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Taft Bulletin / WINTER 2017
AT THE TABLE: ON STRIVING FOR ROBUST AND RESPECTFUL DEBATE

It will not surprise you that this fall, with its unprecedented presidential election, we had a challenging and productive campus dialogue. We work very hard each year to create a community with a really diverse student body, with the kind of difference of perspective and experience you would expect with 600 bright students from all over the nation and the world. That kind of community will inevitably have robust debate, disagreement, and discussion, and those things are the very foundation of a good education and a necessary rehearsal for democratic citizenship. After all, each day in the classroom is about exploring contesting views—and that exercise inevitably, and healthily, spilled into the campus dialogue about the issues that dominated the presidential campaign. So, there was a lot of discussion this fall.

But saying that the conversation is happening does not mean that it is an easy one to have. After all, there were plenty of American families who found themselves arguing emotionally over the Thanksgiving table. If you think of the Taft campus as a really big family at a really big table, you can easily imagine how much more challenging this can be. And so we, too, as a school, had to work really hard to find ways to disagree productively, listen respectfully, and speak thoughtfully. But if you believe in the basic goodness and intelligence of students, faculty, and staff, and if you believe as well that a strong institution is one with the capacity to hold really diverse views together, then good things can happen.

I found a couple of books helpful. Sharon Crowley, an Arizona State University English professor, argues in Toward a Civil Discourse that the ancient art of rhetoric, the skill of finding means of persuasion, can serve us well as we work to manage competing claims in the civic sphere. Properly exercised, rhetoric, Crowley writes, “allows those who are familiar with its concepts and vocabulary to intervene fruitfully in disputes and disagreements.” Positions are changed, ideas are modified, and often agreement is uncovered. Debate conducted in this way is productive. To engage in a rhetorical discussion, Crowley says, obligates you to very hard work, to be willing to submit your claims to inquiry and dispute, to respect and encounter opposition, and perhaps to risk having your mind changed. These are all good lessons for Taft students. Here’s how she puts it: “[Rhetorical] argument…requires an advocate to recognize that an opponent has a position on the issue at hand…. [and] it requires willingness to be addressed by another.” It’s good counsel for a school.

The second book was Difficult Conversations by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen. They write: “We…as a school, had to work really hard to find ways to disagree productively, listen respectfully, and speak thoughtfully.”
Congratulations to Roger Stacey, former Taft faculty member (English), who, along with several others, correctly guessed that the bronze sculpture is in an alcove opposite the Mark W. Potter Gallery. No, the sculptor is not Remington, as some thought—it is by Joy Clinton Shepherd in 1928 and was donated by the Fownes family.

"We are still gathered together, trying to make intellectual elbow room for everyone, debate fiercely and respectfully, and listen seriously and empathically."

Willy MacMullen '78

We stumbled some, experienced strong emotions, learned a lot. It was not easy, and we were not “perfect,” whatever that means. After all, on a campus like ours, this hard work never ends. But we might close with that metaphor of the table, and it’s one we have used all year. Horace Taft opened the school with a handful of students sitting together at a dining room table in Pelham Manor in 1890, and at our most essential level, not much has changed. We are still teachers and students, if more in number, and more diverse and inclusive, but we are still gathered together, trying to make intellectual elbow room for everyone, debate fiercely and respectfully, and listen seriously and empathically.

Willy MacMullen '78

Taft TRIVIA

Who donated this fine beast to Taft, and where is it located?
Send your guess to the editor (lindabeyus@taftschool.org).
The winner, whose name will be randomly chosen, will win a surprise Taft gift.

CORRECTION

In our fall issue’s Alumni Spotlight article “Rocket Woman,” on pages 10–11, we neglected to include the byline of Julie Reiff, former editor of this magazine.
Building Energy’s Future

FOR MICHAEL KLEIN ’10, a typical day at the office is anything but typical. One day he might be joined by a dozen executives in a corporate boardroom, while the next will find him in cowboy boots, jeans, and a T-shirt working on a job site in the Arizona desert. The diversity of Klein’s role as a project engineer for AMEC Foster Wheeler, an international engineering and project management firm specializing in energy and infrastructure, keeps him excited about being a civil engineer.

For the past two years, Klein has helped manage multiple projects aimed at producing energy for local communities using natural, renewable resources—including the Mesquite Solar complex in Tonopah, Arizona, and the Black Oak Getty wind farm in central Minnesota. Both facilities are projected to have major impacts on energy production in their local areas. The 39 turbines at Black Oak Getty will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 213,000 tons annually, and the Mesquite facility expects to generate enough power to run a city the size of Fresno, California.

A childhood fascination with hydroelectric power introduced him to the world of green energy. “I know this is going to sound super nerdy,” he laughs, “but I always thought that dams were the coolest thing. We build these massive structures to retain a massive amount of water, and then that water is forced through a turbine, which basically looks like a jet engine on the inside, and create this massive amount of energy.”

As a freshman at Southern Methodist University, Klein had another career path in mind. “When I first went into school, engineering was not what I wanted to go into,” Klein says. “I was more interested in business or management.” But in the back of his mind, he couldn’t shake his early fascination with building. “My father has been a licensed civil engineer for basically his entire life, so I grew up knowing the benefits of engineering,” he adds.

Ultimately, though, he discovered that a career in civil engineering could combine these interests. “I have always been more interested in the construction side of the industry instead of the pure engineering, because I always enjoyed the management side of construction,” he says.

For Klein, each day working with green energy is like solving another exciting puzzle. As he explains, he and his colleagues are constantly discovering better ways to power communities. “We have the technology, and we know how to apply it, but on our end it’s all about how to apply technology in the best way that gets the most efficient product for not only our clients, but also for the general public and for these local communities.”

Over the next few decades, Klein expects advances in green technology will become essential to fulfilling the world’s great energy needs. “It’s good to invest in these technologies now,” he notes, “because in 30 years, a mixture of solar, wind, geothermal, hydroelectric, nuclear, and natural gas will be needed to meet our future energy demands and security needs. The capital and operation costs for renewable projects are now on par with equivalent-sized traditional power sources.”

But Klein is dedicated to seeing green energy succeed despite the years of hard work ahead. He credits one particularly impactful experience at Taft for instilling him with this exceptional drive. As he remembers, “There was one day that we were in precalculus, and no one was really paying attention. Mr. Richards just raised his voice and said, ‘You guys have to pay attention to what you’re learning. You have to be passionate about what you’re doing.’ He then launched into this 10-minute talk about caring and being passionate about what you’re doing. That really stuck with me throughout the years.”

That passion continues to push him to tackle whatever challenges he may face, confident that with each innovation, he helps move dozens of communities closer to a cleaner and more sustainable energy future.

