
Isel Leontine Pollock\*  
Ra'e'mon Prunty  
Ashley Sierra Rayzer  
Hanna Duffy Riley\*✿  
Jonathan Walter Roman\*  
Hanna Ashley Sante

Joseph Gabriele Scapellato  
David Harrigal Scheatzle  
Erika Sogawa  
Sophia Bela Stone  
Erica Taylor Sweeney\*  
Ross Marcus Tedder  
Gia Larette Thorpe  
Ayanna Eva Townsend  
Hefei Tu 屠鹤飞  
Anastassios Tzounopoulos  
Christopher John Uribe\*  
Luka Michelle van de Venne  
Amber'Nay Isabella Wilkins

\*WT Lifer ✿ Legacy

## Excellence Honored

*The Emily E. Dorrance award for a student whose conduct, interaction, and leadership best demonstrates the school credo, Think also of the comfort and the rights of others, given by friends of the Dorrance family*

**Christopher John Uribe**

*The Mary A. Campbell award for outstanding scholarship, given by Katherine Houston Rush*

**Yijia Chen 陈一嘉**

*The Mary A. Graham Mitchell award for character, personality, loyalty, and scholarship*

**Isibéal Eve McGough**

*The Alice M. Thurston award for integrity, courageous leadership, and service*

**Ayanna Eva Townsend**

*The Ruth S. Gamsby award for citizenship, kindness, and courteous helpfulness, given by the Daniel F. Mullane family*

**Jivak Harbans Nischal**

*The Nina Wadhwa Student Council award for a student who best exemplifies Gentle in Manner, Strong in Deed, endowed by the Wadhwa family*

**Brenda Theresa Hayes**

*The Jane L. Scarborough Award for teaching excellence*

**Adam Brownold**



(L-R) Ashley Harper, Maura Farrell, Kristen Klein



# “WT Prepared Me to Be a Leader”

WT is well-known and heralded for the accomplishments of its students. Alumnae/i effect change throughout the world. Faculty members are sought-after thought leaders in their fields.

And, WT administrators are given the opportunity to grow, develop, and experience new areas of expertise—all with the result of making WT a stronger school. This year, three long-time administrators will be moving to the next step of their careers. We asked them to tell us what it was about WT that prepared them to achieve this level of success.

## Maura Farrell

Associate Head for Strategic  
and External Affairs  
Joined WT: July 2002

*Next Role:* Head of School at Sophia  
Academy in Providence, RI

With deep gratitude, I leave you, fair WT, taking with me treasured experiences and memories. I have learned much from living, working, and raising two daughters in your exceptional culture. These are the leadership lessons you have taught me, lessons I will keep trying to master:

*Relationships are first:* Being nurtured and held up by a community, and in turn holding up that community. My greatest fortune was to find at WT mentors, thinking partners, teachers, friends, and colleagues who have helped make my time here productive, fun, and joyful.

*Self-awareness is second:* Knowing where one shines and where one could be a better human being, and being honest about it. In many moments of truth, I was reminded that if I hide from myself, I risk forgetting my responsibility to the larger world.

*Competence is third:* Applying one's intellect to learn, to understand, to think, to solve. Well-reasoned perspectives and compassion are equal partners in competence, as I have learned from the masters of this wisdom, who surround me at WT.

*Purpose and action are fourth and fifth:* Being a self-aware, competent professional immersed in productive relationships encompasses one's gift to the world when there is purpose outside of and greater than oneself. And so it is our responsibility, our duty to be our full selves.

Thank you, WT. You will always be a part of me.

## Kristen Klein

Director of Upper School  
Joined WT: August 2004

*Next Role:* Assistant Head of School  
at Durham Academy in Durham, NC

WT is not a school that rests on its laurels, and this community has taught me an enduring lesson: good enough is never good enough. WT's innovative and entrepreneurial spirit has spurred me to take risks and strive to remove obstacles from the roads of others. Each day the energy of my colleagues animates me, so much so that finding a dynamic community of engaged learners was my number one criterion for a new school home.

Most of all, I have been prepared through authentic, challenging, and supportive relationships with the members of this community. When I think about each of them, I can immediately point to a beloved trait, personal mantra, or deeply-held philosophy that has and will continue to inspire me on my own learning journey. My gratitude for the trust that exists here, and for the tremendous opportunities that I have been given to grow, will follow me as I take my next step.

