

Thistle



TALK

Winchester Thurston School

CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING

A NEW ERA:
RETHINKING
TIME AND
SPACE

Winchester Thurston School

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WT Names New Director of Finance

In March, WT announced the appointment of Julia Posteraro as Director of Finance, effective July 1, 2021. Posteraro joins WT from The Midwife Center for Birth and Women's Health where, as Finance Director, she worked closely with the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, and donor stakeholders to make strategic decisions and develop long-term plans for the growth and sustainability of The Midwife Center.

Posteraro has a B.A. in International Studies from American University, a Master of International Development with a concentration in Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society from the University of Pittsburgh, and an Executive Certificate in Financial Planning from Duquesne University. She has experience working in finance, operations, fundraising, project management, and acquisitions for a broad range of organizations including Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) Global, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, and the University of Pittsburgh.

"Julia impressed the search committee and each constituent group with which she met," said Head of School Dr. Scott D. Fech. "She has strong financial management and analysis skills, is passionate about what she does, and is a very strong communicator and collaborator. In addition, her deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is woven throughout her personal and professional life."

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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.

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 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.

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Using the Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning as a backdrop, students in Michele Farrell's Introduction to Architecture: Urbanism and Sustainability in Pittsburgh Architecture course learned from Associate Head for Operations John Charney about the relationship between owner, architect, and contractor during the building's deconstruction phase. The course explores the history of architecture and urbanism in Pittsburgh with special attention paid to sustainability.

FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL | Scott D. Fech, Ph.D.

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THISTLETALK GOES DIGITAL

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Scott D. Fech

Rethink Time and Space

Every organization has transformational moments. Moments when the institution is forever changed and new momentum is built because of the opportunities that become possible.

For WT, there have been many. From our founding in 1887, to the move from the pillared portals on Fifth Avenue to our current location on Morewood Avenue, to becoming coeducational, WT has not been content with standing still. Decades from now, 2021 will be seen as one of those transformational moments, not because of the pandemic but because of the strategic advancements we have been able to make in the midst of it.

Many years ago, at a time when the school was struggling financially, former WT Trustee and Honorary Alumnus Putnam ‘Put’ McDowell had the foresight to find a solution to preserve the property on which sits our Upper School Building. That decision laid the groundwork for WT’s subsequent success, and paved the way for the creation of the Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning. [See page 3.] Once completed, the Center will house forward-thinking educational programs that will propel our students ahead in their post-WT pursuits.

**We take seriously
our responsibility
to be educational
leaders and continue
to find ways to set
the standard which
other schools will
follow.**

But it will not just be a new building that demonstrates our commitment to Rethink Time and Space. American education has long been steeped in a schedule and calendar better suited for the agrarian society we once were. And while small steps have been taken over the years to think differently about how we organize the school day and year, it is time for us to be bolder in our approach. To help us challenge our own beliefs and practices, we have engaged with the District Management Group as we explore how best to organize our time to support our progressive educational program. [See page 8.]

Additionally, we have not slowed on our commitments to the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion which is central to our credo to “Think also.” We are grateful to the many alumnae/i, employees, parents, students, and

Trustees who made the time to complete our survey earlier this year and for providing valuable insights into what it means to be a part of the WT community. The data gathered will help us to shape our approach and programs so that our students are prepared to succeed in an increasingly diverse world. [See page 14 for an update on several of our ongoing initiatives.]

For 134 years, WT has embraced opportunities and faced challenging moments with courage.

We take seriously our responsibility to be educational leaders and continue to find

ways to set the standard which other schools will follow. With admission demand for WT at another all-time high, our work is clearly resonating. We are grateful to those on whose shoulders we now stand and who made sure that WT would continue to thrive well into its second century. Thank you for your support through this challenging time. We will come out of this stronger and wiser in the post-pandemic period. But I am not surprised. After all, we are WT.

A New Era: The Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning



The future of Winchester Thurston School is unfolding at the corner of Morewood and Centre Avenues, where a historic 1920s-era building is under renovation to become the Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning—a groundbreaking facility that will serve as the literal embodiment of WT’s strategic priorities Reimagine Learning and Rethink Time and Space. Named for alumna Joan Clark Davis ’65, the Davis Center will expand WT’s commitment to project-based and community-based learning; create collaboration among humanities, engineering, arts, and science programs; and amplify the impact of the school’s renowned City as Our CampusSM program.



“Some of the deepest educational connections happen outside the traditional classroom setting, and beyond the boundaries of individual subject matter offerings,” declares Head of School Dr. Scott D. Fech. “As we continue to evolve our practices for teaching and learning, the new Center creates a unique space to foster that learning and growth.”

“Nothing is off the table”

Just a few-minute walk from Molloy Posner Hall and the Upper School, the building at 4951 Centre Avenue will add 15,000 square feet of adaptable space, spread over two stories, to WT’s physical campus. Workshops, studios, breakout

spaces, and ample room for group gatherings will help to facilitate WT’s innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

“The possibilities are unlimited, and most are yet to be imagined,” enthuses Fech. “Nothing is off the table.” What is certain, Fech says, is that this new chapter in WT history will be bold, progressive—and written collaboratively.

“This is not just about transitioning existing Upper School courses down the street. This is about updating that experience for students, and layering in new components not currently possible because of space constraints. How do we do this? The people who can answer that are



teachers. They're the ones who have said, 'I can't do that because...'. Or, 'I feel limited in what I'm able to do because...'. It's our teachers—in their innovation, creativity, and collaboration—who will bring this to life in very real ways."

"A guidepost for what our program can be"

The Center is slated to open in the 2022-2023 school year; during the next 12 months, there will be sustained, strategic work around what kinds of courses and interdisciplinary collaborations could happen there.

"I've been imagining what a Pre-K-12 aligned curriculum looks like at WT and working with teachers to create that," shares Desiree Jennings, Director of Academics. "There's wonderful groundwork that's been laid in our existing curriculum. Identifying

the necessary changes to be made, weaving differing perspectives and interests into a unified approach, and meeting the time and energy demands needed to do this work will lead to enormous growth. That's thrilling. I'm equally excited about opportunities for our teaching and learning to become increasingly interdisciplinary, to create school-based learning experiences mirroring real-world learning. Shifting towards learning *with* the community as well as *from* is important, too; this will deepen and expand the community-based learning work we do with City as Our Campus."

While the Center will be utilized primarily by Upper School students ("...they can move more independently between the Upper School and Centre Avenue," says Fech), it will dramatically impact the entire school.

"At one end, the Center will stand as both inspirational and aspirational, a guidepost for what the rest of our program can be," Fech adds. "We plan courses beginning with the end in mind: Where do I want my students to be in June? And how do we get there? This is what I want the Center to be: a place for culminating projects, capstone projects, all coming together in this space. What it looks like through the rest of the Upper School builds on what is happening in the earlier divisions. The whole scope and sequence of the curriculum is planned with all of that in mind."

On a tangible level, one of the most significant shifts will affect Molloy Posner Hall, which houses the Lower and Middle Schools and administrative offices. "We will move some administrative offices to the Center, which allows us to expand and codify the Middle and Lower School spaces," notes Fech. "Right now, the Lower School is disconnected with the fifth grade on the second floor, remaining grades on the first floor, and some special classrooms on the ground floor. We now have an opportunity to unify the Lower School. At the same time, the Middle School can grow—students can expand their wings and will have a special place to call their own."

Commitment to Community

The Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning will not only transform the WT school community, it reinforces the school's commitment to the broader community in two dynamic ways: affording opportunities for local and regional neighbors to use the space (an additional exposure that will also benefit students), and through the intentional adaptation of an existing building.

"By purchasing and reusing an existing urban building, WT is making a commitment to both the existing community fabric and to the environment," shares Winchester Thurston School Board of Trustees President Paul Rosenblatt. "As a somewhat land-locked urban school, WT needs to think differently about how we adapt to our evolving needs." Rosenblatt, also a WT alum parent and a nationally recognized architect, brings rich perspective to the project, and is excited about its far-reaching potential.

"Rather than only looking at building new structures, we can look at our neighborhood and see how we can adapt what is already nearby, and in the process engage more closely with our neighbors. Our commitment to explore how our programs and facilities can also benefit the region is further advanced by this space. While our existing facilities are already used by many community groups and organizations, the Center provides unprecedented spaces and opportunities for activation, engagement, and collaboration. What benefits our neighbors benefits us by creating new opportunities for communication and inspiration."

Environmental Impact

WT Trustee and parent Brandon Nicholson is working to help WT reach its goals for sustainability and environmental impact. An architect who specializes in high-performance, zero-energy buildings, Nicholson regularly collaborates with clients and colleagues to reduce





the impact of buildings on global climate change. Through his role on the Board's Buildings and Grounds Committee, he is applying his expertise in Passive House design to the renovation plans.

