

Taft

B U L L E T I N

the courage to
SERVE

SPRING 2018

In this **ISSUE**



FOURTEEN TAFT STUDENTS AND FACULTY TRAVELED TO JINOTEGA, NICARAGUA, during spring break for an annual service learning trip to offer tutoring and other educational services to underserved children. Led by faculty members Jeremy Clifford and Laura Monti '89, the group worked with host organization Outreach 360. Academic Dean Clifford and Taft students are pictured here during a lesson.

PETER FREW '75

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To Serve

How three young alumni are living out *Non ut sibi* in their daily lives in the military.

By Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84



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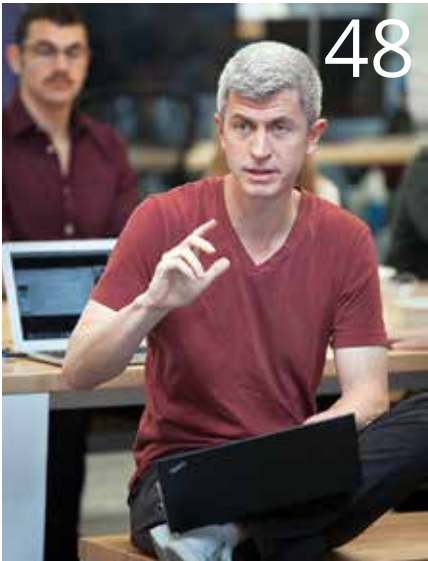
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A Groundbreaking Approach to Cancer Treatment

Dr. Will Polkinghorn '95 is empowering patients to gain access to the best treatments.

By Neil Vigdor '95

Photography by Gary Fong/Genesis Photos



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ON THE COVER


An F/A-18F Super Hornet aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*. Read this issue's feature about three recent Taft graduates now serving in the military.

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Taft

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EDITOR

Linda Hedman Beyus

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Kaitlin Thomas Orfitelli

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Debra Meyers

PHOTOGRAPHY

Robert Falcetti

ALUMNI NOTES EDITOR

Hillary Dooley

DESIGN

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SEND ALUMNI NEWS TO

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The Taft School

110 Woodbury Road, Watertown, CT 06795-2100

taftbulletin@taftschoool.org

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Cathy Mancini | Alumni Records

The Taft School

110 Woodbury Road, Watertown, CT 06795-2100

taftrhino@taftschoool.org

860-945-7777 | WWW.TAFTALUMNI.COM

COMMENTS? TELL US!

We'd love to hear what you think about the stories in this *Bulletin*.

We may edit your letters for length, clarity, and content, but please write.

Linda Hedman Beyus, editor

Taft Bulletin

110 Woodbury Road

Watertown, CT 06795-2100

beyusl@taftschoool.org

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On Main Hall

A WORD FROM HEADMASTER WILLY MACMULLEN '78

RETURNING AND SERVING

Taft has a long history of visitors coming to school to give talks and meet with students, and it's really special when the visitor is a Taft graduate. This is a great tradition—one many great schools and colleges have—and I have a briefcase filled with memories of graduates speaking in Bingham, taking part in class discussions, meeting with groups of students, or performing in front of an audience. We shouldn't think of these visits as ancillary or additional or supplemental. They are not. In fact, they are an *essential* part of a student's educational experience, a vital if often surprising broadening and deepening of the curriculum, and sometimes they become touchstone moments, an experience a student never forgets and even returns to often in his or her days here, and perhaps even long after.

And this was the case in a recent visit to Taft by federal judge Karen Stevenson, Class of 1975.

I might start with the way I introduced her to the students in Bingham. Judge Stevenson, a former member of the board of trustees, is all we could hope a Taft graduate might become. A cursory review of her bio is inspiring and humbling in equal measure: Stevenson was a *cum laude* student, athlete, and leader who attended the University of North Carolina as a Morehead Scholar; she was selected as the first African-American woman Rhodes Scholar and received her master in history at Oxford; she then received her J.D. with distinction from Stanford Law School and practiced commercial litigation for many years in Los Angeles; and in 2015 she was appointed federal magistrate judge for the Central District of California. Her resume alone is breathtaking.

And then there's the simple amazing fact that someone this busy and with the heaviest responsibilities was willing to fly cross-country to spend two days on campus—simply because she cared deeply about Taft.