## Ashley Harper

Director of Advancement  
Joined WT: July 2012

*Next Role:* Head of School at  
Wakefield School in The Plains, VA

As I reflect on my tenure at Winchester Thurston, I am again struck by the strength of the school's purpose and its always forward momentum. I have been fortunate to receive opportunities for personal and professional growth during my time here. Gary Niels's leadership, his trust in his team, and his commitment to collaboration and innovation created an environment primed for progress. Add to this the incredible faculty and staff with whom I have been privileged to work and you get a very special place. At WT you are not only allowed to be your best self, you are encouraged and expected to be such. I believe this quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson captures this impact well: "Our chief want in life is somebody who will make us do what we can."

The unique combination of the school's Mission of active engagement joined with the school's credo of "Think Also," creates an environment where compassionate leadership and achievement go hand in hand. It is this combination that drew me to WT and it is the community that lives out this ethos every day that has made an impact on my leadership journey.

# It's amazing what we can accomplish when we all work together.



Because of you, our generous community, it was a record-breaking year for WT Fund giving. Thanks for the largest annual fund giving in WT history. If you haven't yet made a gift, it's not too late. Please visit [winchesterthurston.org/gift](http://winchesterthurston.org/gift).

THE WT  FUND





# Miss Mitchell Society

In 2002, Winchester Thurston created the Miss Mitchell Society to thank and recognize the many generous donors whose bequests and planned gifts continue to expand the vision of founder Dr. Mary A. Graham Mitchell.

Including Winchester Thurston in your will or trust, or adding WT as a beneficiary of an insurance policy, IRA, or 401(k), is a smart way to provide future tax savings while making a sizable impact. And, every planned giving donor becomes a member of the Miss Mitchell Society—membership requires no particular gift or bequest amount.

If you have made a provision for WT in your estate plans, we would love to welcome you as a member of the Miss Mitchell Society. For more information, or to let us know of your intentions, please contact Amiena Mahsoob, Director of Alumnae/I Relations, at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org) or 412-578-7511.



## Miss Mitchell Society Members

WT salutes the generosity and support of this very special group of alumnae/i and friends. Following are the current living members of our community who have remembered WT in their estate planning.

Betsy Aiken '72	Robert I. Glimcher	Marga Matheny '64	Susan Crip
Suzanne LeClere	Barbara Graves-Poller '93	Patricia L. Maykuth '69	Santa-Cruz '60
Barley '52	Rosanne Isay	Beverlee Simboli	Jennifer M. Scanlon
Loretta Lobes Benec '88	Harrison '56	McFadden '55	Sheen Sehgal '89
Barbara Abney Bolger '52	Elsa Limbach	Kathleen L. Metinko '91	Molly Cannon
Kathleen W. Buechel	Louise Baldrige	Frances P. Minno	Stevenson '72
Judith Rohrer Davis '57	Lytle '51	Bee Jee Epstine	Allyson Baird Sveda '84
Judith Ellenbogen '58	Carole Oswald	Morrison '56	Ruth Weimer Tillar '41
Justine Diebold	Markus '57	Henry Posner III	Gaylen Westfall,
Englert '59	Gretchen Larson	Kathy Zillweger	Honorary Alumna
Anna-Stina Ericson '44	Maslanka '83	Putnam '71	Carol Spear Williams '57

*Please visit [www.winchesterthurston.org/missmitchell](http://www.winchesterthurston.org/missmitchell) for the complete list.*

“What’s your WT story?” Alums from the Atlantic to the Pacific answered that question with Director of Alumnae/i Relations Amiena Mahsoob. She heard themes woven throughout about how WT transformed lives and how the credo, “Think also of the comfort and the rights of others” lives on. She also learned about many of the meaningful ways alums are contributing to their communities.

## CALIFORNIA AS OUR CAMPUS

In November and January, faculty and staff from WT visited Southern California to attend two National Association for Independent Schools (NAIS) conferences: the People of Color Conference (PoCC) and CASE-NAIS. Both provided opportunities to connect with alums and friends in the Los Angeles area.

Faculty members and current students had the opportunity to meet or reconnect with alums through a student meet and greet and an alum-faculty happy hour. Samuel ‘Sammy’ Pollack ’12 reconnected with his Lower School and Upper School teachers, Bill Fitch and Stephen Miller.

Advancement team staff who attended the CASE-NAIS conference met with inspirational Southern California alums who shared their favorite WT memories and how they “Think also...” today.