"Passive House is a European building philosophy and modeling software that leads to ultra-low energy buildings that provide for a healthy, comfortable, and durable interior environment," he explains. "By using these principles in three key areas—windows, walls, and floors—we can expect a reduction of up to 90% in heating and cooling demand, and up to 75% in overall primary energy demand, along with perpetually fresh, filtered air. None of this is possible with typical construction techniques."

A Transformational Moment

The Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning ushers in an extraordinary era in the history of Winchester Thurston School—even for an institution that has never been constrained by convention.

"The fact that we have been able to be strategic in the midst of the pandemic is incredible," observes Fech. "Many institutions are simply trying to survive, but we go back to the notion of Thriveability—the notion that this is really about what's going to come next. If we don't allow this to transform the way we're doing things, then we've missed a golden opportunity."

"I am honored to support the school's efforts."

—Joan Clark Davis '65

In 1961, Chubby Checker and Patsy Cline were at the top of the charts, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps, construction began on the Berlin Wall—and Winchester Thurston School enrolled a freshman who would grow up to become the first graduate with a building named in her honor.



Joan Clark Davis '65

"I hope it creates more space and opportunity for students to realize their possibilities," says Joan Clark Davis '65 of the Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning, a facility made possible by her transformational leadership gift, the largest single donation in WT's 134-year history. The Center expands WT's presence along the Morewood Avenue corridor, enlarging the school's urban campus by two floors, 15,000 square feet, and unlimited possibilities for

collaborative, interdisciplinary, project- and community-based teaching and learning.

The opportunities Davis envisions for future students are inspired by her own WT experience.

"I came to Winchester Thurston from a small school, so it was quite a change to be in a big school with so many different classes and teachers. I remember enjoying all of my classes. The teachers and curriculum at WT were excellent preparation for college. In fact, I think I had to work harder at WT than I did at college!"

As anticipation builds for the Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning, its namesake fondly remembers the excitement students felt upon moving from the Fifth Avenue school building into the new Morewood Avenue facility when she was a junior. That building, dedicated in 2017 as Molloy Posner Hall, was designed to accommodate steadily increasing enrollment with state-of-the-art classrooms for the specialized needs of all disciplines, and ample space for performing arts and athletics.

"Winchester Thurston School played an important role in my life, and I am honored to support the school's efforts to continue as pioneers in education. Although I am proud to have named the building, and hope my gift inspires other alums to give, I don't want to take the attention away from the extraordinary work going on inside of the building. I can't wait to see what happens there, and I hope my contribution will make a lasting impact."



WT is committed to providing students with project-based learning experiences, such as this Upper School physics project where freshman Tadao Tomokiyo is doing a motion study lab and sharing his results with his virtual lab partner via Zoom. The Rethinking Time Task Force will examine new ways of scheduling the school day to ensure students and teachers have ample time for this type of deeper learning.

REIMAGINING SCHEDULE DESIGN

Winchester Thurston's Strategic Priorities, Reimagine Learning, Rethink Time and Space, Strengthen Community, and Support Employees, are the pillars of an approach for equipping students to be able to adapt to whatever the future might hold. The priority to Rethink Time and Space is now poised to drive the evolution of WT's schedule design, encompassing everything from the academic calendar and learning spaces to opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration and, yes, the structure of a school day.

"We went through a major schedule revision for the 2013-2014 school year that helped us drastically reimagine the way we utilized time," states Adam Nye, Assistant Head for Education and Strategy. "Now, we are realizing that we need to move forward again to revise our schedule for the evolving academic program.

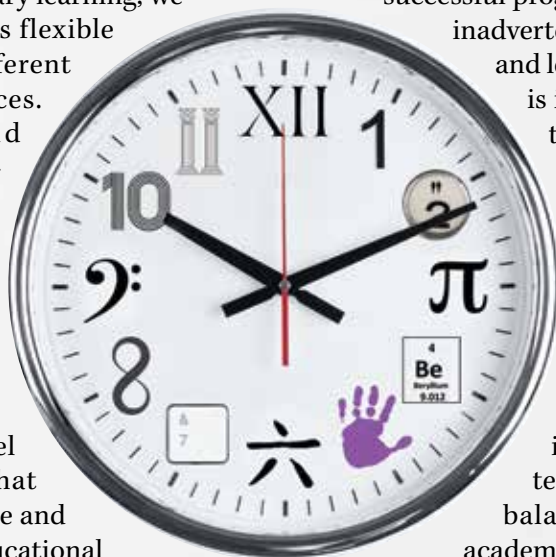
As we progress further into student-centered, project-based, interdisciplinary learning, we must have a schedule that is flexible and can adapt to many different types of learning experiences. Just as our teaching and learning should be student- (and teacher-) centered, so should our schedule."

Helping WT to orchestrate that alignment is District Management Group (DMGroup), an educational consulting firm specializing in systems-level changes, like scheduling, that improve student performance and experience. "By blending educational best practices with proven management techniques, we help school leaders successfully navigate the knotty challenges of time and scheduling to bring about measurable, sustainable improvements in student outcomes," notes Craig Gibbons, VP DMSolutions and Engineering at DMGroup. "Educators have long wrestled with this challenge as they work to instill fundamental skills in their students and seek to prepare them academically, as well as socially and emotionally, for the next challenge they will face in school, their communities, and their careers."

"Schedules are an extremely powerful lever"

"In a similar way that curriculum and academic programs develop over time, so do teaching and learning practices," adds Gibbons.

"Schedules are an extremely powerful lever to drive successful programs, but can very often, and inadvertently, be a barrier for teaching and learning. The approach we take is intended to place the why and the what of scheduling before the how. The design (i.e., how) becomes much clearer when you first refine and align what you are aiming to accomplish."



WT's aim—bringing the schedule into alignment with its focus on student-centered teaching and learning—requires balancing myriad aspects of the academic experience and community.

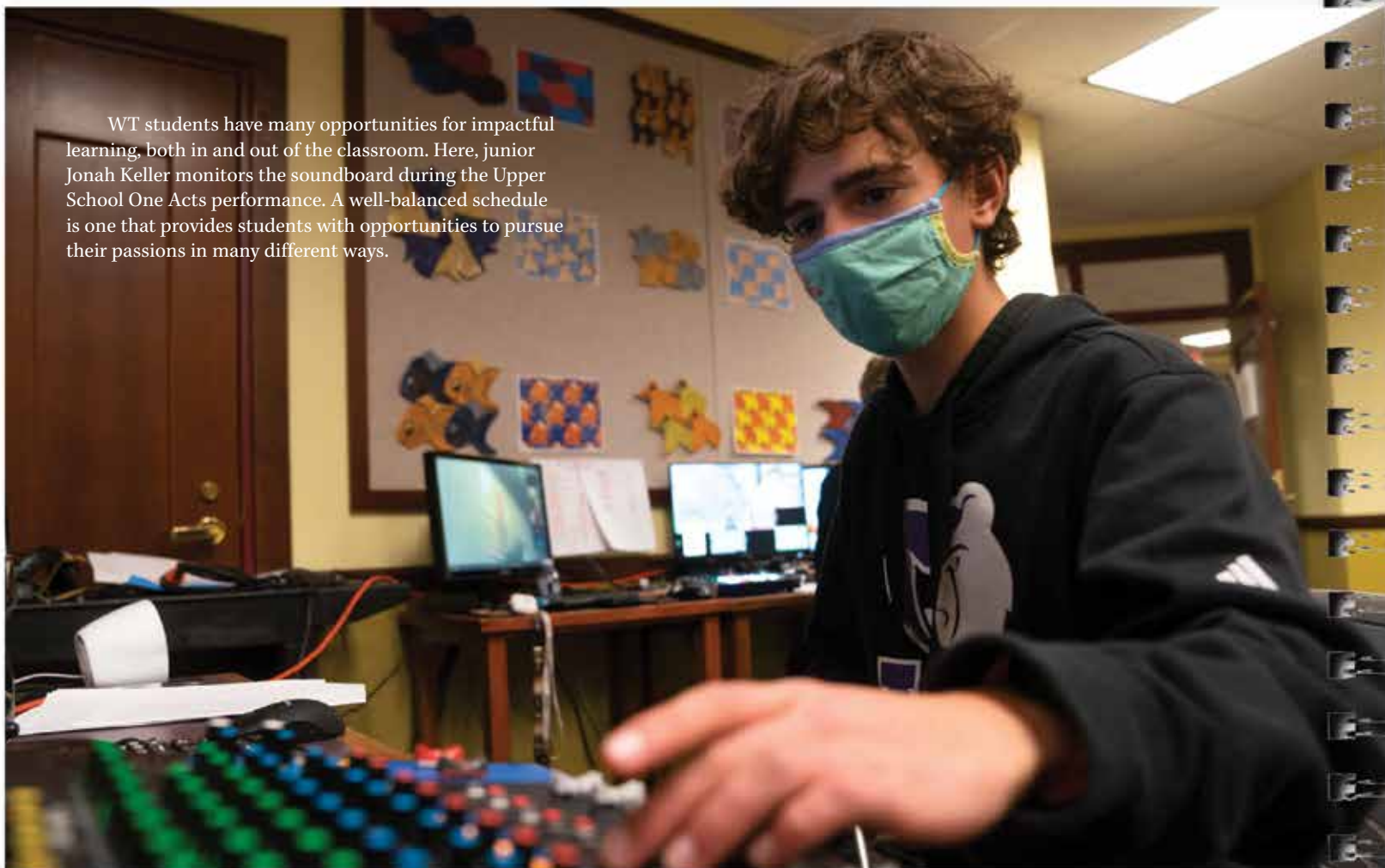
"We want to focus on providing flexibility for many different types of learning experiences, specifically having opportunities for deeper learning," explains Nye. "We also want to focus on supporting our student and employee wellness, and ensuring that we are utilizing the research of how time impacts learning outcomes, teacher practice, and employee satisfaction."