—Christopher Browner ’12

Alumni SPOTLIGHT

Alumni SPOTLIGHT
A Nose for the Business

We use a mass spectrometer during the process.” An artful operation that clearly has its scientific component, the job of perfumer requires not only a refined nose, but also years of training, including learning and being able to identify over 1,000 raw materials. Balavoine must also keep abreast of the trends in fragrance, which she points out are very connected to each culture, and vary by country. “Now woody scents are very prevalent—heavy, dark notes—as people are tired of concrete and want to escape into the woods,” she says, noting a proclivity of Americans to find comfort in their fragrances (think vanilla and butterscotch). Of the five senses, smell is a person’s strongest link to memories. Balavoine has been using her own nose as a grounding force as long as she can remember. “I would put everything to my nose. When I was four I started making potpourri from my garden. I’d also never eat anything until I smelled it first!” she recalls. With a father whose international job took the family overseas, Balavoine lived abroad for the majority of her childhood, calling Japan, London, and Saudi Arabia home, a lifestyle that regularly immersed her in a rich and exotic palatte of smells. “I discovered countries through my nose. You could call me an olfactory anthropologist,” she remarks. It was not until she traveled to the International Museum of Perfume in Grasse, France, during college that Balavoine realized she could turn her olfactory prowess and passion into a career. After a few detours, including a job with Merrill Lynch and six months in Sweden playing professional women’s ice hockey (with a potential opportunity to try out for the U.S. women’s Olympic team), she began her career as an apprentice perfumer in 1996 for V. Mane Fils in Le Bar-sur-Loup, France. Since then, her nose has taken her to Beijing, where she opened new offices Balavoine smells the narcissus flowers in Marse, France, before the petals are distilled into essential oil.

An Invisible Art

WHAT EXACTLY DOES A FILM AND television editor do? Film editor Cecily Rhett ‘83, seated, working on dates Motel, an A&E series, with director Sarah Boyd. (DAVE PETIT-WERN)

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The Treasures of Trade

These days it's common to hear people talk of living in a global age as if it were a relatively new phenomenon. In reality, asserts Karina Corrigan '88, many were experiencing such an interconnected world as early as the 16th century, and certainly by the 17th century, because of trade.

Corrigan should know. As the Peabody Essex Museum's H.A. Crosby Forbes Curator of Asian Export Art, she is charged with overseeing the world's most comprehensive collection of fine and decorative art made in Asia for export to the West. "Founded in 1799, the Peabody Essex Museum's collection is among the finest of its kind, boasting superlative works from around the globe and across time. Some of these works of art haven't moved much more than 200 yards in 200 years," she says. By exploring these cross-cultural works of art from multiple perspectives, Corrigan explains, we can tap into our own global history.

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**THE PROMETHEUS MAN**
Mulholland Books
Scott Reardon ’98

When several bodies are found in Paris, CIA agent Tom Blake hurries his way onto a major case: tracking a man with enhanced abilities, the test subject of a secret government program. There’s just one problem: the man using Agent Blake’s identity is not Agent Blake. He’s Tom Reese, a man without a family or a home.

Reese is searching for his brother’s killer. He stole Agent Blake’s identity two months ago and bluffed his way onto the team investigating his only lead. But his time as a CIA agent is accelerating toward its expiration date. Soon the CIA will find out that Agent Blake is in two places at once, and the augmented man will come looking for him.

And soon both will discover that Tom Reese carries a secret even he doesn’t know about: He is the last test subject of Project Prometheus.

Scott Reardon is a graduate of Georgetown University and Northwestern Law, and currently works at a venture capital firm in Los Angeles. This is his first novel.

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**UNDERSTANDING WORLD WAR 2 COMBAT INFANTRYMEN IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER**
Merriman Press
Peter Karsten ’56

Most scholarship on the American role in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) during World War II has addressed the large issues of strategy, campaign outcomes, command leadership, and logistical support. Other, generally more recent research has provided insights into the experiences of the individual combatants.

In this publication Peter Karsten offers a better grasp of these latter efforts, using evidence that has been underutilized. What he asks in this unique work is for us to better grasp these latter efforts, using evidence that has been underutilized.

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**DEATH ON WINDMILL WAY**
A HAMPTONS MURDER MYSTERY

Dunemere Books
Carrie Doyle ’90

The Hamptons may be a summer playground for the rich and famous, but for the other nine months of the year it is a small town with small-town problems. The scenic stretch along Long Island’s East End is renowned for beautiful beaches, quaint villages, spectacular houses—and murder, in Carrie Doyle’s new series.

Lead character Antonia Bingham, a divorced gourmand and proprietor of Made by Survivors, an international nonprofit that uplifts victims from sex trafficking and extreme abuse. She and her family divide their time between West Hartford, Connecticut, and Park City, Utah. Learn more at www.abbyfabiash.com.

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**I LIKED MY LIFE**
St. Martin’s Press
Abby Fabiash ‘98

Abby Fabiash’s debut novel is a poignant look at the sacrifices of motherhood and the nuances of mourning between a hormonal teen and a powerful alpha male father. I Liked My Life unfurls the story of the Starlings, a teen and a powerful alpha male father.

What he asks in this unique work is to make things right for her family, Brady, as he struggles to balance his high-powered career with the demands of single fatherhood, and Evi, as grief thrusts her into adulthood and she grapples to find her identity without her mother. The result is an intimate portrait of a father and daughter trying to redefine their understanding of family and a striking depiction of the power of unconditional love.

Abby Fabiash is a human rights advocate and the director of the board for Made by Survivors, an international nonprofit that splits victims from sex trafficking and extreme abuse. She and her family divide their time between West Hartford, Connecticut, and Park City, Utah. Learn more at www.abbyfabiash.com.
Tackling Global Problems

The Road to Iowa Begins in Philly

His path to the Borlaug Symposium started more than a year earlier, when he first heard about the Ideas for Action 14–18 competition, sponsored by the World Bank and the Zicklin Center for Business Ethics Research at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School. The competition invited teams of two to five students to submit solutions to global problems.

Zach Mariani ’18 saw that Ben had liked a Facebook post about the Ideas for Action competition; interest piqued, the two reached out to Lauren Pelosi ’18, a friend and able wordsmith.

“When Zach’s article in finance and credit markets and Lauren’s skill as a writer, I knew we had the potential to develop and present a very good proposal,” says Ben. And they did. The team drafted a proposal for a pilot program blending modern microfinance, traditional agriculture techniques, and ongoing education to optimize the productivity of small-scale farmers in Ethiopia. The problem in Ethiopia is staggering, but not unusual in developing nations: Approximately 80 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture, yet 31 million Ethiopians suffer from malnutrition and food insecurity.

“A large number of Ethiopians engage in subsistence farming and livestock production,” Ben explains, “but they lack the education and monetary resources they need to yield harvests of more than six to nine months worth of food for themselves and their families. There is not enough to get them through the year, let alone excess to sell in markets. They have no way to generate income that could be reinvested in their farms, so the cycle continues.”

Zach adds, “We chose to center the project in Ethiopia primarily because of the stability of the Ethiopian Birr deflation (in comparison to the dollar), and the steady GDP and population growth. I brainstormed ideas on how to reliably get capital into our model, Ben was able to help come up with ideas on how to put the money to good use, and Lauren was able to help us merge the two in writing.”

The model, which proposes improving agricultural productivity by bringing small-scale irrigation and water-lifting devices to the region, relies on the coordination and cooperation of government agencies in Ethiopia, and the initial financial backing of philanthropic organizations. Ben, Zach, and Lauren met weekly over the course of four to five months, constantly researching, refining, and reassessing their proposal.

“As is true with most good ideas, the key was in presentation,” says Lauren. “My role on the team was mainly to help articulate our complicated economic ideas. In communicating the modifications of standing economic concepts that we were proposing, and with so many parts to our long-term plan, it was important to write well and concisely. We needed to mix precision with succinctness and completeness with clarity.”