(Front Row, L-R) Gretchen Larson Maslanka ’83, Consuelo ‘Connie’ Staisey Woodhead ’66, Sabrina Lemmon ’06, and Shirley Lin ’00. (Back Row, L-R) Dana Jackson, Advancement Assistant, Jane Schilling, Parents Association Coordinator, Matt Engelberg ’99, Amiena Mahsoob, Director of Alumnae/i Relations, Jackie Ryczek, Andrew Santelli ’00, and Ming Ting.

## FLORIDA AS OUR CAMPUS

Sunny Florida has beckoned many WT alums. Amiena Mahsoob had the luxury of having conversations with several in South Florida this past winter. Alums shared memories including Miss Mitchell’s kindness, exacting standards expected of students, and the ongoing impact of their time at WT. Maureen Sullivan ’73 reflected, “It reminded me that an education is an enduring, irrevocable gift that unlocks doors of opportunity for a lifetime.”



Judith ‘Judi’ Ellenbogen ’58 (L) shared her love of travel, keen interest in Jewish history, and passion for supporting scholarships for WT students.



Joanne Johnston Bowser ’58 (L) and Susan ‘Susie’ Pekruhn Glotfelty ’58 (C) shared the many rules they followed (or broke) as students, crossed their legs at the ankles, and schemed ways to encourage their classmates to attend their 60th Reunion.



Taylor Croft Donahue ’08 discussed the joys of being a newlywed, her current role working for an upscale events company in Miami, and ideas for her 10th Reunion.



1941



**Ruth Weimer Tillar** speaking to her local Rotary Club

**Ruth Weimer Tillar** is still very active with the College of William and Mary, where she serves on many boards and committees. She is also active in her local hospital auxiliary board and a book club. Ruth keeps in touch with **Patricia 'Pat' Williams Gilchrist** and **Marion Thompson Kerwin '42**. She recently shared her warm memories of being a "house girl" in Miss Mitchell's home during grades 10-12.

1944

**Jean Ballard George** shared, "John and I continue to be independent residents of Bethany Village in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania near Harrisburg. Music is still a favorite pastime as we attend our local choral society concerts and Harrisburg's wonderful symphony. We have a comfortable cottage and see John's daughters and family for all holidays."

1946

**Ruth Friedman Ornitz** reports, "I am still healthy. Not playing golf or tennis any more, but I'm fine and traveling a lot with my husband, Bob."



**Rita Gottlieb Levis (R)** and **Amiena Mahsoob (L)**

**Rita Gottlieb Levis** recently moved to La Jolla, California to be near her son. She shared with Amiena Mahsoob her memories of growing up in Squirrel Hill and Shadyside and her experiences as a travel agent.

1949



**Natalie Kaufman Levant** headlines comedy shows

**Natalie Kaufman Levant** shared, "After my husband's death, I tried needlepoint and bingo to fill my time before turning to my love of theater. I began participating in open mic nights and now perform regularly and headline in venues in Philadelphia as a standup comic. You can find information about my shows on Facebook by searching for Natalie K. Levant."

1951



**Lois Graham Tingler (L)** and **Amiena Mahsoob (R)** in *Corona del Mar, California*

**Lois Graham Tingler** shared with Director of Alumnae/i Relations Amiena Mahsoob her fond memories of WT and how she came to the Los Angeles area following graduation from college. Her four children and eleven grandchildren keep her busy. She and her family have sailed to Tahiti, Hawaii, and Alaska and have taught their grandchildren to sail.

1952

**Barbara Abney Bolger** shared, "In 1973, I chaired a Task Force that worked with a nonprofit and the Junior League to establish Bergen County's first group home for teenage girls. I served as Advisory Council Chair for some 37 years as well as a Trustee of the nonprofit. The program is now changing; it will focus on young single mothers and their babies, giving educational, life skills, and employment training. Still helping young women! This was announced April 22 at a special brunch honoring the current Advisory Council and me, as the founding leader. It was a very special day!"

1953

**65th Reunion Year**



**Members of the Class of 1953:** Recognize this photo? Share the classmates and story captured here with Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).

1955

*[With sadness, we note that Linda passed away shortly after submitting this note; we share it so that those who knew her would remember her joie de vivre.]*

**Melinda 'Linda' Brown Beard** reported, "Just had my second great grandchild. Who would ever have guessed we would be here? Still have my same dear husband, same home, same four children and four in-laws and nine grandchildren. All's well with the world. Still involved in volunteer work and year-end office reports. Also play duplicate bridge to keep the brain cells oiled. Life continues to be kind to me."