Above all, says Nye, "We must think about the student and faculty experience as a core driver for the schedule redesign. By examining everything we do, we can ensure we continue to deliver on the promise of a rigorous and student-centered learning experience."

A Holistic, Comprehensive Approach

The work began in earnest last December, when WT selected DMGroup from among several

WT students have many opportunities for impactful learning, both in and out of the classroom. Here, junior Jonah Keller monitors the soundboard during the Upper School One Acts performance. A well-balanced schedule is one that provides students with opportunities to pursue their passions in many different ways.



candidates. Chosen for their holistic approach to schedule redesign, DMGroup dived in immediately, launching a comprehensive analysis of course offerings, course enrollment trends over the years, staffing, academic support intervention and strategies, faculty workload, opportunities for faculty collaboration—pretty much everything that connects to a schedule.

WT provided DMGroup with existing documentation and with research gleaned from employees during the 2019-2020 strategic design process and the January 2020 employee wellness survey. Then, Nye says, “they engaged employees in focus groups—a total of 11 groups with 50 employees across all divisions, departments, and offices. We had a very robust and inclusive representation that brought in voices from across the employee base.”

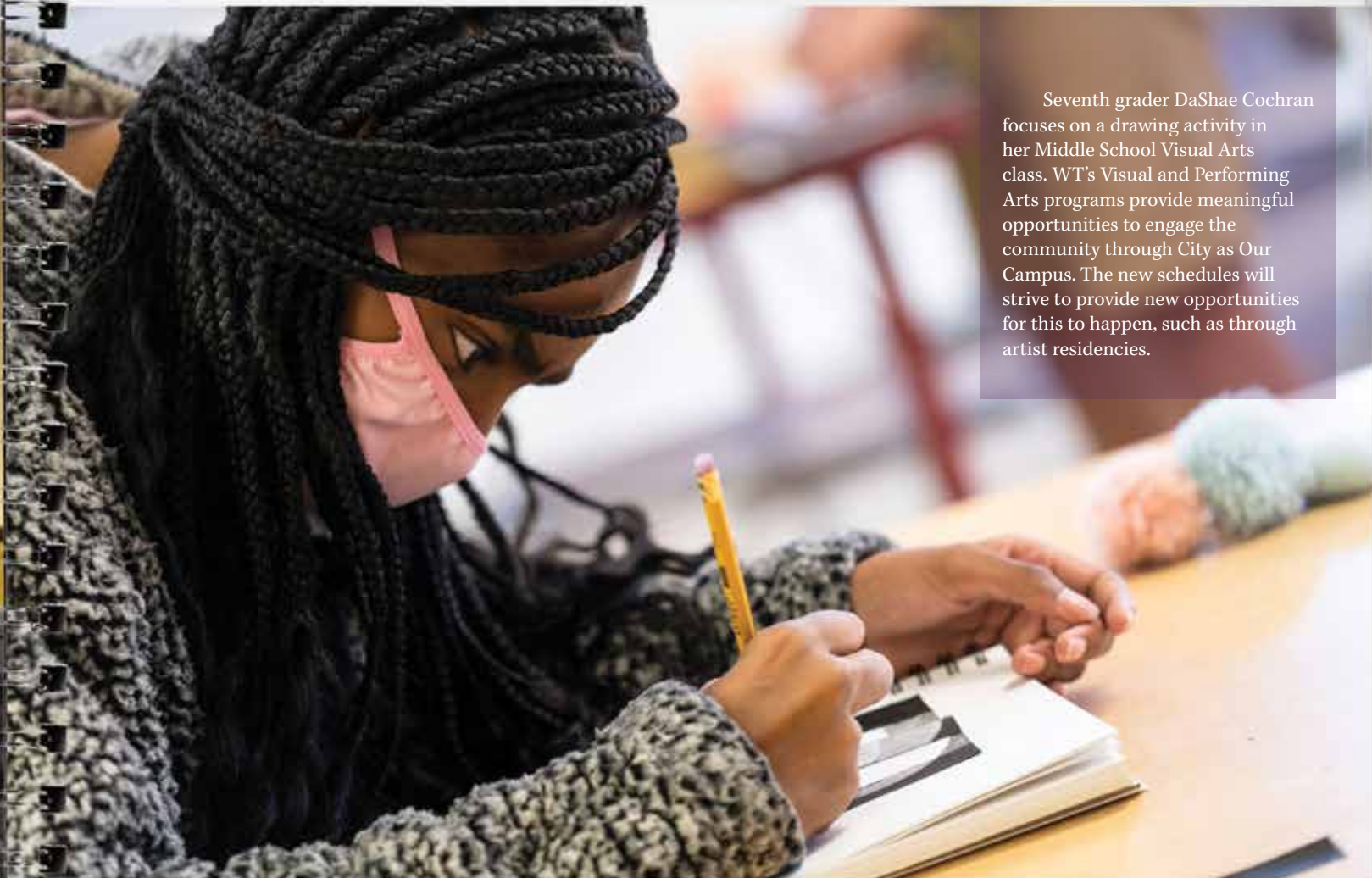
DMGroup’s approach provides a foundation for understanding both the lived experience of the schedule as well as its tactical or logistical components. “It is important to analyze all of these areas to really understand current practice, uncover areas that could promote greater efficiencies, and ultimately leverage the expansive set of information to make informed recommendations,” noted Gibbons.

Research, Recommendations, and a Reimagined Schedule

By late spring, results of DMGroup’s research had been shared with all employees. Any recommendations the school adopts will be implemented with support from DMGroup, Nye says, and any change would happen gradually, with minor revisions phased in over the next three years. One difference already planned for the 2021-2022 school year: moving from a four-day schedule to a Monday through Friday/A–B week schedule. In other words, during week A, a given class would be held Monday/Wednesday/Friday; during week B, that class would occur Tuesday/Thursday.

“This alleviates some of the problems identified by faculty,” Nye explains. “Benefits will include easier collaboration and coordination with City as Our Campus and other external partners; more consistency from week to week for everyone, including part-time employees; and greater distribution of classes across a cycle.”

The schedule redesign is still evolving, but one thing is clear: The school’s Mission and goals, rooted in its strategic priorities, interrelate, overlap, and strengthen



Seventh grader DaShae Cochran focuses on a drawing activity in her Middle School Visual Arts class. WT's Visual and Performing Arts programs provide meaningful opportunities to engage the community through City as Our Campus. The new schedules will strive to provide new opportunities for this to happen, such as through artist residencies.

one another, serving a multiplicity of issues and needs, ultimately furnishing and feeding an environment where students and teachers thrive. And the painstaking process of designing a schedule to reinforce all of this—a schedule with enough flexibility and adaptability to enable and support the extraordinary teaching and

learning experiences that are the heart and hallmark of a WT education—only solidifies WT's position at the forefront of learning innovation.

Says Nye, "I am excited by the possibilities that we have when we align initiatives around all of our strategic priorities."



Kindergarten student Elena Kyriacopoulos takes a break from playing to peek out the window. Revised Lower School schedules will be designed to ensure opportunities for play and exploration, which are essential elements for young children's social and emotional development.

Reflections of Time and Space

At WT, teaching and learning has never been constrained by time or space—resulting in experiences that resonate more deeply. In our recent history, this is most apparent with the impact of City as Our Campus on our learning models, but it has been evident for generations. We've asked a cross-section of alums (including two of our newest!) to reflect on the impact that questioning the typical constructs of time and space had on their learning experience.



Pat Maykuth '69

President, Research Design Associates

"My time at WT was from 1966–1969 against the backdrop of a turbulent time: the Vietnam War; the impeachment and resignation of a president; and the violence of the Civil Rights movement including the assassination of numerous political and community leaders.

Space for me was not physical, it was educational space. The playing fields were often the space where ideas from classes consolidated. Pedagogy then at WT shaped understanding of content. It facilitated the development of human potential, actions, and judgments. It provided the context.