Stevenson's schedule was packed, and at every turn she challenged and inspired. She met over dinner and breakfast with students of color, supporting and mentoring in a singular way. She gave an address in Bingham, sharing her journey to Taft, her work as a judge, and asking students to recognize that each of them no doubt found Taft and adolescence painful and lonely at times—and that they each needed to show compassion and caring for each other. When she finished, there was a standing ovation. She spent an hour in the faculty room, listening and responding to questions from some 80 students and faculty. She attended several classes and led discussions in AP Government, AP U.S. History, and lower mid Approaches to History: on the federal versus state jurisdictions, the judiciary, separation of powers, the role of the Supreme Court. She met with the school monitors after sit-down dinner, responding to questions about the ethical dilemmas and emotional loneliness of leadership and challenging them to think of ways they could leave a legacy that made Taft an even stronger, more inclusive place. She pushed and inspired students, faculty, and me.

Think of what happened in Judge Stevenson's visit. We were able to introduce an alumna of extraordinary accomplishment who reminded students of what they, too, might become. She offered a message that a great school was one where every student could live out his or her full potential and one which aspired always to improvement. She mentored students, offered to provide future advice, and extended herself as part of the Taft network. She worked with students—in affinity groups, classes, and individually—to challenge them to think of what compassionate citizenship and ethical leadership looked like. She lived out our school motto by serving the school.

The Taft education of the whole student has a lot to do with the classroom. It always has and always will. But that education also occurs in so many other ways, and visiting speakers—alumni and other—can deepen and intensify learning. These moments are not extras, add-ons. They are carefully crafted and intentionally integrated into the broader educational goals of the school. For a lot of students, the first days after March break they will remember because a graduate who cared deeply about the school returned to campus and challenged and invigorated and inspired them. I like thinking that one day years from now, a graduate might be back on campus, and standing on the stage in Bingham about to give an address, say, "I'm here because in March of 2018, we had an amazing graduate visit the school. I've not forgotten that day." ■