The team was named one of six finalists in the inaugural Ideas for Action 14–18 competition. All of the finalists saw their papers published online by Wharton, with an abstract published in documentation related to the annual proceedings of the World Bank.

They also traveled to Penn, where they presented their proposals to a panel of senior fellows and professors at Wharton, as well as World Bank dignitaries. “When Ben and Zach invited me to help them develop an essay dealing with the economics behind sustainable farming in Ethiopia, I was initially apprehensive,” Lauren says. “I considered myself to be more of a writer than a businesswoman; to me, economics and humanities were distinct schools of thought. Ideas for Action and our trip to Wharton taught me that interests in the two are not mutually exclusive—they’re in fact inextricable. A good plan for global change requires an empathetic understanding of others’ conditions. It requires cooperation. When an idea is being put to action, it requires clear and persuasive argumentation.”

Borlaug Bound

Ben, Zach, and Lauren have continued to work on their proposal, building on suggestions from the panel that heard their presentation at Penn. They were also invited to judge next year’s competition. But Ben felt compelled to continue exploring the common question raised throughout the team’s Ideas for Action research: How can countries continue sustainable development and still decrease their dependence on foreign aid? He initiated a new project, this time studying Rwanda. It was that research that earned Ben an invitation to the World Food Prize event in Iowa.
Exponential Success

TAFT’S MATH AND SCIENCE

scholars are making their mark throughout New England in a series of high-level competitions, including the annual Math Bash, the prestigious Harvard-MIT Math Tournament (HMMT), and the Yale Physics Olympiad.

Competing as the Galois Group, Taft’s math team took on competitors from Choate, Hotchkiss, and Kent at this year’s Math Bash. Taft fielded four, four-person teams, two at the advanced level and two intermediate squads. The event pits top math students against each other and the clock, and features individual and group events. Sonny An ’17, Daniel Yi ’18, Yejin Kim ’18, and Portia Wang ’18 were awarded the bronze medal at the Yale Physics Olympiad in October.

Stepping Into the Conversation

ALL AMERICAN BOYS authors Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely visited Taft in October for Morning Meeting and Q&A sessions around campus.

Taft’s all-school summer reading selection, All American Boys is the story of perspective—of how bias and experience both inform and misinform. Reynolds, who is black, penned the voice of Rashad, a black teen falsely accused of shoplifting. Kiely, who is white, gives voice to Quinn, the white teen who witnessed the event and the violence that followed. And in Bingham Auditorium, as they did in the book, Reynolds and Kiely told their stories, from their perspectives, informed by their experiences.

“It’s important for us to frame it for you so that you use these two perspectives that fueled the book,” said Kiely. “Our daily lives are part of a bigger story, and we can’t forget that we all have a role to play in that bigger story... We are hoping that by reading a book like this you choose to step into that story, into the conversation. That you will choose to not look away. That you will choose to say, ‘How do I listen in a way that I haven’t listened before?’ We can’t learn to love each other if we haven’t learned to listen first. We can’t learn to respect each other if we haven’t learned to listen first. All we are asking is that people just find the courage to listen.”

Students engaged in spirited conversation with authors Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely over lunch at Taft.

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Taft Joins Area Colleges in Campus Sustainability Week Initiative

THE TAFT COMMUNITY took part in a weeklong initiative designed to both raise awareness about environmental issues and actively engage in sustainability-driven activities.

“Our program was both modeled after and coincided with a statewide higher education collaboration,” explains Taft's Director of Environmental Stewardship Carly Borken. “Colleges and universities across Connecticut hosted events throughout the week that not only stimulated conversation but also built connections and inspired action. It is a concept and opportunity that lent itself well to our own community and to Taft's commitment to sustainability.”

At the college level, the event is coordinated by the Connecticut Alliance for Campus Sustainability. At Taft, Borken worked closely with student EcoMons to plan a week that combined fun with learning, while shining a light on campus sustainability. The program included a Morning Meeting and conversations with Elizabeth Kolbert, author of a Taft summer reading selection, The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History; a debate around the question, “Can capitalism and the climate ever be friends?”; a silent dance; an energy audit competition; and movie screenings.

Teams of students also sent original fashion made from trash and other natural materials down the Bingham “runway” during Taft’s first “Trashion Show.” “It was an opportunity for a little fun and a lot of creativity. It allowed us to celebrate art and individuality while embracing thoughtful recycling and sustainability,” Borken says.

At the Intersection of Art and Science

TAFT STUDENTS ARE COMBINING creativity and design with mathemat- ics and science to produce animated imagery known as generative art. The algorithmic animations were the first project Michael Scaramuzzino’s stu- dents tackled in his yearlong Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science course. “This is truly an intro-level AP course,” explains Scaramuzzino. “Most students arrive with little or no prior coding expe- rience. The goal is for them to be fluent in Java by the end of the school year.”

Generative art is built using complex computer algorithms—well-defined processes and procedures structured for problem solving. The art visually represents the optimization of those processes in the form of music, graphics, or design elements. For Scaramuzzino’s students, it is a good place to begin learning about code.

“The images the students used in their animations came from a pre-built library,” says Scaramuzzino. “This library allowed them to see a high-level view of object-ori-ented programming. Now we are pulling back the veil so students can see the level of complexity that was occurring behind the scenes as well as start to understand how this computer graphics library was developed. The next project requires stu- dents to use that knowledge to program several classes that will act as blueprints for building their own virtual objects.”

Raya Petrova ’17 came into the course with no real experience in computer sci- ence. At home in Bulgaria, she briefly studied Pascal, a somewhat outdated programming language. Raya’s interest in art, combined with a fascination with computer animation work being done by both Pixar and Dreamworks Studios, led her to Scaramuzzino’s classroom.

“My idea for the animation was to copy the motion of ripples in water. I wanted to play with the structure, and manipulate variables to replicate the motion,” explains Petrova. “I was able to do so by manipulating oscillation in the ’y’ direction, and in the ’x’ direction.”

The end result of Petrova’s work is an animation featuring fish moving back and forth in a dappled and variegated sea. Petrova is now applying her under- standing of object variables to creating the hierarchical information sets that will drive code representing her family.

“There are different variables for each ‘class,’” says Petrova, “family, grandparents, parents, and siblings. Some inherent attributes, like age and gender, will trickle down through the class levels. Other variables will be class-specific, and will be added using different methods and aspects of code.”

And although computer science is new to Petrova, she plans to continue her stud- ies when she moves on to college next year. “That I am creating a new world by just typing letters and numbers is amazing,” says Petrova. “It is just incredible.”
Living Our Motto: THE ULTIMATE TAFT TRADITION

MEMBERS OF THE TAFT COMMUNITY, nearly 700 strong, fanned out across greater Watertown for the 22nd consecutive year in a tradition of service and selflessness that dates back to 1995 and embraces our 125-year old school motto.

“This year we wanted students to think not only about the idea of service but also about the idea of community,” says French teacher Sarah Gray, who coordinated the October 24 event. “We share our time and talents because we value both the community that surrounds us and our relationships with its members.”

Celebrating the Life of the Mind
CUM LAUDE INDUCTIONS

“THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS we do here in a given week,” Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78 recently told the Taft community. “We play sports, put on plays and concerts, serve in the local community, and take part in clubs. But obviously we are first and foremost a school. And at the center of student life, and where we devote the majority of our hours and energy, is our academic classes and the life of the mind. Today is the day we celebrate that.”