My time at WT brought forth in me a deep intellectual curiosity and belief that integrated information/deep knowledge can form a true basis for operation in the world as it presents itself.

This experience made me the agent of my own education, and it gave me the basics to use education to shape my life and those of others. I saw a 21st century version of this when I visited WT for my 50th Reunion."



Margaret McKean Taylor '74

Former Trustee, Former Director of North Campus, Alum Parent

"There are so many WT experiences that transcend four walls and a schedule bell! From a 1968 Middle School chorus class performing the children's parts for a visiting opera company's *La Boheme* at the Syria Mosque, to the fabulous art classes Mrs. Peters taught in the old bomb shelter. I also remember a social studies class, City and Culture—we explored Pittsburgh's history and ethnic neighborhoods through meals at an Italian restaurant in Bloomfield, and a bagel bakery and a Greek restaurant in Squirrel Hill. Unforgettable!

As Director of the North Campus in the 1990s, I saw the outdoors as a perfect setting for learning. What could spark curiosity for children better than daily close observation of pond life, catching a frog in a net, or tossing egg contraptions from the barn loft?"

**Noah Raizman '95, M.D., M.F.A.***Hand, Upper Extremity, and Peripheral Nerve Surgery*

"Every year, the Physics class would go to Kennywood Park, armed with a worksheet of problems based on measuring and timing the rides. Using the Thunderbolt as a model for free body diagrams reflects the openness of the campus, and its integration into the city. By the time I was a senior, my schedule seemed to be half at WT and half elsewhere around the city. I was able to take Neuroscience seminars and a Modern Philosophy course at the University of Pittsburgh, and I took Cell Biology at Carnegie Mellon University. I think that many of my mornings were spent at Arabica, a now-defunct coffeehouse, dilating my allowed off-campus time with study and caffeine. Then I would stop by the Upper School office to chat with Joan Franklin and Sue Hershey, and maybe then wander to the student lounge before returning to 'actual' classes before a late afternoon of sports or theater practices. As much as I enjoyed that freedom, and perhaps took advantage of it, it was accompanied by high expectations and bred a sense of responsibility that I hope I carry with me to this day."

**Felix Bhattacharya '21**

"March 14, 2018. Together we marched, hand in hand, one school, one community. Past the Upper School Building, Molloy Posner Hall, and Garland Field, together we stood hand in hand. There were students, parents, teachers, and staff uniting over one message. *Candide Modo Fortiter Re*—gentle in manner, strong in deed. We held signs saying "Not One More" and pleading for gun control. United we stood as one community. The WT Silent Walk for Our Lives taught me that we are stronger when we stand together as one, pushing for change. This is a lesson I continuously saw throughout my four years at WT."

**Maïté Sadeh '21**

"As part of my Environmental Literature class in my junior year, I had the opportunity to visit Carrie Furnace, a formerly functioning blast furnace. As we stepped off the bus, we were faced with an immense structure, which put into perspective how small the workers must have felt at the time. We saw nature overtaking the site after years of abandonment, learned about the site's history and working conditions, and were able to appreciate the raw beauty of a historic landmark. With this, we were able to craft a personal response to the site through a short photo journal."

I am so grateful to have experiences such as these through the City as Our Campus program, because they afford me unique learning opportunities, which I would not be able to experience in quite the same way just sitting in a classroom."

Creating an equitable and inclusive WT

Through research, professional development, and curricular enhancements, WT continues to confront the challenges and obstacles that have prevented it from being an environment of equity, justice, and belonging for every member of the community. A few updates on this work are included here, as well as a warm welcome to WT's next Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Wellness.

Move Forward

WT is pleased to welcome Jessica Walton in the role of Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Wellness starting in July 2021. Jessica joins WT from Perkiomen School, an independent boarding and day school in eastern Pennsylvania, where she served as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator and a faculty member in the History Department. Jessica brings with her a strong focus on what is at the heart of developing and strengthening an equitable and inclusive culture. We're eager to share more from Jessica in the next issue of *Thistletalk*.



Strengthen Community



Sara Leone (L) and Asia Shannon (R)

As outlined in our strategic priority to Strengthen Community, WT is committed to ensuring that all students are supported, appreciated, and cared for by addressing our institutional practices and our school model. The expertise of our counselors, Sara Leone in Middle School and Asia Shannon in Upper School, move this work forward while providing critical support for our students. This is especially important today as we continue to navigate the challenges of COVID-19, racial injustice, and other trials that our students experience every day.

“Research shows that having an inclusive community has numerous positive outcomes for students and staff,” notes Shannon. “I am committed to creating opportunities and programming that embrace all people collectively, which in turn fosters an environment that all can take pride in.”



Workshop leader Ashley Lipscomb, CEO and Co-Founder of the Institute for Anti-Racist Education

Support Employees

On Thursday, February 11, employees gathered via Zoom to explore a wide offering of diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. With workshops ranging from *Fostering Equitable Change* to *DEI as the Basis for Strong and Effective Social-Emotional Learning*, employees had the opportunity to learn new methods, explore alternative viewpoints, and embark on ways to foster connections.

Build Bridges

The African American Buddy program was developed several years ago to create a space where Lower School African American students have the opportunity to see a reflection of themselves in Upper School students, affirming their common identities. This sense of belonging and connection is intended to create an early sense of safety and respect for WT's African American student community. While activities this year have been constrained by the pandemic, the connections have remained strong with virtual activities.



Sophomore Nur Turner (L) and Freshman Torey Bullock (R) prep spring snack bags for their Lower School buddies.



Address Research Recommendations

WT's partnership this past school year with The Glasgow Group, experts in the field of equity and inclusion, was designed to help WT interrogate the lived experiences of all constituent groups. Insights and recommendations from the group's year-long, in-depth research will be included in the next issue of *ThistleTalk*.

ICYMI*

Experience a taste of some of the great things happening at WT!
Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and visit winchesterthurston.org to keep up-to-date.

Middle School students studying Chinese welcomed the

Year of the Ox

with messages of luck for the Lunar New Year.



**In Case You Missed It*



For the first time, Lower School students participated in

Martin Luther King Jr. Day On.

Students participated in various virtual activities, including creating a culture quilt to celebrate the differences that make our community special.

In February, Lower School students continued their study of Black History, decorating their classroom doors to reflect their learning.



In a year of reimagining art education, Lower School students showed resilience and a creative energy that was both healing and celebratory. Their

self-portraits

reflected the perseverance and joy of our shared experiences.



The WT
Community
celebrated

Pi Day

and the great outdoors with a Pi Day 5K event hosted by the WT Programs Team. Families enjoyed a 3.1-mile stroll in Frick Park on a course that included seven “Pi Stop” stations with ingredients needed to create a special post-race pie.



Despite the challenges of the pandemic, both
Girls and Boys Basketball advanced to WPIAL

playoffs

—the Girls’ team to the semifinal round and the Boys’ team to the quarterfinals.

Athletes from both teams also earned individual recognition this season: junior Jackson Juzang and sophomore Nadia Moore were selected to Class 2A All-State teams and senior Nya Nicholson was selected for the Roundball Classic.

Media on Morewood, a club led by Assistant Teacher Randon Bopp ’13, provided livestreams of sporting events with commentary, allowing the WT community to experience these events virtually.



The shows all went on!



The One Acts performance, *The Monologue Show* (from *Hell*), was a live, virtual event. Students performed in separate spaces, both on campus and at home, and streamed the performance to more than 200 audience members.

Students in the Middle School Musical, *Super Happy Awesome News*, worked individually with Director Jill Machen via Zoom and then recorded their parts in various settings. In collaboration with Machen, Max Lasky '20 edited the individual recordings together. The performers experienced the final product for the first time when the recording premiered to an audience of more than 400 viewers.

The Upper School Play, *Spoon River Anthology*, featured original music by senior Liam Kress and was livestreamed from the Falk Auditorium stage—the first production from the stage this year.

Interested in viewing these performances? Contact our Advancement Department at advancement@winchesterthurston.org.

Please note: Students only removed masks during live performances when they were six feet apart from others, and only one student was unmasked at any given time.



"You have witnessed a rapidly changing world that needs your insight, your passion, your unwavering hope, and action for a kinder, gentler world."

—DR. SCOTT D. FECH

Commencement 2021



The 72 members of the Class of 2021 were encouraged to recognize their strengths and stay connected as WT celebrated the school's 134th Commencement exercises on June 3, 2021 at Carnegie Music Hall.

Student speakers Felix Bhattacharya, Ben Bermann, Eliot Herron, and Liam Kress were joined by Board President Paul Rosenblatt and Head of School Dr. Scott D. Fech in addressing the students and their guests. Student speakers reflected on and reframed the remarkable experiences of the past eighteen months and shared gratitude for their classmates and the WT community.