Willy MacMullen '78

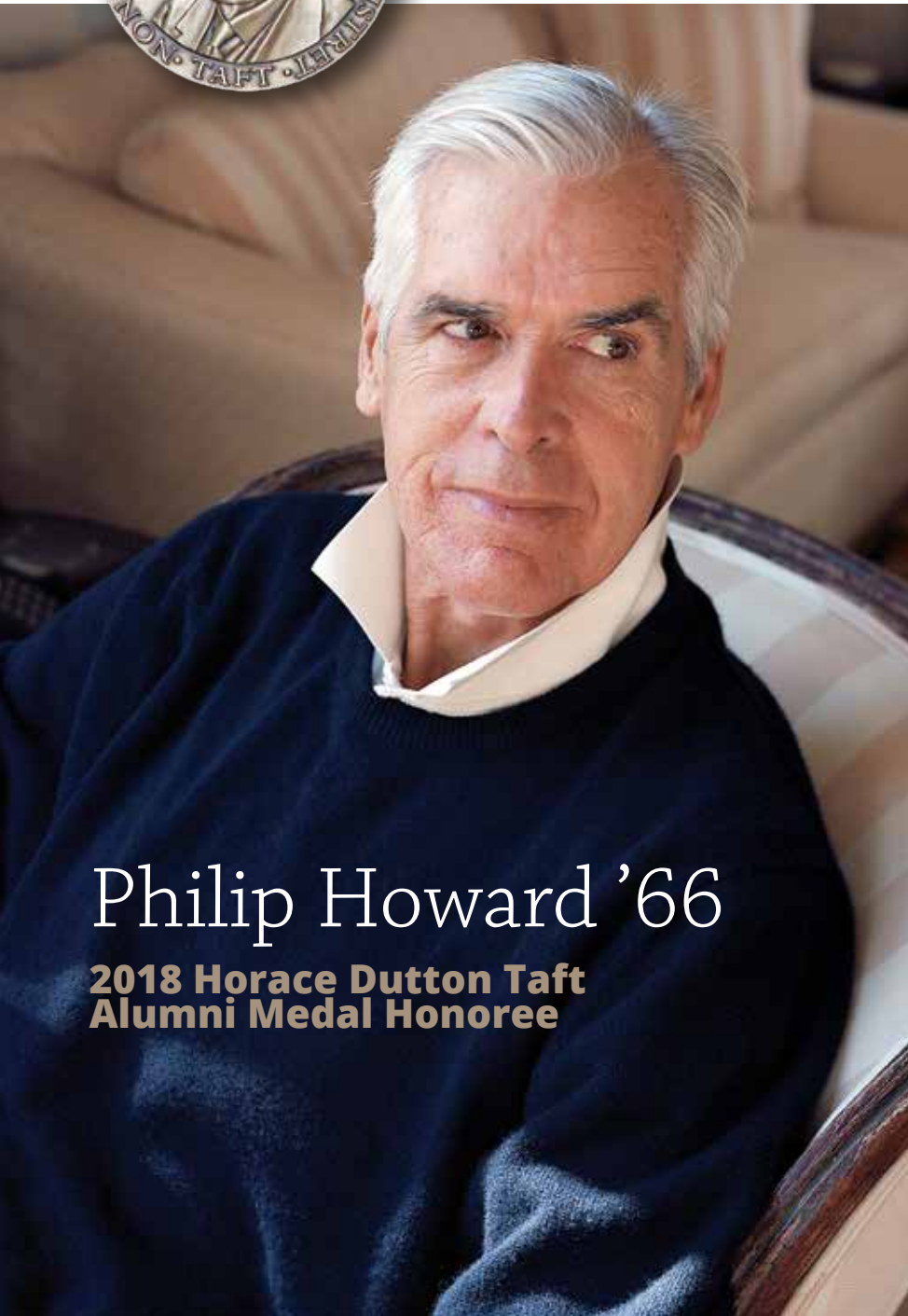


▲ Judge Karen Stevenson '75 responds to students' questions during her visit to Taft in March.

“There's the simple amazing fact that someone this busy and with the heaviest responsibilities was willing to fly cross-country to spend two days on campus—simply because she cared deeply about Taft.”



Alumni **SPOTLIGHT**



Philip Howard '66

2018 Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal Honoree

"AMERICA NEEDS TO RADICALLY simplify its operating system and give people—officials and citizens alike—the freedom to be practical," writes author, lawyer, and philanthropist Philip Howard '66. "Rules can't accomplish our goals. Only humans can get things done."

Getting things done is something Howard knows a lot about. He is the founder of Common Good, a nonpartisan reform coalition that describes itself as working to simplify government to put humans back in charge, cut mindless red tape, and limit the bureaucracy that prevents progress in America. Howard is senior counsel at the New York City law firm Covington & Burling. He has appeared on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and written four books as well as the introduction to former Vice President Al Gore's *Common Sense Government*. Howard also advises politicians, works with the White House, and regularly testifies for Congress, which lies at the heart of his mission to create a more efficient and effective government. In May, Howard will be recognized for this impressive body of work with The Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal, Taft's highest alumni honor.

After graduating from Taft, Howard attended Yale University and the University of Virginia School of Law before getting a job at a Wall Street law firm. It was during this time that he began to contemplate the complexities of the government. "I began to wonder why it was that my friends in government couldn't do what they thought made sense," he says. "Why was government so clunky? I ended up having this epiphany that law can't be precise. If you make law precise, people spend their whole day in rule

books and they can't get the job done. They're just complying with all these rules that may or may not make sense."

This idea hadn't received much attention or been explored on a national level at the time, so when Howard drafted a book proposal, Random House was eager to publish it. The book, *The Death of Common Sense* (1995), became one of the bestsellers of the year.

"Phil is a terrific recipient of the HDT Alumni Medal. His initial book was one of the best non-fiction works I have ever read. His ideas have gained in popularity of late on all sides of the political spectrum. I hope that in some small way our award invigorates and furthers his efforts to what I believe would be the great benefit of all Americans," notes Holcombe T. Green III '87, trustee and chair of the Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal Committee.

After the success of his first book, Howard continued to work toward

simplifying government. In addition to releasing a second book, he founded Common Good, an organization focused on building support for governmental overhaul by educating the public. "The challenge is persuading the public that you can't fix this system. It's not a management problem, it's a philosophy problem. You have to put humans in charge again," explains Howard. Today, Common Good's advisory board is comprised of some of the country's well-known leaders, including John Danforth, former U.S. senator and ambassador to the United Nations; Bill Bradley and Alan Simpson, former U.S. senators; Tom Kean, former governor of New Jersey; and Richard Thornburgh, former U.S. attorney general and governor of Pennsylvania.

Howard and Common Good are working on several reforms. Currently, they are the leading group advocating for more streamlined infrastructure practices that still honor important environmental

goals. Their three-page statute would not only introduce a more productive process, but it could also create a million new jobs.

Through books, speeches, and extensive advising and advocacy work, Howard is fighting to reestablish the American people's freedom. He explains why this is so important in his 2010 TED Talk, "Four Ways to Fix a Broken Legal System," which has more than 625,000 views:

"If teachers don't have authority to run the classroom and maintain order, everybody's learning suffers," says Howard in his talk. "If the judge doesn't have the authority to toss out unreasonable claims, then all of us go through the day looking over our shoulders. If the environmental agency can't decide that the power lines are good for the environment, then there's no way to bring power from the wind farms to the city.... What the world needs now is to restore the authority to make common choices. It's the only way to get our freedom back, and it's the only way to release the energy and passion needed so that we can meet the challenges of our time."