Cum Laude Society induction honors the “highest levels of scholarship on campus,” noted MacMullen. “It is reflective of Taft’s robust and vibrant academic life.” Taft’s newest Cum Laude Society members, all seniors, are: Seung Hwan (Sonny) An, Karalyn Rose Baird, Riley Kathleen Bragg, Lauren Grace Fadiman, Eugenie Reid Greeff, Gabriela Nicole Gura, Joseph Han, Zemima Hossain, Zygmantas Jievaltas, Sophie Valentine Kamhi, Marisa Nicole Mission, Juste Marija Simanaukaite, Luke Austin Sommer, Sydney Trevenen, and Cristofer Zillo.
Fall Dance Concert

Students in Sarah Surber’s fall semester dance programs performed in a culminating fall concert in December.
Shrek

WHAT BEGAN AS A LONELY TALE OF LIFE in an ogre’s swamp blossoms into love story for the ages featuring a colorful cast of characters in our fall production of Shrek the Musical.
Morning Meetings

TAFT WELCOMED RENOWNED FACES, FAMILIAR FACES, AND FASCINATING FACES TO MORNING MEETING DURING THE FALL TERM, INCLUDING:

- Kathryn Aalto, landscape designer, historian, lecturer, and New York Times bestselling author of *The Natural World of Winnie-the-Pooh: A Walk Through the Forest that Inspired the Hundred Acre Wood.*
- Bill McKibben, a well-known and highly regarded environmentalist, author, and journalist who has written extensively on the impact of global warming, was this year’s Paley Lecturer.
- A prison reform panel made up of, from left, Waterbury Mayor Neil O’Leary; George Camp ’56, Connecticut co-executive director of the Association of State Correctional Administrators and president of the Criminal Justice Institute; and Connecticut Department of Corrections Commissioner Scott Semple.
- Ibram Kendi, author and assistant professor of African-American history at the University of Florida.

Beloved former Taft School teacher and navy fighter pilot Colin Farrar.

To see these and other Morning Meeting presentations, visit our Vimeo channel at https://vimeo.com/taftschool
The World’s Game Brings a World to Taft

THE BOYS’ VARSITY SOCCER TEAM had an impressive season with an overall record of 17–2. They were Founders League Champions, New England semifinalists, and the Western New England Prep School Soccer Association (WNEPSSA) Class A runner-up. Having one of the most successful soccer records was a major accomplishment, but this season it was more about the team itself—about an internationally rich team where players brought not only their soccer skills to the field, but also various parts of their cultures and different playing styles, all of which helped make the team stronger.

The team represented six countries, including Zimbabwe, Ghana, Spain, Jamaica, Canada, and the U.S. “Every day at practice you would hear multiple languages on the field,” Head Coach Ozzie Parente says. “I would just sit back in awe. We have two boys from Zimbabwe who are speaking to each other in Ndebele. There are two boys from Spain, and our assistant coach, Phillip Koshi, teaches Spanish, so they’re speaking in Spanish. We have a boy from Montreal, and our goalkeeper spent some time in France, so they are speaking French together.”

The players embraced each other’s unique qualities, which translated into success on the field and genuine friendships off the field. For example, the three teammates from Africa were invited to spend Thanksgiving at a different player’s house. One went to New Jersey, one went to New York City, and one went to Maine. The way the players cared for each other was also evident in smaller gestures, like when the team got together for Sammed Bawa’s birthday. He’s from Ghana and hadn’t been home or spoken to his parents since arriving at Taft, so the team surprised him with a cake and sang Happy Birthday.

“Outside observers see this amazingly talented product on the field, but the relationships within the team are really strong and special. That’s what I’ll remember in addition to the performances on the field,” says Parente.

While part of the success this past season is attributed to individual players blending their talents to form an inclusive and powerful team, another contributing factor was the senior leadership. In addition to co-captains Michael Hennessey and Matteo Mangiardi, there were 13 other seniors who were ready to step up. They were ambitious about what they wanted to accomplish, and it paid off.

For the first time since 2009, the boys’ varsity soccer team beat Hotchkiss. They won against Loomis 2–1 (the game that would secure the Founders League Championship) by scoring two goals in the last five minutes. And the Rhinos came from behind to defeat Salisbury, Kent, and Deerfield.

The seniors set the bar high and proved to be good role models in the hallways as well.

“I’m really proud of the way the team conducts themselves,” notes Parente. “I think they make great contributions to the school. They behave humbly. They care about Taft and want to be part of the school in other ways. They are really close-knit without being exclusive.”

The 23 boys who laced up their cleats this past fall were hardworking and ready to compete. They embraced each other, challenged themselves, and wanted to win. With three of the four top goal scorers coming back, Parente is sure the younger players are eager to carry that on.

—Hillary Dooley
Boys’ Soccer 17–2
FOUNDERS LEAGUE CHAMPIONS
NEW ENGLAND CLASS A
SEMFINALISTS

In what was one of the most successful seasons in team history, Taft went undefeated in and dominated the Founders League (8–0), and reached the New England Semifinals before falling 1–0 to the eventual champion, Berkshire. Taft began the season with an eight-game winning streak, highlighted by convincing victories over Avon Old Farms (6–1), Deerfield (5–1), and Andover (3–1). After Taft’s lone regular-season loss to Berkshire, the Big Red closed out the regular season with another eight-game winning streak. In the process, Taft earned comeback victories over Salisbury and Kent, both by a score of 2–1. Taft then shut out Choate 3–0 on the road to keep its undefeated Founders League record intact before clinching the championship with a 2–1 road victory over Loomis. After trailing for 85 minutes at Loomis, Taft scored twice in the final five minutes to win the title. Taft finished the regular season with a 5–0 shutout of rival Hotchkiss and then cruised to a 6–1 home victory over Loomis in the New England quarterfinals. The offense on this team was lethal, tallying 75 goals in 19 games, led by Matteo Mangiardì ’17 (21 goals, 6 assists), Mthabis Tshuma ’18 (17 goals, 8 assists), Marvin Shanda ’19 (12 goals, 6 assists), and Carter Voley ’18 (5 goals, 6 assists). Postgraduates Beau Bradley ’17 (4 goals, 1 assist) and Michael Candelori ’17 (2 goals, 13 assists) were important additions to the team, while Miguel Bidneo ’17 and A.J. Barre ’17 patrolled the midfield for the Rhinos. Defensively, Taft got outstanding contributions from Michael Hennessey ’17 and John Nugent ’17, and goalkeepers Eric Sodero ’17 (11 wins) and Jacques Pellet ’17 (6 wins) were excellent on the season.

Girls’ Soccer 14–3–1
NEW ENGLAND CLASS A
QUARTERFINALS

With a strong group of returners and leadership from co-captains Sam Manfreda ’17 and Eliza Denious ’17, Taft powered through the season to post a 14–2–1 record and earn the No. 4 seed in the Class A New England Tournament along with the program’s first home game in the playoffs in over 15 years. The Rhinos were strong offensively and defensively, scoring 54 goals while allowing just 14 goals. Seung Kim ’17 (10 goals, 4 assists, WYNNEPSA All-Star, CT All-State Prep Team), Paisley Eagan ’18 (15g, 5a, New England All-Star, CT All-State Prep Team), and Emilie Adams ’19 (9g, 6a, WYNNEPSA All-Star) had breakout seasons on the offensive end. The defense, led by Taylor Jacobs ’18, Juliana Yamin ’18, Mary Alice Ewing ’18, and goalkeeper Katie Pachnik ’18, posted seven shutouts, including a stretch of four consecutive wins to end the regular season. Grace Adams ’17 and Kristin Manfreda ’18 controlled the center of the field for Taft, while four-year team members Riley Bragg ’17 and Kyla Thomas ’17 both earned All-Founders League distinctions. The team played their best soccer down the stretch, going 8–0–0 in the final eight games of the season with 30 goals for and just 2 against. That stretch included wins against strong teams from Williston (4–0), Kent (5–1), and Hotchkiss (2–0). Taft would eventually fall in the first round of the tournament to Nobles, the team they defeated in the first round last year.