WINCHESTER THURSTON SCHOOL CLASS OF 2021

Jon Apossos
Lily D. Apostolopoulos
Jacob Eli Bair
Vishal Bandaru *
Benjamin Asher Bermann
Felix N. Bhattacharya
Ayisat A. Bisiriyu
Evan Marie Miller Blair
Eliott A. Boselli
William Buchanan *
Megan S. Bulova *
Keran Chen
Xingru Chen
Laura Haruko Childs
Pablo A. Coen-Pirani
Scout Daisy Conley
Bryce J. Cooper *
Nathan Robert Donner

Eli Dorsey
Maxwell R. Dunham *
Martine Ferrency
Samuel A. Freudenberg
Cayla Cruz Gancy
Allen R. Gao
Caleb B. Greenwald *
Benjamin Gutschow
Abigail M. Hartman
Eliot A. Herron *
Babita Kathryn Heystek
T. Jerome *
Jizhou Jiang
Yipeng Jiang 蒋意芃
Alptug H. Kaynar
Jack Keane-Lizano
Meredith Addison Kelley
Liam Kress

Rachel Rose Kuzmishin *
Janvier Nicole Lamont
Jingqi Li 李竟琦
Jada Lyde
Patrick Dalton Malone
Sofia Joy Mangiafico
Malaynie R. McCreary
Gwynnyth A. McGough
Moses H. Michie
Joseph Molder *
Anna Katherine Nesbitt
Nya N. Nicholson
Oscar Koziol Nigam
Niam Noaman
Alexander Oyebanji
Rajan Tekchandani Reddy
Gus Robinson
Christopher Bari Roman *

Maité Nicole Sadeh
Dulce Alyse K. Sappington *
Samuel Emerson Siktart
Lila Green Spiro
Elizabeth Stenson
Emma Stewart
Grace Margaret Stewart
Zach Stewart
Mike Sun
Nicolette R. Topping
Rocco A. Turano
Asma'u Turner *
Mathias E. VanBriesen *
James Thaddeus Votruba-Drzal
Joel Isaiah Williams *
Abhiram S. Yadagiri
Andrew Zivkovic *
Adeline Zwicker-Jones

*WT Lifer * Legacy

"I truly believe that we have impacted every aspect of this institution, and most importantly, we have persevered through all the challenges that have come our way."

—FELIX BHATTACHARYA



(L-R) Fourth generation WT student Rachel Kuzmishin with her grandmother, Trustee Rosanne Isay Harrison '56

"Director of Upper School Dr. Anne Fay tells me that your defining characteristic as a class is that you are LOUD; but I'm here to say that I'm pretty sure what is going on in the background of all that LOUD signal might be really interesting, too."

—PAUL ROSENBLATT



The WT community joins in singing the Alma Mater. (Foreground L-R) Evan Blair, Ayisat Bisiriyu, and Martine Ferency

"While WT is a physical space, what makes it special is the community it breeds."

—BEN BERMAN



(L-R) CB Roman and Science Department Chair Graig Marx

"The pandemic took who we are and brought out the strength that was there all along."

—ELIOT HERRON



(L-R) Caleb Greenwald with his mother, Director of Middle School Amanda Welsh



(L-R) Asma'u Turner with her mother, Visual Arts Teacher Mary Martin '88



(L-R) Maïté Sadeh and Student Council Vice President Niam Noaman

"The coveted Class of 2021, the largest and loudest group in WT history, will stay together as one in spirit and will reunite during Reunions to come as if no time had ever passed."

—LIAM KRESS



Health and Physical Education Department Chair Steve Cooper and Lower School Teacher Marie Cooper congratulate their son Bryce.



(L-R) Paul Rosenblatt, Dr. Scott D. Fech, Eliot Herron, Felix Bhattacharya, Ben Bermann, Liam Kress, and Director of Upper School Dr. Anne Fay

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

Eliot Ann Herron

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

Christopher Bari Roman

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

Anna Katherine Nesbitt

The Alice M. Thurston award for integrity, courageous leadership, and service, given by the Board of Trustees

Adeline Zwicker-Jones

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

Rachel Rose Kuzmishin

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

Maïté Nicole Sadeh

The Jane L. Scarborough Award for teaching excellence

Tracy Valenty



THISTLETALK GOES DIGITAL

Get a full gallery of photos from graduation at winchesterthurston.org/digitalthistle

Miss Mitchell Society

Expand the Vision of our Founder



Dr. Mary A. Graham Mitchell was a visionary leader. She broke boundaries by creating a school dedicated to educating women and preparing them for the rigors of a university setting. She reimagined learning by encouraging her students to progress in their education at a time when most women were encouraged to complete their schooling with a high school diploma. And, she created a community of learners and scholars who continue to “Think also of the comfort and the rights of others” to this very day.

In Miss Mitchell's honor, the Miss Mitchell Society recognizes those in our community who have chosen to expand the vision of our founder through a bequest or planned gift. Including Winchester Thurston School 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 lasting impact on the life of our school and students. Every planned giving donor becomes a member of the Miss Mitchell Society—membership requires no particular gift or bequest amount.

Please consider joining the community of supporters in the Miss Mitchell Society. Your gift will help us continue to break boundaries, reimagine learning, support community, and rethink time and space—all in the spirit of our founder. For more information, or to let us know of your intentions, please contact Alex Neal, Director of Leadership Philanthropy, at neala@winchesterthurston.org or 412-224-4644.

MISS MITCHELL SOCIETY MEMBERS

Following are the current living members of our community who have remembered WT in their estate planning.

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Betsy Aiken '72 | Anna-Stina Ericson '44 | Gretchen Larson | Henry Posner III |
| Suzanne LeClere | Robert I. Glimcher | Maslanka '83 | Kathy Zillweger |
| Barley '52 | Barbara Graves- | Marga Matheny '64 | Putnam '71 |
| Loretta Lobes | Poller '93 | Patricia Maykuth '69 | Sarah Irving Riling '67 |
| Benec '88 | Rosanne Isay | Beverlee Simboli | Susan Criepp |
| Barbara Abney | Harrison '56 | McFadden '55 | Santa-Cruz '60 |
| Bolger '52 | Kristi A. Kerins A'67 | Kathleen L. | Jennifer M. Scanlon |
| Kathleen W. Buechel | Kathryn W. Kruse '58 | Metinko '91 | Sheen Sehgal '89 |
| Joan Clark Davis '65 | Elsa Limbach | Frances P. Minno | Allyson Baird Sveda '84 |
| Judith Rohrer Davis '57 | Louise Baldridge | Bee Jee Epstine | Dr. Beth A. Walter '92 |
| Judith Ellenbogen '58 | Lytle '51 | Morrison '56 | Gaylen Westfall, |
| Justine Diebold | Carole Oswald | Eileen Mauclair | Honorary Alumna |
| Englert '59 | Markus '57 | Muse '61 | Carol Spear |
| | | | Williams '57 |

Please visit winchesterthurston.org/missmitchell for the complete list of Miss Mitchell Society Members.



Learning has real allure here at WT.

It's a fun, creative, immersive experience. It's tapping into imagination, learning new ways to communicate, taking risks, and working with teachers who care for the well-being of each student.

Cultivate a love of learning with a WT Fund gift; large or small, every gift counts.

Visit winchesterthurston.org/gift, or contact Michelle Wion Chitty at 412-578-3748 or wionm@winchesterthurston.org.

THE WT  FUND

Scott Fech (L) and Rick Soria (R) have a "blast" at the WT Virtual Benefit.



2021: A SPACE ODYSSEY

A VIRTUAL PARTY TO BENEFIT WINCHESTER THURSTON SCHOOL

WT's Virtual Benefit 2021: A Space Odyssey was a spectacular success with out-of-this-world attendance. There were pets and babies in orbit, magic, trivia, plenty of dancing, and, most importantly, an amazing core of parent volunteers, alums, and staff giving countless hours to make this virtual benefit otherworldly!

VIP (Very Interesting Planet) ticket holders were treated to a pre-party cocktail/mocktail-making session with Dr. Scott D. Fech and Rick Soria, complete with kits from Wigle Whiskey.

With your help and support, we rocketed to success. Thanks to our generous sponsors, we more than doubled our sponsorship goal. And, through Fund-a-Needs, we raised more than \$10,000. The result? With ticket sales, donations, sponsorship, and Fund-a-Needs, more than \$55,000 was raised to help make a WT education available to more students.



THISTLETALK GOES DIGITAL

Get more news, photos, and fun at
winchesterthurston.org/digitalthistle

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 BENEFIT COMMITTEE

Benefit Co-Chairs:

Kelly Hanna Riley '91,
Trustee
Rick Soria

Benefit Committee:

Susan Allison
Teresa Beshai
Kim Daboo
Yolanda Frank
Kate Gardner
Monica Manes Gay
Allison Grodin
Dana Jackson
Jennifer Kilgore
Amiena Mahsoob
Katie Metosky
Giulia Lozza Petrucci
Tracey Schwartz
Liz Stephan

1941 80th Reunion Year

Britta Ericson Chambers shares, "My first great-grandchild was born in May and named Britta. My granddaughter, Britta, was married in November in a lovely small (11 people) outdoor wedding at a beautiful country inn in nearby West Virginia."