1958

**60th Reunion Year**



**Members of the class of 1958:** Don't miss the boat on Reunion 2018!

**Barbara Berkman Ackerman, Joanne Johnston Bowser, and Susan 'Susie' Pekruhn**

**Glottelty** shared, "Remember what fun we had at our 50th? Let's do it again! The 60th Reunion is quite a milestone, and we should all plan to be together again in October to celebrate. Everyone who comes will make the festivities extra special. Please save the date!"

## 1960

**Elisa Lynch Simmons** has been married to Tom for 50 years, has four married children, who are all doing well, and nine grandchildren. The oldest grandchild is in college and the 10th is expected in November.

## 1962



*Eleanore Childs and her seven children*

**Eleanore 'Ellie' Nix Childs** retired from Law, Heartwood, and the Farm. Ellie writes, "I am now happily transplanted, with Bob, to Sebastopol, California. Five of my seven children live in the Bay Area, and I'm about to be blessed with my 16th grandchild. I hope our class is happy and hopeful for our future."



*Varsity Girls' Basketball Team in 1965*

## 1963

### 55th Reunion Year



*Members of the Class of 1963: Recognize this photo? Share the classmates and story captured here with Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).*

## 1965

**Nancy Herron** shared, "I retired this year after forty-four years in social work. Whew! The electronic medical record almost did me in. My husband, Reed, is retiring in July. We're still in New Jersey, and I have a new granddaughter, Molly, who lives with her brother, Henry, and parents, Laura and Matt outside Detroit. Not sure if we want to move, and where to. Florida, Detroit, Maine, or stay here? Any suggestions? Love to hear from you."

**Nancy Clever Middleton** writes, "Hello to all my fellow basketball players. I remember our team of Marny, Cathy, Ann, Sally, Dana, Peggy, Jeannie, Mary Helen, Jo, Kay, and Helen Mar, plus the juniors. Did you see that WT won the WPIAL championship for the second year in a row? We had fun, but not such success in 1965."

## Claudine Cmarada Schneider

recently collaborated on an article published in *The New York Times*, "Beware of Devin Nunes's Next Move." She is a former Republican representative from Rhode Island and serves on the board of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.



*(L-R) Son Alex, granddaughter Romane, Susie, husband Franco, and daughter Elena hiking in Majorca*

**Susan 'Susie' MacMichael Zuntini** writes, "In 2017 our classmates passed the cap of 70! Franco and I invited our close family for a hiking, biking, and swimming adventure in Serra de Tramuntana, Majorca. We found a trip that the youngsters wouldn't whine about and the oldsters could manage too. October is a quiet month in the otherwise busy Balearic Islands and the nature is outstanding."

## 1966



*Meg Meltz in New Mexico*

**Margaret 'Meg' Gezon Meltz** and her husband have traveled extensively throughout the country on two wheels. Additionally, they belong to a community dance group that supports music education in public schools in Santa Fe.

## 1967



*Eleanor Schatz Magyar and grandson Henry*

**Eleanor Schatz Magyar** exclaimed, "I am finally a grandmother! Henry Thomas Pfister was born on Saturday, February 10, 2018. All are doing well."

**Hannah 'Ann' Mercer** shared, "I enjoyed seeing my classmates at the reunion. I want to thank **Eleanor Schatz Magyar** for her generosity and thoughtfulness in picking a number of our classmates up at the airport and inviting them to stay at her home, and **Jan Alpert Engelberg** for hosting a lovely party."



*Judith Craig Sutton on the Campo Santo Stefano*

**Judith Craig Sutton** traveled to Venice with an old friend. Judith writes, "The weather was perfect the whole time. We also went to Ravenna, to see its amazing mosaics, and to Modena, for more beautiful sights, historic sites, and great food!"



*Recognize this photo? Share the story captured here with Amiena Mahsoob [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).*



## 1968

### 50th Reunion Year

Message from the Class of 1967 to the Class of 1968: "Come to your 50th Reunion! We had a great time and WT treated us like queens!"



Members of the Class of 1968. Recognize this photo? Contact Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org) with the story and classmates captured here.

**Kathryn 'Katy' Rich Sherman, Terry Donaldson, Patricia 'Patty' Watson Kammerer, and Frances 'Francie' Hoffman Puntereri** are leading the charge for Reunion. Please let them know if you are planning to attend and how you would like to help. It promises to be a wonderful experience.