Taft Volleyball 16–4
NEW ENGLAND CLASS A
NEPSAC FINALIST

In the past 16 years, Taft volleyball has gone to the New England Tournament 13 times, with four trips to the championship finals. This year, it was No. 1-ranked Choate vs. No. 2-ranked Taft in the finals. Both teams were evenly matched all season long with identical 16–3 records and split head-to-head contests. In the penultimate regular-season match, Taft found itself down 0–2 before rallying for a dramatic 3–2 win at home, but that pattern was not to be repeated in the final, as a tired Taft team lost the title to Choate. However, the final loss did not define this team that brought the school together, displaying so much school spirit in Cruikshank Gym, especially during the night game vs. Convent of the Sacred Heart, a raucous 3–2 victory. In early September, the Rhinos captured back-to-back victories over Andover (3–0) and Andover (4–0) as they defeated in the first round last year.

For more on the fall season, please visit www.taftsports.com
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Boys’ Cross Country 0–7

Taft boys’ cross country went about the difficult task of rebuilding after graduating a core of its varsity runners the previous year. This season was led by co-captains Calvin Palmer ’18, the lone varsity returner, and Zygmantas Jievaitas ’17. The team had some close, hard-fought races, but was unable to squeak out a dual-meet win; however, the 2016 season was marked by individual accomplishment, pride, and perseverance, and several harriers broke into the top 30 performances by Taft runners on the home course, including Nick Mortimer ’18 (19:13), Philip Huang ’18 (19:00), Jievaitas (18:46), Nick Carolan ‘17 (18:07), Palmer (17:12, 5th), and Ben Roberts ’18 (16:30, 1st). The season was capped by a strong performance at the NEPSSTA Division I Championships at Exeter, as every varsity runner had a career or season personal record, beating out Aeon, Brunswick, Milton, and Trinity-Pawling. Roberts had a breakout first year in the sport as Founders League All-Star (8th place) and All-New England honors (12th place). Additionally, he set the home course record for a Taft athlete (16:30) and was the recipient of the John B. Small Award. Palmer and Roberts will lead next year’s team as co-captains.

Girls’ Cross Country 2–6

The season record of 2–6 does not reflect the achievements of the 2016 girls’ cross country team. Racing a tough dual-meet schedule against several non-Founders League teams, the girls faced close losses throughout the season, but ended up winning regular-season victories over Miss Porter’s and Kent before placing fourth at the Founders League Championships. The successes of the team were owed to the pack running of Hanna Murphy ’18, Juste Simanauskaite ’17, Claudia Vira ’18, and Caroline Winicki ’17, who traded places between first and fourth all season. Talented newcomers Katie Bootema ’20 and Michelle Liu ’20 added welcome depth and scored for the varsity team in each meet. Murphy and Vira were named Founders League All-Stars, due to their top finishes throughout the season, while Simanauskaite and Winicki received the Girls’ Cross Country Award for demonstrating the most dedication and enthusiasm for the team. Next year’s team will be captained by Murphy.

Field Hockey 5–9–2

There were a lot of close games for this talented team, including seven one-goal losses. The highlight of the season was one of those hard-fought losses, a last-minute 3–4 battle versus rival Greenwich Academy. Taft led 3–1 for most of the game and was the only team to score three goals on the team that went on to be the No. 1 seed in the NEPSAC tournament. Key wins came against a very strong Ethel Walker team (3–1), which was also a No. 1 seed in the NEPSAC tournament, and against then eventual D2 New England champion Canterbury (1–0). Co-captains Emma Vermylen ’17 and Katherine Qually ‘17 were central to the team’s success on and off the field, and both were chosen to be Western New England All-Stars. The team leader in goals and assists was Liv Santini ’19, while Anna Rasmussen ’17 and Nina Garfinkel ’17 were chosen to be Founders All-Stars for their hard work and dedication. A number of talented young players will return next year, including goalie Phoebe Atzin ’18 and center mid Eva Baumreimer ’19, who is the first underclassman elected captain in over a decade.

Soccer 3–5

The team bonded quickly in a great scrimmage against a talented Lawrence Academy team, leading to hopes of competing for the league title. Unfortunately, lack of execution and attention to detail led to a tight loss to Salisbury during week one and an overtime loss by one point to Williston in week two. The Rhinos rebounded by beating an undefeated Brunswick team on their home field, 29–26. It was Brunswick’s first loss on their home field since 2013. Taft then struggled through some inconsistent play to find its rhythm to win the last two games, a result of great senior and postgraduate leadership. Highlights of these two wins include defeating Berkshires at home 47–7 and coming from behind to defeat rival Hotchkiss 34–31 in the final game. Captain Alex Alipata ’17 (Black Award and All Founders League) led the team on offense and was named Connecticut Soccer Coaches Association Prep School Class I Coach of the Year.

Connecticut Award winners

John B. Small Award
(Boys’ Varsity Cross Country)
Ben Roberts ’18
Girls’ Cross Country Award
Caroline Winicki ’17
Juste Simanauskaite ’17
Volleyball Award
Karylan Baird ’17
Field Hockey Award
Katherine Qually ’17
Emma Vermylen ’17
Black Football Award
Alex Alipata ’17
Cross Football Award
Eric Holzman ’17
Livingston Carroll
Soccer Award
Michael Hemmeswyk ’17
Matteo Mangardi ’17
1976 Girls’ Soccer Award
Sam Manfreda ’17
Eliza Dennis ’17

recently retired Taft math teacher Don Padgett visited the boys’ cross country team and coaches Al Reiff, Stuart Guthrie, and Steve Palmer at the New England Cross Country Championships at Phillips Exeter Academy.
The Working Lives of Four Young Professional Musicians
By Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow ’84

Making it in the music business is a daunting task, but these four Taft alumni are carving their own paths as professional musicians and creating beautiful music that satisfies their souls.
Mia Borders couldn’t escape music growing up in New Orleans. Her mother and grandmother instilled a love of music in her through visits to the New Orleans Jazz Festival every year. Piano lessons gave her a base, though Borders says she hated piano because she wanted to play guitar like the rock stars she watched who played with their “guitars on fire.”

Borders sang in the choir in elementary and middle school, and she sang pretty much everywhere else, too, like right outside her grandmother’s bedroom while her grandmother was trying to nap. Her musical tastes ranged from Celine Dion to Aerosmith to Simon and Garfunkel, and that range has served her well since graduating from Taft. Borders sang with Taft’s female a cappella group, Hydrox, beginning in her mid year. She co-headed Hydrox her senior year with Elspeth Michaels ‘05, who created the cover art for Borders’ new album. She’s recorded nine albums and appears regularly on stages in New Orleans (including at that same New Orleans Jazz Fest she attended as a child) and around the country. Her soulful voice and blazing guitar bring a deep intensity to songs she wrote like “Mississippi Rising” and “Mama Told Me.” Her performance of Stevie Wonder’s “Superstition” at the Kennedy Center will give you goosebumps.