In addition to his philanthropic work with Common Good, Howard is an active leader in New York City. He chaired the committee that installed the "Tribute in Light" memorial for victims of 9/11, and he serves as chair emeritus of the Municipal Art Society, which led the battle to save Grand Central Terminal. Throughout his life, Howard says that Taft's motto has never been far from his mind. It taught him to value service, and he hopes that his work inspires others. "I want people to feel like they have much more ownership over their own choices and that they can make a difference on many different levels in our society," says Howard.

"Philip Howard has been guided by Taft's motto his entire life, and his labor, intellect, and vision are needed today. His belief—that we all can make a difference—is something every Taft graduate might aspire to," comments Headmaster Willy MacMullen '78. ■

—Hillary Dooley



Coming to Netflix



Director and writer
Dennis Liu '02

PARENTING IS HARD ENOUGH, but raising a son with magical powers would have a unique set of challenges, especially for a single mom. That's the premise of an upcoming Netflix series created by Dennis Liu '02.

Netflix has ordered a 10-episode series of the sci-fi family drama called *Raising Dion*, based on Liu's short film and comic book of the same name.

"I'm excited about it," says Liu. "The cool thing is that the parent, Nicole, has no powers, but her kid does. She's trying to raise her son under extraordinary circumstance. The usual superhero trope is that the parents die. But this is from the parent's POV. For me, she is the protagonist, even though Dion has the power."

A graduate of NYU's Tisch School for the Arts, Liu has spent much of the past 10 years directing commercials and music videos for artists such as Sara Bareilles, Mariah Carey, Justin Timberlake, Diane Birch, and Sia through the company RadicalMedia.

"I love directing music videos," he says. "I've met some really cool artists that way, but I've been trying for many years to get into narrative, to do movies and television."

"Honestly, it was such a nice surprise," he adds. "I'd tried to take [the series proposal] around town at the time, before the whole 'Oscars So White' incident, but I think of late people are finally seeing there needs to be representation of women and people of color."

Michael B. Jordan (who starred in *Creed*) is cast to play the father, and the team was just finishing the writing process when we spoke. "It's all about the script right now," says Liu. "We're just trying to make sure it's great. From there we'll shoot it."

When he started the project about four and a half years ago, there were very clear reasons to make the protagonist a woman and a person of color, says Liu, who's been a member of the Directors Guild of America's Eastern Diversity Steering Committee since 2009. Their goal is to improve the employment opportunities, working conditions, and the skills of ethnically diverse guild members.

"I still stay involved," he says. "More than ever, it's important that the images we're putting in the world can be so powerful. I love *Raising Dion* because it presents a unique superhero story from a different point of view."

"I thought I might as well put something out there I feel good about, and now the timing sort of struck a chord when I put it out in the universe."

A reporter at *The Washington Post* saw the comic book series Liu created and wrote something nice. Then someone at Netflix saw it and thought it was pretty cool.

The series will likely have several directors, but Liu will direct at least one episode and help produce it. For now though, he enjoys being part of the writers' room. "This is a pretty big shot I'm getting here," Liu says, "so I hope it works!"

"If it weren't for my Taft friends and faculty who were in my first movies, I'd never be where I am today. I can't believe how lucky I am. It's kinda nuts," Liu says. "But I also want to use this project to say something important." ■

—Julie Reiff

View the short written and directed by Dennis Liu, read the comic book, or follow the series' progress at www.dennis-liu.com.

Teaching with a Worldview

ADAM YONKERS '89 says that making a huge career change in his early 30s freed him from a deadening job to one that instead feeds his soul. He went from corporate communications—marketing and public relations at a big corporate law firm—to teaching U.S. history and foreign policy to high schoolers at Palo Alto Unified in California.

"I ended up working at a law firm, which was soul-sucking," he says. "Although marketing and public relations for brands like Odwalla and Clif Bar was often great, I was constantly being told I should be a teacher, which I thought would ultimately be more rewarding in the long term."

"I realized in marketing it was all dependent on the product," he says. "If I didn't believe in the product... it was really hard for me to get behind something I really didn't believe in. So I went into this career exploration."

Yonkers, who was coaching local basketball teams, began applying to graduate schools to earn a master's degree in education, landing at Stanford's Teacher Education Program. After graduation, he was hired by Palo Alto Unified.

"I spent one year teaching in middle school, and then I was hired at the high school, which was the goal," he says. "Education, it's relationships between people, between ideas and history. All these things are fundamentally interesting to me."



Adam Yonkers in
the classroom.

The dual Irish-American citizen says teaching history and foreign policy courses really connects to his interests in foreign policy and U.S. history. He also lived for four years in Benin in West Africa, where his father, Charlie '58, served as the Peace Corps director. These two experiences fed his understanding of how America relates to the rest of the world.