Tanya Blades Palmer (R) and Abby Holland (L)

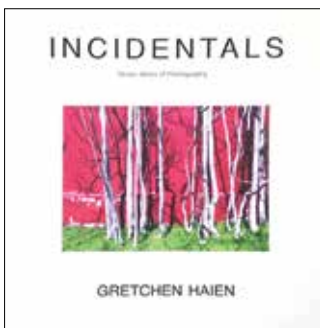
**Tanya Blades Palmer** met WT faculty member **Abby Holland** over winter break in Kansas City, Missouri. Tanya and Abby's grandmother live in the same complex. Tanya shared, "I think it was totally amazing that Abby and I happened to meet each other in such a small location, so far away from Pittsburgh."

## 1969



Class of 1969 Mystery Ring

Amiena Mahsoob received a phone call from a woman who was cleaning out her parents' house in Washington, Pennsylvania. She found a Class of 1969 class ring inscribed with the initials GHH, and would like to reunite it with its original owner. If you have any ideas on who that may be, please contact Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).



Gretchen Haien's photography book

**Gretchen Haien** published a book of her photography titled, *Incidentals: Seven Years of Photography*. She is the head of the Photography Division of the Visual Art Department at Belhaven University in Jacksonville, Mississippi.

**Lucinda 'Cindy' Cyert Steffes** shared, "Retirement is fabulous! My husband and I live on Mercer Island, Washington six months in the summer and Scottsdale, Arizona six months in the winter. I am very busy volunteering with a group helping mothers and children!"



Cindy Cyert Steffes hiking in Arizona with her dog Skipper

## 1971

National Geographic Photographer **Lynn Johnson** recently collaborated on a Pittsburgh-based project with alumni parent, Scott Goldsmith (among others) that was highlighted in the *New York Times*, "Migration Stories From the Stoops of Pittsburgh." The photographs were exhibited at the Westmoreland Museum of Art.

## 1972

**Carolyn Cramer Sanford** shared, "I continue to work part-time for Linden Partners, a fundraising consulting firm in Pittsburgh, and also part-time for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Both are stimulating and enjoyable!"

## 1973

### 45th Reunion Year



Members of the Class of 1973: Share your memories of this day with Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).



Victoria Dym

**Victoria Dym** teaches Laughter Yoga, Improv, and Poetry. She recently published her second chapbook by Finishing Line Press, *When The Walls Cave In*. She is also an improviser on a house team at The Box Theater in Tampa, Florida.

**Amy Nixon, Maureen Sullivan, and Barbara Jo 'BJ' Finkel Holmes** look forward to seeing the Class of 1973 for Reunion. Maureen writes, "It is an opportunity for fun, reminiscing, and filling in the gaps since our paths last crossed."

## 1974

**Leslie Joseph Bonci** writes, "After a long career at UPMC, I opened my own business in 2015, Active Eating Advice by Leslie, a nutrition consulting company. I have had the honor of speaking across the U.S. and around the world as well as developing some culinary programs in Pittsburgh. I have written two books, and co-authored four, and blog regularly for *U.S. News*. I also

have a weekly TV segment on KDKA. Most importantly, I am the proud Gammma of Joshua and Mya, proud mother of Greg, a radiologist, and Cary, a physical therapist, and grateful wife of Fred."

1978

### 40th Reunion Year

1981



Anita Prizio

Congratulations to **Anita Prizio**, who is now Councilperson for Allegheny County's 3rd District



Members of the Class of 1978: Share your memories of this day with Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).



Amy Kamin (R) with son Mitchell (L) and daughter Sydney (C)

**Amy Kamin** is continuing with busy life in New York City as CEO of medical/beauty company EndyMed which develops a home use aesthetic treatment device available at Neiman Marcus stores and QVC. Her daughter, Sydney, is now 24 and works in fashion media as a style correspondent on "The Jam" (ABC TV in Chicago) and "NY Live" in New York City. Her son, Mitchell, is now 14 and busy at Birch Wathen Lenox School in New York City and with his sneaker business.



Lillian Goldstein Schapiro

**Lillian Goldstein Schapiro** shared, "A year and a half ago, I left a big OB/GYN group and opened my own GYN office one week later. I am learning about being a solo woman navigating in a world controlled by men. I am able to implement my ideas and provide care in the environment that I designed. My patients range from their teens through their 90s. One week I spoke (through multiple translators) to women from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, and Iraq. The next week, I spoke to small groups of graduating seniors from one of Atlanta's most affluent schools. Keeping with the times, I have added CoolSculpting to my

practice and recently hosted a Facebook Live event on my Cool and Fit Facebook page. If you are in Atlanta, come see me or friend me on Facebook."