“Just being from New Orleans and playing at this huge international festival, Jazz Fest, and getting to bring my family and have it come full circle, that’s pretty awesome,” she says. But don’t try to label her as simply a jazz singer. “I don’t want to make it easy,” she says. “There’s a little bit of everything” in her songwriting and performing.

“I really enjoy singing,” Borders says. “I sing every day to the point that I irritate my family. Is everything a song? Yes, it is. Even if I wasn’t a professional musician, I would be singing every day.”

Performing didn’t come naturally, though. She says she had terrible anxiety when she first began performing in public.

“It got to the point that I got sick before every show,” she says. A bandmate suggested she wear sunglasses, and now she wears them every time she performs. This has the added benefit of cutting the brightness of the stage lights too, she says. (That by wearing the sunglasses she looks like a female version of Lenny Kravitz has not escaped her notice, either.)

Her most recent album, Fever Dreams, came out in September, and she says it’s a bit of a departure for her.

“I wanted to make a happier album,” she says. “We’re experimenting with different sounds, mixing electronic instruments with live instruments. My drummer and I started sending music files back and forth. I’d send him a guitar track, and he’d send me a drums track. I really enjoy it. Emotionally it’s a lot lighter. I have my muse singing on it.”
As a guitarist for the London-based band Crystal Fighters, Graham Dickson is used to playing in front of huge, enthusiastic, rhythmically swaying crowds across Europe. The band’s focus is on making music for live shows, and the group is a natural next step for fans of the Grateful Dead and Phish (which was headed by Taft’s own Trey Anastasio ‘83).

“We’ve always focused on our live shows,” Dickson says. “The live concert is putting the soul in the actual performance of the music itself.”

Growing up, Dickson was inspired by his parents, who “forced” him into piano lessons when he was still quite young. At 10 or 11 years old, he was able to start playing guitar and drums, and by his sophomore year at Taft, he started writing music. He says he found at Taft a place that nurtured his creativity, and says Taft’s music teacher T.J. Thompson was, and remains, “a huge inspiration.”

“I did an independent study on jazz appreciation with T.J.,” Dickson says, which led to Dickson performing at Morning Meetings and coffee houses and in the Jazz Band. Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78 was also a “huge supporter” of Dickson’s musical aspirations, encouraging him to perform whenever possible.

After graduation from Taft, Dickson attended Edinburgh University in Scotland, and there he met a guy who went to high school with the two musicians who became the core of Crystal Fighters, Sebastian Pringle and Gilbert Vierich. The three make up the foundation of Crystal Fighters, adding touring members when it’s time to hit the road. Other members have come and gone, including Laura Stockley, whose grandfather was a Basque from Spain. As Stockley’s grandfather aged, he began writing an opera that included the phrase “crystal fighters,” which the band adopted as their name. Stockley also got the band members interested in Basque music, leading Dickson to learn to play the txalaparta, a historic Basque wooden percussion instrument.

When the band isn’t touring, its members return to their home bases, which for Dickson is in Far Rockaway in New York City.

“We all write the music, we all write the songs,” he says. The band’s third album, Everything Is My Family, was released in September, and after touring this past fall to promote it, Dickson wants to take some time to focus on his other musical love: producing. Dickson has been finding and developing new musical talent, along with fellow Tafties. He started Axis Mundi Records with Bill Toce ’01, and Caroline Toce ’05 also works with them, along with help from Alex Biederman ’03.

“It’s been really great to be able to put together a studio,” Dickson says. “I always hope to be more behind the scenes in the music. It’s just so inspiring. To have hands interested in my input in a real honor. And I love the idea of teaching eventually. “Music has given me a lot and allowed me to achieve a certain type of lifestyle,” Dickson adds. “I like to try to give back as much as possible now.”

—Graham Dickson ’03

The live concert is putting the soul in the actual performance of the music itself.

—Graham Dickson ’03

Everything Is My Family, Crystal Fighters’ recent release.

Graham Dickson ’03, performing with Crystal Fighters at Paradiso in Amsterdam.

KEVIN SMITH

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Graham Dickson ’03, performing with Crystal Fighters at Paradiso in Amsterdam.

KEVIN SMITH
For a guy who has earned the nickname “Fuego,” you’ll expect a certain fieriness when he performs. And Freddy Gonzalez does not disappoint. His performances on the trombone are hot, spicy, and tinged with an intensity that Gonzalez himself acknowledges.

“I was in a band in the underground hip-hop scene and… I was playing these really angry solos,” he says. “One of the band leaders started calling me Freddy Fuego, and it just sort of stuck.”

Gonzalez comes from a musically talented family. “Everyone in my family plays an instrument,” he says. “My dad plays sax, my uncle plays piano, another one sings—music was always sort of around the family. There’d be a jam circle, a lot of jam sessions. It was always around.”

But Gonzalez didn’t seriously focus on the trombone until after hearing a trombone teacher play the Darth Vader theme from Star Wars.

Gonzalez laughs when he remembers thinking, “I have to learn how to do that.”

As a student at Taft, Gonzalez played in the Jazz Band under the direction of T.J. Thompson, who encouraged Gonzalez to go to the Berklee College of Music after graduation. But Gonzalez was worried he wouldn’t make a living playing music, so he went to Fordham University and studied more conventional subjects while still performing on the side. A performance in 2006 at the Blue Note in New York City changed his trajectory. “I lost myself in it,” he remembers. “Performing never felt like work.”

Gonzalez knew he needed to follow his heart so he transferred to Berklee in 2007. At first, he just studied performance, but he began to soak up the influences of all the other musicians around him—absorbing classical, hip-hop, funk, and reggae styles. After a stint at The New School, Gonzalez started teaching in New York City and leading his own band.

“I always had these songs in the oven,” he adds. “Other bands asked me for songs. People were always picking my brains for ideas.” Gonzalez started writing more songs, but was somewhat limited in his ability to get gigs.

“If I was a drummer or bass player, bands always need them. Trombone is the third horn to get called to perform. First is sax, then trumpet. Then if there’s a budget, I get called. Trombone is always an afterthought.”

Gonzalez’s creativity led him to put together his own group, the Freddy Fuego X-Tet (because the number of band members is always changing). “I had to give myself a creative outlet, writing the tunes I liked. I never felt like I fit in—I’m too jazzy for hip-hop, too hip-hop for jazz.”

He went back to Berklee, this time as a graduate student at Berklee Valencia in Spain. “I spent all my time composing,” Gonzalez says. “For a final master’s project, we had to compose for and conduct a 51-piece orchestra at Abbey Road Studios in London.”

That experience led him to his biggest break, when a representative for Alejandro Sanz, a multi-Latin Grammy-winning performer who tours throughout Latin America, came to Berklee Valencia in 2015 looking for a trombonist. Gonzalez has been on the road ever since.

“They said, Hey, do you want to go on tour with this Spanish artist?” Gonzalez recalls with a laugh. “He’s like the largest-selling artist in Latin America. I really lucked out.” Sanz has 18 Latin Grammys, the latest for a DVD that Gonzalez and band members recorded with him in Madrid.