Britta Ericson Chambers (L) with her great-granddaughter (R)



Members of the Class of 1941: Recognize this photo? Share the classmates and story captured here.

1946 75th Reunion Year



1946 Thistledown Staff

1951 70th Reunion Year



Members of the Class of 1951: Recognize this photo? Share the classmates and story captured here.

1953

Judith 'Judy' Dubin Oksner shares "My years [at WT] changed my life. I learned to play field hockey (right halfback), basketball (only half court – unseemly for girls to run that far), wore uniforms, stood in presence of teachers, learned to diagram sentences including the preamble of the Constitution, trembled in Miss Johnson's Latin class, went to college. **Miss Mary Philput '14**, the headmistress, sent me off to Smith College as someone who was an individual with a sense of self and a great education. Smith, my college, paled by comparison. If there are any of you from my class left, would love to hear from you."

1955

Faith Wertz Eastwood Shore, writes, "Enjoyed Zooming with 1955 classmates [during our virtual reunion]. Hope to do it again next year at Reunion time."

1956 65th Reunion Year



Members of the Class of 1956: Recognize this photo? Share the classmates and story captured here.

1957

Judith Rohrer Davis, "The things I learned at WT have served me well for all these many years in ways I never dreamed they would!"

1961 60th Reunion Year



Class of 1961: Your class has taken pride in the creation of student government. Do you remember any of the students in this photo?

1965

Julie Hibbard Crittenden writes, "Memo to self: Think again before deciding to build a new home during a global pandemic. Yup. Two years (almost) later we are enjoying our new life at the beach."

But! Still no railings or fence, so no mailbox yet! Maybe by Christmas 2021! Happy to be out of the snowy mountains here in San Diego, California, but will spend time in our Park City, Utah nest during summers."

The Class of 1965 Book Recommendation Group led by **Emily 'Tabby' Amerman Vagnoni**, "was formed after our last reunion (on Zoom). Rather than discussing one book as many groups do, we get together monthly to recommend books, movies, and good TV series to each other. In our March meeting, we were joined by **Susan McGowan '66**, who educated and entertained us with her experience as a mystery writer.

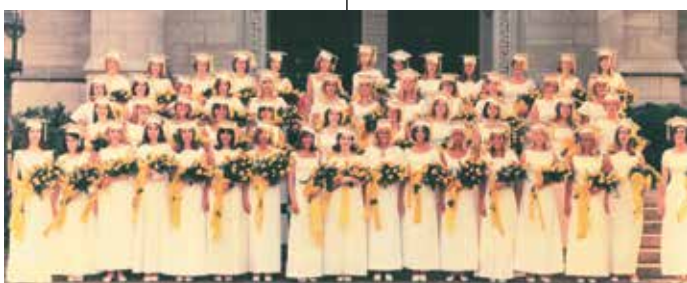
All Class of 1965 members are invited." **Carolyn Slease Frahm** and **Nancy Herron** also wrote to tell us how much they enjoy the group. Anyone who wants to join can email Emily 'Tabby' Amerman Vagnoni at eala@comcast.net.



The Class of 1965 formed a Book Recommendation Group after their Virtual Reunion in 2020. Top Row: Susan McGowan '66, Emily 'Tabby' Amerman Vagnoni, Carolyn Slease Frahm, and Samantha Francis Flynn. Middle Row: Louise Geer Herman, Helen Mar Parkin, Darlene Wolf Millman, and Cynthia Pearson Turich. Bottom Row: Margaret 'Peggy' Stubbs, and Nancy Herron.

Eleanor Levinson Peris writes, "Hi classmates, I enjoyed reconnecting with many of you over Zoom at our last reunion and seeing some of you on our book group. I'm looking forward to the summer and getting to travel a bit. I kept busy all during this pandemic walking everyday (with lots of layers) and doing an ancestry project. I have found new relatives all over the globe. Excited to get back to seeing the grandkids up close and personal now that we're vaccinated. Stay well."

1966 55th Reunion Year



Class of 1966 Commencement Photo

Patricia 'Patty' Watson Kammerer shares, "Trying to keep you all safe during

pandemic vaccine roll out. I came out of retirement to continue my nursing career as a nurse vaccinator in the stadium outdoor drive-through tents in Columbia, South Carolina run by Prisma Health. I truly love what I do, and everyone is so appreciative. Please everyone, stay safe and get vaccinated! I would love to see all of you again in the near future. I still have my home in Pittsburgh, but have been in Columbia, South Carolina for close to five years."

1970 The Class of 1970 has continued to meet regularly on Zoom following their successful virtual

Reunion in October. Together they have gone on virtual tours, discussed art and social justice issues, and passed many

laughter-filled hours together. Contact **Saralu 'Sarah' Baehr**, **Megan 'Meg' Hall**, or **Anne 'Annie' Peters** if you would like get involved.

1971 50th Reunion Year

Paula Becker Vito writes, "You may remember the one young man in the congregation dressed in a Navy uniform at our graduation ceremony in Shady Side Presbyterian Church. It does not seem like that was fifty years ago. Denny and I have been happily married for 48 of those years. We now live in our dream retirement house on the Wye River, a tributary to the Chesapeake Bay. We continue to sail as often as we can with the company of our son, Tom, his wife, Marilyn, and our daughter, Blythe. We have plenty of room for visitors so please find us when you are in the area."

Margaret Taylor shares, "I moved back to Pittsburgh (after 30 years in Canada) in 2015. My mother (founder of the Carnegie Mellon University Children's School) is now 97, and I wanted to be here for the end of her life. Luckily, my daughter and her family have relocated from

Manhattan to Pittsburgh for the duration of the pandemic. I still run the Publishing Certificate (postgrad) program at Ryerson University in Toronto, which I can do online. And I'm the managing editor of *MONKEY*, the English-language offspring of the Tokyo-based Japanese literary journal. Follow the link in *DigitalThistle* to read more about *MONKEY* magazine."



Members of the Class of 1971: Recognize this photo? Share the classmates and story captured here.

1972 Carolyn Cramer Sanford shares, "I joined The Neighborhood Academy in Stanton Heights as Assistant Head of School for Development almost two years ago. I am grateful to have the opportunity to fundraise for our students so they may have a college preparatory education and attend college. Please contact me if you would like to visit the school!"

1973 Victoria Dym led a Laughter Yoga Writing Workshop online for The North Florida Poetry Hub. She was joined by **Martha 'Murph' McDowell**. Martha and Victoria were ready to launch *The Metanoia Retreat for Writers, Well Being and Right Whales* in May of 2020, but have postponed the retreat until May 2022 to be held in Fernandina, Florida. Martha specializes in Restorative and Yoga Nidra and Victoria is a Certified Laughter Yoga Leader. For more information about attending

the retreat contact Martha and/or Victoria at metanoiairetreat@gmail.com. Follow the link in *DigitalThistle* to read more about Laughter Yoga Writing Workshop.



Victoria Dym (top left) joined by Martha McDowell (top right) are seen here leading a Laughter Yoga Writing Workshop.

1974

Local nutritionist **Leslie Joseph Bonci** consults for the Kansas City Chiefs, Carnegie Mellon University athletics, and the National Dairy Council. She was also the sports dietitian for the Steelers, Pirates, Penguins, and the Women's National Basketball Association. Leslie was featured in *NEXTpittsburgh's*, "Eat. Drink. Do.," section where she explained how to support your immune system during the pandemic winter. Leslie is also the owner of Active Eating Advice, a nutrition consulting company. Follow the link in *DigitalThistle* to read more about Leslie's offerings.

Susan Whitacre writes, "Hello, Classmates! Looking on the bright side of the COVID quarantine in Texas and most recently the extensive damage our home suffered in sub-tropical Houston, during the arrival of the Polar Vortex and days of freezing temperatures. I built my first snowman in YEARS! We experienced days of candlelight dinners and romantic meals for two cooked in our fireplace during power outages. Plus the awesome wonder of full-on waterfalls from light fixtures and vents in two rooms of our home! With some support from our insurance company, we'll be enjoying a partial home makeover with new

flooring, walls, ceilings, and paint! The days, weeks, and months spent entertaining ourselves in our quarantine garden, brought more joy and peace than I could ever anticipate...as well as a bumper crop of herbs, vegetables, fruits, and flowers. Our chickens thrived on the extra attention and have provided us (and our extended family and friends) with a rainbow of colored, fresh eggs, and entertainment. We marveled at the variety of bees, anoles, and hummingbirds which came to visit and even raised Monarch and Swallowtail butterflies in our greenhouse. I earned my Master Gardener Certification through Texas A&M Agrilife Extension and enjoyed writing numerous articles and taking nature photos for publication. Missing my grandchildren motivated me to write a series of children's books...like colorful, whimsical Love Letters to them! It was a way of reaching across the miles, and touching their hearts when I was unable to hug them. My wish is that this Cosmic Timeout has proven to be a rich and meaningful time for all my classmates, even as many of us faced heartbreak and overwhelming challenges."