1982

**Sofia 'Stef' Agras** shared that her experiences as an academically competitive WT student empowered her to work in male-dominated startup companies in Silicon Valley. She is committed to mentoring individuals and organizations in the startup space.

1983

### 35th Reunion Year



Upper School Student Council 1982-1983: Share your stories with Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).

### Gretchen Larson Maslanka

shares, "I am hosting the Class Party on Reunion weekend and look forward to seeing my '83 classmates! Please get in touch if you plan on coming and can help to spread the word."

1988

### 30th Reunion Year



Class of 1988 Lifers: Recognize this photo? Contact Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org) with the story behind the Raggedy Ann doll.



One of Mary Martin's works from *Touching Earth: Women Creating Communities*

**Mary Martin** shared, "This March, we had a true WT celebration. I was in a group exhibit, *Touching Earth: Women Creating Communities*, with female artists from around the country alongside three of my

Class of 2018 clay students: **Isel Pollock**, **Sophia Lebiere**, and **Erika Sogawa**. This exhibition was also included as part of the National Council of Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) Conference held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center."

**Annette Caplan Ruzicka** has been promoted to Program Director of Richmond with Mindspire Test Prep, headquartered in Durham, North Carolina. She and her family have recently moved to the Richmond, Virginia area and are enjoying being in a more temperate climate.

She reports, "My husband, Matt, recently retired after 24 years of service in the U.S. Army and we all enjoyed our previous times being stationed in Virginia. Relocating here was a natural move for both of us and our kids." Annette invites any alumnae/i in the Richmond area to contact her. "I'd love to connect with others who 'think also of the comfort and the rights of others,' both in Richmond and in Pittsburgh at our Reunion weekend in October!"



**Christin Zandin** is coming all the way from Stockholm, Sweden for her 30th Reunion! Will you join her?

## 1991



Chris Phillips Gregory (L) with Bishop Daniel Martins (R), Diocese of Springfield

**Marie 'Chris' Phillips Gregory** was ordained as a Vocational Deacon in the Episcopal Church Diocese of Springfield on January 25 after graduating from Nashotah House Theological Seminary in 2017.

## 1992



L-R) Mara McFalls Falk, daughters Margaret and Annie, and husband John

**Mara McFalls Falk** writes, "Thanks to all of my WT friends who shared kind thoughts, notes and calls when my husband, John, died this past August. My girls, Margaret (age seven) and Annie (age four), and I treasure the good years we shared with our kindest, funniest, smartest, and most adventurous husband and daddy."

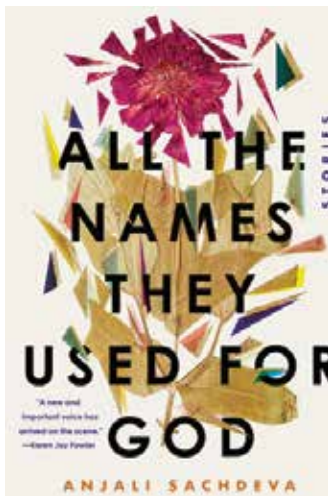
## 1993

### 25th Reunion Year



Members of the Class of 1993: Please help us to identify the students in this photo by emailing Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).

## 1996



Anjali Sachdeva's short story collection

**Anjali Sachdeva's** short story collection, *All the Names They Used for God*, was published in February and received great reviews from Anthony Doerr and Karen Joy Fowler, and was featured on NPR's All Things Considered with Audie Cornish. These surreal and mysterious

stories explore the ways that science, religion, nature, magic, and other forces shape our lives. Anjali would like to send a big thank you to all her WT friends who have sent her messages of encouragement and support.

## 1998

### 20th Reunion Year



Members of the Class of 1998: Share your memories of this day with Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).

## 1999

**Anne D'Appolonia Dickson**, Fifth Grade Thoughtfulness Awardee in 1992, presented the Thoughtfulness Award this year.

## 2000



Claire Blaustein's latest album

**Claire Blaustein** has a new position as a Senior Information Architect/Content Strategist at Cancer.gov. Additionally, her band, By & By, just put out their second album, *Songs for This Old Heart*. She performs fiddle and vocals, and created the cover art for the album.

**Andrew Santelli** met with Computer Science Department Chair David Nassar's Computer Science Innovation students via

videoconference. He shared the scope of his team's work and offered advice to the students as they set out to create unique applications to solve real-world problems.