“Touring’s been really cool,” he says. “The pros are getting to travel the world, which is something I never thought I’d do. But my sister and my girlfriend wish they saw me more!”

In his downtime, Gonzalez is working on a book of music theory. Eventually he’d like to teach and spread his love of all different genres to young musicians.

“I really love music. I can feel, music that’s telling a story, that has some meaning behind it,” he says.
Jacovino started her musical career—as so many young musicians do—learning the piano, then began playing cello and saxophone. She also picked up the trombone, playing it and the saxophone in the Taft Jazz Band. “I passed out of the piano requirement, so I took up trumpet to learn that,” she says. “I have a few trombones, a bunch of keyboards, and a few saxophones in the closet.”

After getting noticed for her playing ability, Jacovino began composing, influenced by many different genres. “In general, I love taking inspiration from classical works, she says, “taking one kernel of an idea and developing that. Taking something that’s really simple and short and concise and transforming it.” Like a child’s nursery rhyme. The simple composition of “Three Blind Mice” has a great jazz version by legendary Jazz Messenger trombonist Curtis Fuller. “I actually got to work with Fuller one on one,” Jacovino says. “He had heard my voice and asked me to write an arrangement for that for big band. It’s definitely slanted to my aesthetic.”

Now living in New York City, Jacovino goes back and forth between composing and performing. “It’s hard to make a living composing,” she says. “There’s not much of a market for it, and I’m a perfectionist, which can be overwhelming and stressful. Performing is about being in the moment. It’s not about planning ahead of time. Now I’m mostly performing.”

Jacovino says making a living as a musician wasn’t always in her plans. “I never thought I’d be in music. I was a math geek, a statistics person. I thought I’d be an actuary!”

Performing is about being in the moment. It’s not about planning ahead of time.” —Sara Jacovino ’01
For nearly 20 years, the Rockwell Visiting Artists Program has helped bring the arts to life at Taft.

by Julie Reiff

The flame is mesmerizing. It is so bright that Claudia Black’s art students wear protective goggles. They gather around the table in the large, light-filled studio on the top floor of the Arts and Humanities Wing watching visiting glass artist Sally Prasch. Two industrial tanks stand at the corner, connected to the torch. Many of the students have worked with glass already, but only through fusing in the kiln. This is their first exposure to torch work.

Prasch holds a glass tube at the point of the flame, demonstrating where the flame is hotter or cooler. The glass turns red hot. She takes a rod of colored glass in her other hand and shows the students how color is applied, the greens and blues turning...
red in turn. With the color applied, she lifts the still cool end of the tube to her mouth and they watch it expand. The trick, she tells them, is to keep it rotating so it inflates evenly.

She describes relieving strain in glass by firing it in a kiln. She talks about temperature, about the annealing point of the glass, and molecules needing to relax. At one point she asks for two volunteers. She heats a rod of glass and asks the two of them to hold it and walk away from each other quickly. As the rod becomes a thin strand in the middle, she explains how it can carry light, creating fiber-optic cables. The students make it wobble.

Prasch is unique in that her work is both artistic and technical. Trained as a scientific glassblower as well as an artist, she combines both in her work at Syracuse University, where she alters and repairs scientific glass equipment of all kinds according to a project’s unique demands, returning to her Massachusetts studio each weekend to work on her own creations.

"I don’t know when science and art became separate, because you really need both," Prasch says. "They are very similar in mind-set."

A knowledge of chemistry and physics is essential when creating glass from scratch, she adds a variety of minerals to alter the composition and color.

In her Morning Meeting presentation she gives students a virtual walk-through of the Corning Museum of Glass, covering its 3,500-year history of utilitarian and artistic uses. She also presents some of her own work.

"What I hope they take away from this," says Black, who had previously studied glassblowing with Prasch at Taft, "is the merging of disciplines, that there is science in art. Her open flame work was incredible. I loved the fact that it was so hands-on and that you could just totally change the shape by blowing in it. It was pretty nervous, but she was just totally in control the whole time."

Ramos ’18. "The whole idea of an artist working with some of the students is really nice, and actually having that first experience of glassblowing was super cool. It gave me more ideas of what to do with glass as a medium, and then learning the logistics of it."

Dean Pope ’17 agrees. "It was pretty awesome. She’s probably the most competent artist I’ve seen in a while. She was really good at helping us all with technique. Her open flame work was incredible. I loved the fact that it was so hands-on and that you could just totally change the shape by blowing in it."

Prasch is in turn. With the color applied, she lifts the still cool end of the tube to her mouth and they watch it expand. The trick, she tells them, is to keep it rotating so it inflates evenly.

How does this unique experience, with artists like Prasch, work at Taft? The Rockwell Visiting Artists Program was created in 1997 and often brings two or three artists to campus each year. Visiting artists frequently work directly with students, give a talk at Morning Meeting, or have an exhibit in the gallery. As of late fall, in addition to Prasch, the school welcomed landscape and wildlife photographer Andy Giordano as a visiting artist.

His show, Going Home, was exhibited in the Mark W. Potter Gallery, and he discussed his work with photography students, in addition to giving a Morning Meeting talk.

"The students always come up to the artist after the Morning Meeting talk and want to express their excitement about the work," says art teacher and Potter Gallery Director Leneta Chickaoua. "They’re enthusiastic about the places these artists have been around the world, where they’ve studied. When they talk in the gallery, the artists have been very generous about how and why they make certain decisions when working on a piece, and that’s exactly what I’m looking for when I invite an artist—those who can make great art, but also those who can talk about the process."
She likes to tell artists who are coming to visit, “Don’t worry about being too adult about it. These kids are smart. They get it, and they don’t like being talked down to!”

When artist Mark Lewis was in residence for a week in 2014, he gave Chickadaunce’s advanced and A.P. art students a critique on their work as well. “He’s a teacher, and he responded so well to them. In a discussion where the ideas were just whirling around the room, he would take this idea and that one and tie them up in a neat bow, and you’d ask yourself, ‘How’d he do that?’”

For Nicole Jarck ’15, the visiting artists allowed her to experience a variety of artwork without leaving campus. “I really loved Mark Lewis’s work. I remember his Morning Meeting presentation and how much I admired his attention to detail, which led to the unique nature of each of his pieces,” she says. Each gallery show offered a new perspective and enriched my education in the visual arts. I was able to broaden my understanding of much more than the aesthetic qualities of artwork.

From the artists and their work, I was inspired to try new techniques in both my artwork and in my daily life. In the serene setting of the Potter Gallery, I was afforded space and time to think more deeply, pause, and reflect on and organize my thoughts.”

Artist Dawn Clements spent part of her residency sketching an enormous mural of a girls’ dorm room while living there temporarily, and exhibited the drawings in the Potter Gallery. “It was interesting to see how someone from outside of the school interprets the unique Taft life in a creative way,” says Jasmine Oh ’11, who was studying with Chickadaunce at the time. “I was also inspired by the pure technique of the artist. For Ms. Chic’s class, I often drew my own room or objects in the art studio to practice capturing the form, light, and perspective. It was nice to see how other people render the same kinds of objects in a different way.”