Susan Whitacre participated in the "Corona Lisa 100 Mile Challenge" where participants ran or walked an accumulative 100 miles and earned a limited edition Corona Lisa Medal.

Heidi Kanterman Freedman shares, "My husband Glenn and I are so happy to welcome our fourth grandchild, Easton Michael Freedman, born February 2021 to our son, Andrew, and daughter-in-law, Krystie. We now have one granddaughter and three grandsons. They bring us so much joy!"

1976

45th Reunion Year



Members of the Class of 1976: Recognize this photo? Share the classmates and story captured here.

1981

40th Reunion Year



Members of the Class of 1981: Recognize this photo? Share the classmates and story captured here.

1985

Shannon Smuts shares, "My art teacher at WT, Mrs. Petersen, ignited my lifelong interest in art and art history. I am the host and producer of a podcast, *Living Artists Podcast*. Please give my podcast a listen when you have time and let me know what you think." Follow the link in *DigitalThistle* to explore the *Living Artists Podcast*.



(L) Anne Peterson

1986

35th Reunion Year

Dean Anthony E. Varona recently announced the appointment of Professor **Tamara Rice Lave** to faculty director of the litigation skills program at the University of Miami School of Law. The litigation skills program invites students to engage in rigorous, hands-on training providing them with the practical skills necessary for competent professional legal service. "Professor Lave is a devoted and award-winning teacher, a gifted and nationally renowned scholar, and an experienced and talented litigator with a passion for trial and appellate advocacy," said Varona. "I am thrilled that Tamara is our next litigation skills faculty director and that I get to partner with her and with our associate dean for experiential learning, making the program even stronger and more nationally prominent."



Tamara Rice Lave was recently appointed to faculty director of the litigation skills program at the University of Miami School of Law.



**Class of 1986
Commencement Photo**

1991 30th Reunion Year

WT Trustee **Kelly Hanna Riley** has been named President of Global Relocation and Business Development at Howard Hanna Real Estate Services. As part of her new role, she will also lead their third-party relocation company as President of Relocation Horizons, Inc.



Members of the Class of 1991: Recognize this photo? Share the classmates and story captured here.

1995

FISA Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, and The Pittsburgh Foundation are co-sponsoring the *Race + Disability* webinar series, as part of a broader effort to address the intersection of race and disability. Earlier this month, WT Trustee **Tiffany Sizemore** was part of a free panel, “Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline for Students of Color and Students with Disabilities.”

1996 25th Reunion Year



Class of 1996 Commencement Photo

1997

Latika Ravi Signorelli is a Vice President at T. Rowe Price. During the pandemic, she relocated her family back to Pittsburgh. She has been an active member of the Alums of Color group, and the Endowment Committee of WT's Board of Trustees. She recently spoke with WT's Student Investment Club about her indirect career path and her work to diversify the financial sector.

1998

The Cultural Humility & Equity Collaborative (CHEC), founded by **Dr. Azadeh 'Azi' Masalehdan Block**, has partnered with the City of Pittsburgh to provide cultural competency training for public safety workers working with the city's immigrant and refugee populations.

2000

There was a double dose of WT talent in Quantum Theatre's immersive audio experience, *10 for 21* featuring the talents of **Jason Shavers** and **Zoe Silberblatt '11**.

2001 20th Reunion Year



Members of the Class of 2001

2002

Congratulations to **Sarah Humphrey** for being accepted to West Virginia University School of Law!

2003

Malcolm Smith shares, “I moved on from the Albuquerque Isotopes in November 2019 and I am now a Judicial Specialist II with the New Mexico Second Judicial District Court (Bernalillo County District Court).”

2006 15th Reunion Year

Alums of Color Co-Chair **Don Mike Mendoza** facilitated the WT Alums of Color Gathering: A Personal and Professional Networking Experience. Attendees included **Linsey McDaniel A'96**, **Latika Ravi Signorelli '97**, **Neena Kumar Rawls '98**, **Trustee Brandilyn 'Brandi' Dumas '99**, **Jason Shavers '00**, **Mia Long Collette '01**, **Cassandra 'Cassy' Richards Davis '01**, and **Brea Heidelberg '02**. The group is energized to find ways to connect and engage with WT alums of color across the generations. If interested in learning more, please contact alumsofcolor@winchesterthurston.org.



**Class of 2006
Commencement Photo**

2011 10th Reunion Year

Rogan Grant, a Ph.D. candidate in the Northwestern University Interdepartmental Neuroscience program, co-authored an article published in *Nature Research* on COVID-19 pneumonia entitled “Circuits

between infected macrophages and T cells in SARS-CoV-2 pneumonia.” Grant shared, “WT had a large role in my choice to become a scientist. I really appreciate all of the support!” Read the full article at the link in *DigitalThistle*.



Rogan Grant

Dayna Scott Jenkins shared, “Shout out to my alma mater, Winchester Thurston School, for the cutest little gift. We can't wait to see what this little bear will do!”



Dayna Scott Jenkins (R) and her son Harrison (L) rocking some sweet WT gear.



Class of 2011 lifers

2013

Laura 'Lita' Brillman is honored to have completed the Coro Fellowship in Public Policy in May, and will be attending the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh in the fall to earn her Master of Public Administration

in 2023. She plans to use her public policy experience to make Pittsburgh a more livable and equitable place for communities of color. She happily resides in Wilkensburg with her partner Kevin and her dog Cassie.



Laura 'Lita' Brillman with her dog Cassie

Max Herz spoke with students about sports commentating. Max is a sports broadcaster currently based in Nashville, Tennessee, with a wide variety of on-air experience in television, radio, and online media. Max's broadcasting experience includes extensive credits with the SEC Network, Learfield IMG College, 102.5 The Game, Vanderbilt Athletics, MyTV30, the Iowa High School Sports Network, WQKR Radio, the Cape Cod Baseball League, VandyRadio, and more as a reporter, host, and play-by-play announcer.

2014

Congratulations to **Tonya Armes** for starting medical school at The University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences.

Nikhil Mohan has poured his creative energies into some new tracks, dedicated to WT, which can be found on SoundCloud. Have a listen at the link in *DigitalThistle*.

2016

5th Reunion Year



Class of 2016 Commencement Photo

2017

Benjamin 'Ben' Harrison was accepted to the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine.

2019

Current college student **Ian McGough** reported that he had COVID-19, but has since recovered. Wishing all alums with COVID a speedy recovery.

AJ Molder recently starred in a short film, *Thanks to Her*, a Pittsburgh-set coming-of-age tale about being comfortable with one's sexuality. In an article on the University of Pittsburgh's website, AJ shared, "I was so excited when I first read the script for *Thanks to Her* because the character of Millie was someone who felt very familiar to me. I was lucky enough to attend a school that strives to give its students the space to explore who they are in a safe environment where self-discovery was always fostered and supported. I want Millie to be an example for those who didn't have a nurturing environment like WT."



A still from *Thanks to Her*, starring AJ Molder (L) and Julia De Avilez Rocha (R).

2020

Best friends **Aria Eppinger** and **Nicole Shigiltchoff** say, "Hi from MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts!"

Congratulations to **Rivers Leche** and **Zoe Soteres**, for being recognized in City Theatre's 2020 EQT Young Playwrights Contest! Rivers' play, *Fracture*, was one of just three winning one-act plays, and Zoe's play, *Grand Visions*, was one of just four honorable mentions. Rivers recently spoke to Kristin Kovacic's Literature and Power classes about the experience of having her play produced by City Theatre, which featured actor **James Counihan '15**.



(L-R) Rivers and Zoe

WT Welcomes Alex Neal



Alex Neal joins WT as Director of Leadership Philanthropy, a new role created to develop and manage a portfolio of major and planned gift prospects in support of WT's strategic initiatives. Although focused on the upcoming capital campaign, of which the Joan Clark Davis Center for Interdisciplinary Learning is the cornerstone [See page 3.], Neal's efforts will also support annual and endowment giving.

Neal joins WT from the University of Pittsburgh and UPMC where he first worked as a Senior Development Associate, and then as a Planned Giving Officer, supporting Pitt's six Health Science schools and clinical partners.

Neal, a board member for the Society for Contemporary Craft, is a graduate of Allegheny College with a B.A. in Communications and holds a Master of Public Administration, Public and Nonprofit Management from the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh.

Please welcome Alex to the WT Community by contacting him at 412-224-4644 or neala@winchesterthurston.org.