## 2001



Steve Nathenson

**Steven 'Steve' Nathenson** has returned to Pittsburgh and has founded a company called StriveforMore, which focuses on personal and organizational development. He would love to reconnect with his classmates.

## 2002



The Whitney twins, Wesley (L) and Miles (R)

**David Whitney** and his wife, Courtney, welcomed twins Wesley and Miles into the world in November.

## 2003

### 15th Reunion Year



Callie Gropp working with Art in the Garden summer program students

**Callie Gropp, Emily Gropp Carlson '99, and Linsey McDaniel A'96** are board members at OMA Center for Mind, Body, and Spirit. Together, they created Art in the Garden, a free summer program held in Borland Garden, an urban green space in East Liberty. The program is conducted with an awareness of the importance of trauma-informed care, and with the determination to support the development of resiliency and social-emotional intelligence of the next generation.



Malcolm Smith in Isotopes Park

**Malcolm Smith** met with the WT Advancement and Communications team members attending the Strategic Marketing and Advancement Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is continuing to pursue his sports passion in Albuquerque as a Ticket Sales Executive for the Minor League team, the Isotopes.

## 2008

### 10th Reunion Year



Members of the Class of 2008: Recognize this photo? Contact Amiena Mahsoob at mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org with the classmates and story captured here.



Matt Arffa during Match Day festivities

**Matt Arffa** is happy to announce, "This May I will be graduating with a medical degree from Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. After my intern year in Chicago, my wife and I are excited to be moving to beautiful Austin, Texas where I will be doing my residency in dermatology at The University of Texas at Austin!"

## 2009



(L-R) Greg Hess, Tim Wainwright A'09, Gabrielle 'Gabby' DeMarchi '09, Dan Gespass '03, Carley Catherine, Ben Tritsch, Alaina Ferry '10, Helen Bunker '10, Isabel 'Izzy' Zehner '10, Charles Thayer, NaTisha Washington, Sarah Hillman '09, and Annie Alexander '09 at Adulthood 101: Mixology and Mingle

**Annie Alexander** recently hosted two events for alums and friends. Called "Adulthood 101," the first session focused on networking and mixology, while the second focused on financial health. Both were hosted by WT parents Meredith and Alex Grelli at their Wigle Whiskey Distillery Tasting Room and Threadbare Cider House and Meadery. Watch this space for more events in the fall!

**Hadley Armstrong** is currently the House Manager at City Theater in Pittsburgh, and will be attending Columbia University in the fall for a Masters in Fine Arts with a concentration in stage management.

**Andrew Glick** appeared as Trevor on the "The Long Goodbye" episode of the TV series, *Modern Family*.



## 2012



David Wollam (L) and  
Sammy Pollack (R)

**Samuel Pollack** is currently working as a portfolio associate at PIMCO. He recently shared his career path and advice with the Upper School Investment Club, a club he co-founded as a student. Sam also visited with club sponsor David Wollam, WT's Director of Finance.

**Jack Stein** shared, "After I graduate from Columbia University's Harriman Institute in May, I am moving to Washington, D.C. to work for the government for two years as part of the Presidential Management Fellowship."

## 2013

### 5th Reunion Year



Lifers from the Class of 2013: Share your favorite memory with Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org).



Annie Jasiewicz  
photographing chimpanzees  
in Uganda

**Anastasia 'Annie' Jasiewicz** fulfilled her lifelong dream of becoming Dr. Jane Goodall in February. She was able to observe and photograph wild chimpanzees in Kibale National Park during her journey to Uganda. While in Uganda, she visited several schools throughout the Kampala area to learn about solar and water filtration projects. She also completed a safari along the western border to observe and photograph dozens of native African species.

## 2015

**Krithika Pennathur** was recently profiled in *Pitt News*

for her work as Founder and President of Pitt Unmuted, a club focused on amplifying the voices of underrepresented students and addressing issues including intimate partner violence.



(L-R) Alaina Ferry '10, Anna  
Ferry, Kaitlyn Macieski, and  
Izzy Zehner '10 in Bologna

**Anna Ferry** participated in Dickinson College's Study Abroad program in Bologna, Italy. During Spring Break, her sister, **Alaina Ferry '10**, their cousin Kaitlyn Macieski, and fellow WT alumna **Isabel 'Izzy' Zehner '10** joined Anna on a whirlwind trip through Amsterdam and Italy.