He teaches U.S. foreign policy and history to 10th graders and an elective course for seniors. Yonkers says he prefers not to be the "sage on a stage," where he lectures and students learn by rote, instead leading seminars where the students discuss themes based on events affecting the country today, such as immigration and the war in Afghanistan.

A bonus of teaching at Palo Alto is that parents of his students often have

connections with the very people enacting policies, such as Michael McFaul, President Obama's ambassador to Russia, who came and spoke with his students. "I love having guest speakers," Yonkers says. "It's just amazing."

Pedagogy fascinates him. His lesson plans are often minimal to allow for student discussions, with only two or so topics covered in a 90-minute period. With a lot of student classroom presentations and healthy discussions, Yonkers believes his method helps students understand the nuances of how the United States relates to the world.

Yonkers and his wife, Suzanne, have three children: Connor, 7, Sue, 5, and Jack, 2. He is looking to teach in Europe in 2019–20, so that his children have the opportunity to experience life internationally outside the United States as he once did.

"I would like to give my kids an experience that would perhaps change their worldview," he says. ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84



◀ History/government teacher Adam Yonkers '89 (in rolled-up shirt sleeves) with his Palo Alto High School foreign affairs class when renowned historian Francis Fukuyama of Stanford University visited the class.

Fashion into the Future

VANESSA LEFEBVRE ROBINSON '95 grew up working in her mother's clothing store in Litchfield, Connecticut, but when she started college at UPenn, she planned to follow a pre-med track. Fast-forward nearly two decades, and Robinson is leading the women's merchandising team at Stitch Fix, one of the most successful and exciting fashion/technology companies in the world.

Robinson's choice to embark on a retail career wasn't planned. After working three jobs at once during her college years, she decided to take some time off from the grind—a respite

and numbers behind retail and not just the pretty products," she says.

"Trends are always changing, customer behavior is always changing, the economy is always changing, and retail is really the intersection between all of those different factors, and that's the part that I really enjoy," Robinson says. "I love the idea that no matter how good your business is, it could change at a moment's notice, and you really need to always have your eyes and ears open to what that change is."

Robinson's openness to change prompted her to take a job at TJX, which owns TJ Maxx and Marshalls, after 11

with fit and price preferences. After that an AI-powered computer suggests five pieces to a stylist, who then confirms the choices and processes the shipment. Items start at \$28 and go up to around \$600, with designer brands like Rag & Bone at the top. A typical men's box might contain two button-down shirts and a pair each of pants, shoes, and socks. Whatever the client doesn't want, they simply return in a postage-paid bag.

The San Francisco-based, publicly traded company has revenues of more than \$1 billion and employs about 5,800 people. Robinson believes it's the future, and judg-



Stitch Fix uses stylists and algorithms to find the best five items to send clients; pictured is one such fix.



Clients receive their clothing selections in a beautiful box.

that would not have been possible if she'd applied to medical schools. A year off, she told herself, would give her some time to decide her next steps.

Robinson ended up in retail—something she thought she'd enjoy for a year and would allow her to earn money. She never expected she would stay in the industry, let alone end up in a major role at such a high-profile fashion innovator.

After UPenn, Robinson worked as an assistant buyer at Lord & Taylor, which she chose because "it was one of the few companies that still had buying and planning together, so it would allow me to work with the math

years at Lord & Taylor. After two years there, she moved to Daffy's and then Macy's before joining Stitch Fix last May.

Like TJX, Stitch Fix is "a disruptor in the retail industry," says Robinson, who adds that "it's really important as a retailer to make sure you're always abreast of changing consumer behavior and evolving in your way of thinking about the customer."

Stitch Fix does that by using artificial intelligence and data science to recommend clothes to its clientele of men, women, and children. When new customers sign up online for the service, they're prompted to fill out a "Style Quiz"

ing by its inclusion on LinkedIn's list of the top start-ups, others seem to agree. "People are expecting personalization," she says. "You take for granted that when you open Instagram or Facebook or even Google, it's customized for you. Stitch Fix is taking that to the next step and personalizing the shopping experience for you."

And while Robinson didn't end up with a medical degree, she says her background in science has been immensely helpful in relating to the way Stitch Fix's data scientists approach their role. "I guess all things happen for a reason," she says. ■

—Sam Dangremond '05



Vanessa LeFebvre Robinson '95 goes over a product review with one of Stitch Fix's directors, who shows product that is currently popular that the team will rebuy for future fixes.

■ Tom Losee '84 sets out for a stand-up paddle as part of a training program that combines it with running.