“Some visiting artists are invited because someone in the Taft arts faculty has worked with them before, others by reputation, and a few are alumni artists—like Marc Leuthold ’80. In 2008, Leuthold closed the gallery for four days in preparation for his display, covering the floor in thick watercolor paper and drawing on it in black and brown ink. He then filled the gallery with his wheel sculptures, made of a variety of materials, including bronze, porcelain, and glass.”

“During that week, he also ran workshops in sculpture, ceramics, and studio art classes. “Some of the younger students were really shy and self-conscious,” says Leuthold, “and that brought me right back to my days as a student. Others were very confident and really enjoyed interacting with me. I was struck by how friendly and charming they were.”

“With the arts program at Taft, you could be just as relaxed or as serious as you wanted to be,” says Leuthold. “It was a great way to fill in the gaps and get a sense of what the students were interested in.”

“Artists are invited from many different backgrounds and from around the world, so it’s a great way to expose students to a variety of perspectives and techniques,” says Chickadaunce. “It’s also a great way to inspire them to pursue their own passions.”
the exhibition. Seeing Taft through their eyes made me all the more grateful for the privileges that my family and Taft gave me.”

“Rockwell artists are an amazing thing at this school,” says Arts Department Head Bruce Fifer. “They give students the opportunity to see what professionals are doing in so many various forms, from glass to photography to painting, and more than just hearing them and seeing them in assembly, they get to do workshops with them and see how it’s done. The program is a wonderful addition to our life here at Taft.”

The Rockwell Visiting Artists Program was an important component of my education at Taft,” writes Witt Fetter ’13. “It helped me further develop the skills of artistic observation and critique outside of the art studio. The opportunity to hear from the artists and to see their work allowed students to connect meaningfully with the artwork. The gallery visits and artist talks prepared me for future encounters with art in academic settings beyond Taft. I appreciate the way Taft’s art curriculum encourages students to explore art from a multitude of angles, as critics, observers and creators.”

“The students hear exactly what they’ve been hearing in class all along,” says Chickadaunce, “but from a new mouth—a sort of confirmation. The most important thing is that they get to know that there really are people who make art and don’t have to starve in a garret somewhere to do it, and that it’s OK to let art be a guide. You can’t have a good life without art. They get to see people who live with art every day. They can think about a life where they could walk into a studio and ask themselves, ‘What am I going to do today?’ instead of someone else telling them.”

“If people purchased some fine art back in the day when it didn’t cost so much,” says Taylor Rockwell ’72. “Small works by big names.” His parents were both artists in a way. His mother writes poetry. His father, H.P. Davis “Deever” Rockwell ’44, who died in 2014, was an architect who trained with Mies van der Rohe. Taylor says his father, who graduated from MIT, was—for an architect—a pretty good engineer as well. He never designed with anything but pencil and paper.

Deever Rockwell started the Rockwell Visiting Artists Program in 1997 with his brother, Sherburne “Bud” ’41, who died in 2003. (Taft’s baseball field, Rockwell Field, was given in their honor by their mother in celebration of her sons’ safe return from World War II.) Emboldened by Deever’s wife, Priscilla, who endowed a poetry series at Vassar, the brothers decided they could do something similar for the fine arts at Taft. The Rockwell family who created the fund are great art appreciators.

“Students get to see people who live with art every day. They can think about a life where they could walk into a studio and ask themselves, ‘What am I going to do today?’ instead of someone else telling them.”

—art teacher Loueta Chickadaunce
Clayton Blanchard Spencer ’56, faculty emeritus, died on December 9 at his Litchfield, Connecticut, home, with his family beside him following a long battle with cancer. He leaves his wife of 36 years, Susan; his daughter, Jane ’03; sons Jonathan ’88 and Oliver ’85; daughter Jennie; sisters Carolyn Means, Ginny Giddens, and Franny Means; five grandchildren; and many close friends. Born in Hartford and raised in West Hartford, the son of Clayton Burr Spencer and Francis Means, he was a lifelong resident of Litchfield and well as Watertown, and the Fenwick community in Old Saybrook.

He attended the Kingswood-Oxford School prior to Taft. He graduated from Yale University in 1960 with a BA in history, and later years he completed a master’s in history from Trinity College, Hartford. Following Yale, he was commissioned as an ensign in the U.S. Navy, where he served as a surface warfare officer in the Pacific. Following his naval service, he briefly worked at Hartford Bank & Trust until he went to work at Taft teaching history and serving in the Admissions Office. Known by all as Chip, he was then selected at a very young age to be the headmaster of the all-boys’ McTernan School in Waterbury, where he oversaw the merger of the all-girls school, St. Margaret’s, now known as the Chase Collegiate School.

After seven years as headmaster, he left to work for Billings & Co., a subsidiary of Advest, for many years. In 1994, he returned to Taft as the director of planned giving, where he remained for over 10 years, leaving a lasting legacy to the school. He loved and cherished his work at Taft, having developed long and lasting friendships with the faculty and staff, as well as countless members of donors and contributors. He never considered fundraising to be a job as much as a call to service for the school he loved, attended, and his children attended.

Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78 said, “It is hard—no, it’s impossible—to capture what Chip was to Taft in his years of service here. His love for the school was profound, his service inspiring, and his loyalty unswerving. As director of development and director of planned giving, Chip was instrumental in two capital campaigns. He traveled thousands of miles and spoke to hundreds of alumni, all in service of Taft. So much of Taft’s strength and growth is linked to this remarkable man, who devoted much of his life to Taft. He was a great colleague, a wonderful friend, and an inspiring leader—and there was no one more fun to work with. There are hundreds of alumni, from Florida to California, and throughout the years, who supported the school because of the efforts of this great man.”

Headmaster Emeritus Lance Odden said, “Chip Spencer was a Taftie through and through. At Taft he really made his mark as director of development and then director of planned giving. In the latter role he was personally responsible for raising over $30 million of our $130 million of the 1990s, and helped pave the way for Taft’s most recent campaign. A friend to all, his boundless enthusiasm for his school inspired remarkable generosity. Beloved by his colleagues in the Alumni & Development Office and throughout the alumni body, he had a profound impact on those who knew him and on his school.”

He met his first wife, Letitia Butler, while at Yale and was married for 14 years until her early death. He later married Susan Fischer and enjoyed a long life at their home in Litchfield and summer residence in Fenwick. They spent many hours passionately toiling in the gardens and working the land he loved.

Over the years, his fundraising expertise and reputation led him to be called upon as an advisor and consultant by many organizations. He served on the boards of St. Michael’s Parish, the Litchfield Historical Society, the Litchfield Montessori School, Litchfield Preservation Trust, and the Lynde Point Land Trust. An avid sailor, skier, golfer, tennis and paddle tennis player, he was a longtime member of the Litchfield Country Club, the Dauntless Club of Essex, and the Sanctum Club of Litchfield.

A memorial service was held on December 17 at St. Michael’s in Litchfield and a separate gravesite service will be held in the spring in Old Saybrook.

Beloved by his colleagues in the Alumni & Development Office and throughout the alumni body, he had a profound impact on those who knew him and on his school. He leaves his wife of 36 years, Susan; his daughter, Jane ’03; sons Jonathan ’88 and Oliver ’85; daughter Jennie; sisters Carolyn Means, Ginny Giddens, and Franny Means; five grandchildren; and many close friends. Born in Hartford and raised in West Hartford, the son of Clayton Burr Spencer and Francis Means, he was a lifelong resident of Litchfield and well as Watertown, and the Fenwick community in Old Saybrook.

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