Remembering Joan Helen Bloomquist Franklin and Dr. Susanne 'Sue' W. Hershey

WT was struck a double blow this winter when two former influential members of the Upper School passed away. Joan Helen Bloomquist Franklin served as the Director of Upper School from 1980–1997. She spent her life as a teacher and administrator, educating, encouraging, and mentoring her students. Dr. Susanne 'Sue' W. Hershey served as an English and History Teacher at WT from 1968–1977 and as School and College Counselor from 1977–1998. She was an influential and caring teacher and administrator.

Tributes to Mrs. Franklin:

"She was a great teacher and a lovely, inspiring person."

—Kerry Bron '84, Trustee

"Mrs. Franklin could be imposing—perhaps it was those Pilgrim shoes, or the way she used them to stride, with frowning focus and intensity, through the school halls. But she also regularly put up with my shenanigans, could be genuinely hilarious, and was often disarmingly loopy. She called me 'Lizzie-Lou' even when I was in trouble, never seemed phased when I barged into her office, and always listened to my side of whatever story I'd gotten myself tangled up in.

One of my favorite memories of her was the time she found a condom on the floor near the lockers. The Winchester Thurston School could be as infuriatingly fusty, old-school, prim, and conservative as its name implies, but then again, there Joan stood in her sensible shoes, rooted in the post-lunch rush, condom raised high above her head as we all swirled noisily around her in our rush to class. 'THIS IS WONDERFUL!' she shouted, eyes raised above the throng. 'THIS IS RESPONSIBLE! I AM PLEASED! THIS IS GOOD.'

I'm so sorry to learn of her death, but am also so glad to have known her, learned from her, gotten to see her in action—especially at the time in my life when I did. Rest in peace, Joan. You had such an impact. Thank you."

—Elizabeth Wollman '87

"I admit to spending more time in her office than I should have—and she was stern and demanding but also had that balance for humor and understanding. She was always telling us that if we swallowed our chewing gum it would get stuck in our duodenum...none of us knew what a duodenum was, but it sounded very bad. She helped shape the lives of a generation of WT women."

—Jennifer Gonzalez McComb '89, Trustee

"I am sad to hear about the death of Joan Franklin. She was a wonderful Director of Upper School, always taking a keen interest in our lives...from helping us choose our courses every year, to paying attention to our extracurricular activities, to hounding us for pulling our hiked-up uniform skirts back down to knee-level every day. She lived next door to my violin teacher in Squirrel Hill, so I would often exchange hellos with her as I was leaving my lesson in the early evening and she was just coming home."

—Lynn Bechtold '90

"After all these years, Mrs. Franklin remains one of the most important educators and mentors I have ever had. I don't know how many students truly saw the depths she would go to advocate for and support them. Her steadfast passion and dedication were matched only by her patience and humor. I can only imagine how tiresome the students' (ok my) impressions of her must have been! In her message to me in my senior yearbook she wrote, 'You pack a mighty wallop for such a small person ... we expect great things from you. – Joanie (Franklin)' I don't know how many great things I have accomplished, but I do know without a doubt that even after all these years, my life is better because of Mrs. Franklin. She will be dearly missed."

—Amelia 'Amy' Matlack Hamarman '90

"Joan was the first person that I ever met at WT. I pestered her into interviewing me for a science teaching position in 1996. Every time I came to Pittsburgh from the U.K. I would request a meeting, which she always took, just to ask if there would be any positions open when I moved to the states in 1997. She was a kind and visionary leader who gave me the chance to work at WT as Physics Teacher and Science Department Chair. Unfortunately, her last day as Director of Upper School was the day before I started at WT, and I never had the chance to work with her. I know she was loved by faculty and students alike and will be missed by many."

—Mick Gee, Director of Upper School, 1997 – 2012

Tributes to Dr. Hershey:

"Please accept my deepest condolences on the passing of the best (ninth grade) English Teacher ever. As I'm sure many others of us will agree, Dr. Hershey, as she was called in those days, was always approachable and cool without ever trying or thinking about cool. I've adored Dr. Hershey all these years, I have thought often of things we learned from her." —Christine Larson '71

"I am very sorry to learn of Sue Hershey's passing. I first met Sue when she became my riding instructor, one of the most talented instructors I had. Imagine my surprise the following September when I was assigned to her English class during her first year at WT. Sue was an even greater English Teacher who gave challenging assignments and always provided insightful comments. In addition, she was always available for any student who needed help, either with schoolwork or something more personal. I am so thankful to have benefited from her wisdom and I will never forget her."

—Joan MacGregor '71

"Dr. Hershey was my History Teacher in seventh grade, my first year at WT. Initially, I was somewhat afraid of her because she was demanding. However, she taught me how to efficiently take notes. That ended up being a lifelong gift. I stopped being afraid and I worked to excel in her class. I will always be grateful to her."

—Pamela Schaper Cabalka '72



(Back Row, L-R) Honorary Alumna Gaylen Westfall, Sue Hershey, Joan Franklin; (Seated) Former Head of School and Honorary Alumna Judith 'Judy' Chamberlain

"I was very saddened to hear about the passing of Dr. Sue Hershey. She was my College Counselor. Furthermore, I gained such a positive experience having her as my Psychology Teacher during my senior year at WT. In fact, she made me so enthralled with the subject that I became a psych major in college. She was always there when we needed her to be. I always felt comfortable talking to her in her office and answering any questions I had about my future life choices. She was always honest while never judging what you had to say. Dr. Hershey was both a great educator and wonderful human being!"

—Elizabeth Wollman '87

"The news of Dr. Hershey's passing so soon after Mrs. Franklin is devastating. I have struggled with words to describe the strength, resolve, and steadfastness with which Dr. Hershey guided us in all the hats she wore. Her psychology class was a master class in how to lead immersive, thought provoking discussions that drew out students with sometimes vastly different perspectives, ideas, feelings, etc. She taught us how to let down our guard and really listen and really consider another's point of view. We were all so lucky beyond words to have had both Dr. Hershey and Mrs. Franklin. Both were hands-down two of the best educators I ever had in all my nearly 25 years as a student in various capacities. She will be dearly missed. Thank you, Dr. Hershey."

—Amelia 'Amy' Matlack Hamarman '90

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.

Charlotte Rush Brown '38
Mary Louise Richardson Brock '41
Ruth Speidel Dalzell-McMillan '42
Suzanne Fink Scott '43
Adrienne Pigossi Shryock '43
Margery Succop McCarthy '45
Ellen Falk Hirsch '46
Nancy Noah Succop '46
Jean Jacob Delynn '49
Frances Hollearn Gleim '51
Elizabeth Forstall Keen '55
Linda Crandall Smith '58
Polly Brandt Lechner '59
Alisoun Kuhn '61

Carole Kettering Pringle '62
Mary Hamilton Burroughs '65
Marguerite 'Molly' Singley '73
Gretchen Becker Wegler '74
Daniel Plaut '18
Natalie Hulme Curry, former Trustee
Joan Helen Bloomquist Franklin, former employee
Dr. Susanne 'Sue' W. Hershey, former employee
Kenneth 'Ken' L. Lovasik, former employee
Robert 'Bob' T. Scully, Jr., former Trustee

Sam Kuzmishin (L) and his father, John (R)



INSPIRED TO HELP

WT Students Create Solutions for those
Impacted by the Pandemic



Inspired to help others impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, two Upper School students have put into practice WT's credo to "Think also of the comfort and the rights of others."

Sophomore Sam Kuzmishin works with his father to repair vehicles for those in need through the non-profit corporation Sam founded, Drive On (driveon412.com). "Without reliable transportation, many people struggle with holding a steady job or simply being able to perform daily tasks. I founded Drive On in order to address this need," notes Sam.

Drive On obtains cars from recognized charitable organizations, repairs them, and returns them. The cars are then given or sold (at a discounted price) by the charitable organization to an individual or family in need. Earlier this year, Sam and his father worked with City Mission on their first charitable repair, a 2006 Buick Rainier.

Likewise, Junior Sasha Likhachev recognized that remote learning, which was the only option during the pandemic for so many of her neighbors, was not meeting the needs of all students. She took her experience tutoring children in her Squirrel Hill neighborhood and created Teens4Tutors (teens4tutors.com), a web platform created as part of Entrepreneurship and Product Design, an Upper School computer science course.

Teens4Tutors employs high school students to serve as tutors. Sasha screens applicants through conversations with parents, teachers, and school administrators. Her goal is to help both eager students and busy parents. Her work was recently celebrated on *Kidsburgh*, an online resource focusing on the people and ideas making Pittsburgh a better place to raise kids.



THISTLETALK GOES DIGITAL

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REUNION 2021

OCTOBER 14-16

Save the Date

All classes are invited to join us on campus or virtually for Reunion 2021. Class years ending in 6's and 1's have their own Class Parties, too. Join the planning for your class by contacting Amiena Mahsoob at mahsooba@winchesterthurston.org or calling 412-578-7511.

winchesterthurston.org/reunion