A Workout That Takes You Somewhere

COMBINE RUNNING AND STAND-UP PADDLEBOARDING AND WHAT DO YOU GET? RUN/SUP®, outdoor sports entrepreneur Tom Losee's increasingly popular training program that fuses his two favorite recreational fitness activities. For more than 10 years, Losee '84 has worked in the stand-up paddleboard business in South Walton, Florida, a beautiful region on the state's northwestern Gulf Coast.



▲ Tom Losee with his daughter, Ella '20.

But “work” is the wrong word to describe how Losee spends his days. While spearheading RUN/SUP is indeed his career, the business is a by-product of his passion, created through his entrepreneurial spirit. Losee, who claims he “caught the entrepreneurial bug at a young age,” got his start in the paddleboard industry when he cofounded YOLO (You Only Live Once), a line of paddleboards, in 2007 with his friend Jeff Archer.

Over the past few years, Losee has stepped away from the day-to-day operations of YOLO to focus on RUN/SUP.

“I started RUN/SUP because I would consistently find myself torn between choosing to run or stand-up paddle for my workout,” Losee explains. “With this program, I’ve married my two loves.”

Running and stand-up paddleboarding are extremely popular in the scenic Panhandle area. In addition to providing great exercise, both activities offer breathtaking views of the region’s pristine coastal dune lakes, lush green acres, and, of course, majestic blue ocean.

RUN/SUP is ideal for fitness enthusiasts of all levels, including beginners. Losee offers RUN/SUP programs at the Boathouse Paddle Club at the WaterColor Inn on Western Lake, including classes in SUP Yoga and TRX.

“It’s a great way to cross-train,”

Losee explains of the workout, which typically involves a one-mile group run followed by an interval-style workout on the stand-up paddleboards, including bodyweight squats, push-ups, and core exercises. The entire program is finished in less than an hour.

Born and bred in Long Island, New York, Losee grew up loving the water and was a natural athlete from a young age.

“It was actually at Taft that I first started running,” he recalls. “There was a legendary Latin teacher named Donald Oscarson ’47 (known as ‘Oscie’), who was dean of students for two decades. He had a training program called Jumpers, kind of like Crossfit, that athletes did to stay in shape between seasons, and we had to run a lot. I like to pay homage to that when I think about the role running has played in my life and in my work.”

RUN/SUP’s tagline is simple but impactful: Let your workout take you somewhere. Part of the beauty of the program is the idea that it can truly be done anywhere there’s a body of water, and participants are never in the exact same spot twice. RUN/SUP uses and sells its own line of inflatable paddleboards, which are just as durable as non-inflatable boards.

“The beauty of inflatables is that they come in their own travel bag,” Losee says. “We went to Patagonia recently. All you need are your sneakers

and your board, and you can take the RUN/SUP experience with you. I like the natural simplicity of it.”

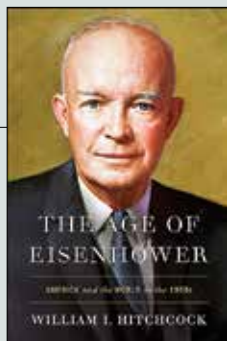
As the program gains popularity, RUN/SUP is becoming more than just a workout; it’s evolving into a true fitness and lifestyle brand. The company has a small retail store that carries gear and activewear, and RUN/SUP now offers retreats, training certification programs, kids’ classes, and a variety of race events.

“The races aren’t anything too crazy, but they’re very popular,” Losee says. “Typically it’s a mile run followed by a mile paddle. They’re a lot of fun.”

What’s next for stand-up paddleboarding? Losee, whose daughter, Ella ’20, is a Taft middler, would love to see SUP become an intermural at his alma mater someday.

“I just want people to get out and try SUP and enjoy it,” he says. “At the end of the day, that’s my goal.” ■

—Carola Lovering '07



**THE AGE OF EISENHOWER:
AMERICA AND THE WORLD
IN THE 1950S**
Simon & Schuster
William I. Hitchcock '82

In a 2017 survey, presidential historians ranked Dwight D. Eisenhower fifth on the list of great presidents, behind the top four: Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Theodore Roosevelt. Historian William Hitchcock shows that this high ranking is justified. Eisenhower’s accomplishments were enormous. A former general, Ike kept the peace: he ended the Korean War, avoided a war in Vietnam, adroitly managed a potential confrontation with China, and soothed relations with the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death. He guided the Republican Party to embrace central aspects of the New Deal like Social Security. He thwarted the demagoguery of McCarthy and advanced the agenda of civil rights for African-Americans.