**Annie D. Guentner**, Honorary Alumna writes, "This is a note to all my former students. Reading some of your news and looking at class reunion pictures, brings so many wonderful memories as well as joy in seeing how successful you are. Félicitations! I am a busy octogenarian, still playing tennis, gardening, and traveling, just enjoying the twilight of my life!"



# Leaving a Legacy to WT

Winchester Thurston School is grateful for the memorial gifts given in loving memory of members of our community. This support leaves a legacy that continues to advance the Mission of the school.

Among our recent donations are gifts in remembrance of Rita Gould '46 and Letitia Emilie Rieck '43, whose bequests through the Miss Mitchell Society were designated for the endowment of the Gary J. Niels Chair for City as Our Campus.

We join the entire WT community in extending our sincere condolences and gratitude to these families.



Rita Gould '46 reads to WT Pre-K students



Letitia Emilie Rieck '43



## IN MEMORIAM

The following members of the WT community will be missed by their classmates, friends, students, and colleagues. We offer sincere condolences to their families.

**Betty Wolf Loeb '43**  
**Nancy Cohen Werner '44**  
**Shirley Kerr Kennard '45**  
**Ellen Bachman Amshel '46**  
**Katherine MacDonald Blenko '46**  
**Nancy Fink Nirenberg '46**  
**Lynn Hardie Burgan A'48**  
**Myrna Kline Hackney '49**  
**Robena Moses Spencer '50**  
**Patricia Singer Talotta '52**  
**Marion Montgomery Colbourne '52**  
**Nancy Scholnick Blum '54**  
**Sally Lewis Horner '54**

**Melinda Brown Beard '55**  
**Linda Goorin Marcus '55**  
**Susan Mallinger Simon '55**  
**Judith Stohr Gavalier '57**  
**Margie Balter '68**  
**Hope Armstrong Jones '78**  
**Nathaniel Winschel '14**  
**Hannah J. Kamin, former Trustee**  
**Putnam B. McDowell, Honorary Alumnus, former Trustee**  
**Susan Zitterbart, former English teacher**





(L-R) Gary J. Niels, Head of School; Margaret 'Mouse' McDowell Lofberg '67; Barbara McDowell '69; Martha 'Murph' McDowell '73; and Putnam 'Put' McDowell.

## In Memory of Put McDowell

Putnam 'Put' B. McDowell passed away on Tuesday, January 2, 2018. Put served as a Member of the Board of Trustees from 1963–1975 and was Board Chair from 1966–1971. As Chair, his leadership, forethought, and ingenuity helped the school through a difficult moment and provided fertile ground for expansion nearly four decades later.

In the mid-1960s, WT found itself in financial difficulties following the construction of what is now Molloy Posner Hall. The Board discussed selling the parcel of land located on the corner of Morewood Avenue and Bayard Street; Put opposed this plan. He believed that one day the School would need the property. So, in a letter to his boss, Henry Hillman, Put solicited a loan that would enable the school to save the property for future usage. Mr.

Hillman loaned the School \$100,000, which he later forgave, and WT retained this important parcel of land. The Upper School was built on that land in 2006,

and in 2011, Put's leadership was recognized when he was named an Honorary Alumnus. Put considered saving this property among one of his most gratifying accomplishments.

We express our deepest condolences to Put's wife, Rosamond 'Robin' McDowell, his daughters, Margaret 'Mouse' McDowell Lofberg '67, Lucy McDowell Karrys '68, Barbara McDowell '69, Martha 'Murph' McDowell '73, and his son, Putnam Ricketson McDowell.

In recognition of Put's contributions to WT, a ceremony took place on May 3, 2018, to name the McDowell Office Suite

in the Upper School.

A video detailing the story of Put McDowell's impact on WT can be found at [winchesterthurston.org/digitalthistle](http://winchesterthurston.org/digitalthistle).



Gary J. Niels (L) and Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89 (R) at the naming of the McDowell Office Suite



Winchester Thurston School  
555 Morewood Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
[www.winchesterthurston.org](http://www.winchesterthurston.org)

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Pittsburgh, PA  
Permit No. 145





# REUNION 2018

OCTOBER 12 AND 13

## Save the Date

All class years are invited to join us for an alumnae/i weekend at Reunion. Class years ending in '3 and '8 have their own special class celebrations too.

Join the planning for your class by contacting Amiena Mahsoob at [mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org](mailto:mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org), posting a message in your class Facebook Group, or calling 412-578-7511.

[winchesterthurston.org/reunion](http://winchesterthurston.org/reunion)