As part of his strategy to wage and win the Cold War, Eisenhower expanded American military power, built a fearsome nuclear arsenal, and launched the space race—all in order to keep global peace, he said. But he also admonished citizens to remain alert to the potentially harmful influence of the “military-industrial complex.”

Hitchcock’s book draws extensively on declassified material from the Eisenhower Library, the CIA, and the Defense Department, and unpublished documents. The author shows how he shaped modern America and why he is rightly regarded as one of the best leaders the U.S. has ever had.

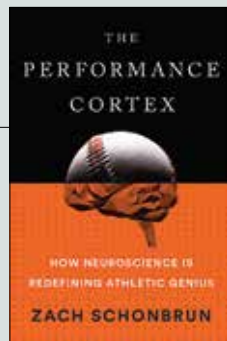
Hitchcock is a professor of history at the University of Virginia and the Randolph Compton Professor at the Miller Center for Public Affairs. He also is the author of *The Bitter Road to Freedom: The Human Cost of Allied Victory in World War II Europe*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

**THE PERFORMANCE CORTEX:
HOW NEUROSCIENCE IS
REDEFINING ATHLETIC GENIUS**
Dutton
Zach Schonbrun '05

Why do good quarterbacks always seem to know where their receivers are? Why can’t modern robotics come close to replicating the dexterity of a 5-year-old?

In this deeply researched book, sports and business reporter Zach Schonbrun explores what drives human movement and its spectacular potential. The groundbreaking work of two neuroscientists in Major League Baseball is only the beginning. Schonbrun traces the fascinating history of motor research and details how new investigations into the brain are helping explain the extraordinary skills of talented performers like Stephen Curry, Tom Brady, Serena Williams, and Lionel Messi, as well as musical virtuosos, dancers, rock climbers, race-car drivers, and more.

Whether it is timing a 95-mph fastball or reaching for a coffee mug, movement requires extraordinary computation that many take for granted—until now. *The Performance Cortex* ushers in a new way of thinking about the athletic gifts we strain to see in our cavernous arenas. It’s



not about the million-dollar arm anymore. It’s about the million-dollar brain.

Schonbrun is a journalist who writes regularly for *The New York Times*, covering sports and business. His work has also appeared in *ESPN the Magazine*, *SB Nation Longform*, *VICE*, *Newsday*, *The Washington Post*, and Yahoo! Sports, among other publications and online sites.

**A QUESTION OF ATTACHMENT:
TOWARD A LOSSLESS SOCIETY**
Kindle Direct Publishing
Frederick H. Leonhardt '74

Pulling from his background in geology, counseling psychology, and philanthropy, Frederick Leonhardt organizes the information he presents and the stories he tells around the singular question he sees posed by patterns of insecure attachment within U.S. society: How do I bring to myself a sense of connection, even intimacy, while at the same time distancing myself from the pain and heartbreak that connection and intimacy inevitably bring?

He looks at number of social and cultural trends that he considers as answers to the question asked by insecure attachment: the march of postmodernism, a desire to turn kids into adults, and a wish to become machine-based entities (i.e., to become posthuman) chief among them. In contrast, early safe and secure attachment relationships establish the foundation upon which rest robust executive function skills, such as empathy, appropriately focusing attention, perspective taking, and valuing the future. Leonhardt argues that manifold answers to the question asked



by insecure attachment pave the way toward life in a largely lossless society.

Leonhardt holds an M.S. in structural geology and an M.A. in counseling psychology, and he has worked in the petroleum exploration and mental health fields. Currently he is executive director of his family’s private foundation, The Frederick H. Leonhardt Foundation. He writes a blog titled *Bowlby Less Traveled* (bltblog.fhlfoundation.org).

**BAYT FARHI AND THE SEPHARDIC
PALACES OF OTTOMAN DAMASCUS
IN THE LATE 18TH AND 19TH
CENTURIES**
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Research/Manar al-Athar**
Elizabeth
Macaulay-Lewis '98

One of the largest and most important palatial houses of late 18th- and early 19th-century Damascus belonged to the Farhi family, who served as financial administrators to successive Ottoman governors in Damascus and Acre. The conversion of Bayt Farhi to a hotel provided a unique opportunity to make a detailed examination of its architecture, which is comparable to that of affluent Christians and Muslims and decorated with high-quality materials in the latest styles.

Bayt Farhi’s outstanding architecture and decoration is documented and presented in this first comprehensive

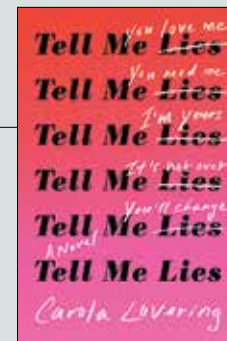
analysis of it and Damascus’s other prominent Sephardic mansions Matkab Anbar, Bayt Dahdah, Bayt Stambouli, and Bayt Lisbona. The Hebrew poetic inscriptions in these residences reveal how the Farhis and other leading Sephardic families perceived themselves and how they presented themselves to their own community and other Damascenes. A history of the Farhis and the Jews of Damascus provides the context for these houses, along with the architectural development of the monumental Damascene courtyard house.

Lavishly illustrated with extensive color photographs, plans, and reconstruction drawings, the book brings to life the home environment of the lost elite Sephardic community of Ottoman Damascus. It will be an essential resource for those studying the architecture, history, and culture of Syria and the Ottoman Empire. Copublished with Manar al-Athar, University of Oxford.

Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis is assistant professor and the acting executive officer of the M.A. Program in Liberal Studies at The Graduate Center, City University of New York.

TELL ME LIES
Simon & Schuster
Carola Lovering '07

A thrilling, sexy, coming-of-age story exploring toxic love, ruthless ambition, and shocking betrayal, Carola Lovering’s



first novel is about that one person who still haunts you—the wrong one, the one you couldn’t let go of, the one you’ll never forget.

Lucy Albright is far from her Long Island upbringing when she arrives on the campus of her small California college, happy to be hundreds of miles from her mother, whom she’s never forgiven for an act of betrayal in her early teen years. Quickly grasping at her fresh start, she embraces college life and all it offers—new friends, wild parties, stimulating classes. And then she meets Stephen DeMarco. Charming. Attractive. Complicated. Devastating.

Confident and cocksure, Stephen sees something in Lucy that no one else has, and she’s quickly seduced by this vision of herself. Meanwhile, Stephen is determined to forget an incident buried in his past that, if exposed, could ruin him. And their addicting entanglement will have consequences they never could have imagined.

Alternating between Lucy’s and Stephen’s voices, *Tell Me Lies* follows their connection through college and post-college life in New York City. Lovering’s novel chronicles the exhilaration and dilemmas of young adulthood, and the difficulty of letting go, even when you know you should.

Lovering’s work has appeared in *W Magazine*, *National Geographic*, *Outside*, and *Yoga Journal*, among other publications. ■

If you would like your work added to the Hulbert Taft Library’s Alumni Authors Collection and considered for this column, please email the editor (lindabeyus@taftschool.org) and mail a copy to:
Taft Bulletin | The Taft School | 110 Woodbury Road | Watertown, CT 06795-2100

For more information, visit
www.taftschool.org/news

Around the **POND**

BY DEBRA MEYERS



Nathan Trice and his theatrical dance company staged both Morning Meeting and Music for a While Concert Series performances.



Nathan Trice is the artistic director and founder of nathantrice/RITUALS, a project-by-project theatrical dance company based in Brooklyn, New York. He brought his talent and experience to a unique residency program at Taft.

Learn how to use the Layar interactive app on page 2.



Scan this page to watch Trice work with students and to see one of the culminating works.

—continued on next page

I, The Object In My Eye

NATHAN TRICE IN RESIDENCE AT TAFT

WHEN DANCER and choreographer Nathan Trice established his theatrical dance company in 1998, his vision included the creation of a “unique visual, audio, sensory, theatrical movement language.” For nearly six months, Trice spoke that language at Taft, guiding students though a process of self-exploration that culminated with extraordinarily personal performances on the Bingham stage.

The depth and breadth of Taft’s dance program has grown markedly during dance teacher Sarah Surber’s six-year tenure. Surber is a former professional dancer with deep roots and connections in the national arts community. She has used those connections to bring an eclectic and impressive roster of dance

companies to Taft for limited residencies, including Trice, a highly regarded dancer, choreographer, and artistic director.

“When Nathan began talking about the work he was doing with college students, it really sparked my interest,” says Surber. “I thought, Wait a minute, our students can do this kind of work and really enjoy it.”

The work done at Taft is a very small part of a much larger initiative developed by Trice in 2001. The Recognizing Women Project bridges the gap between art and academia through collaborative interdisciplinary research initiatives between the company, high school students, professional female dancers, and students enrolled in university social sciences and humanities departments.

The mission of the project is to “create artistic/educational work that addresses various social, political, cultural contributions, as well as emotional, psychological, and spiritual experiences of women.” It is designed to shed light and provoke thought, and to drive self-discovery.

“Overall, the Recognizing Women Project focuses on creating work that speaks to the unique contributions and experiences of women,” Trice explains. “We do that by having the dancers research their own lives to develop deeper personal understanding and pen very personal narratives. Each year there are new dancers involved with the project, each with their own story. I have a broad choreographic framework that I adapt

to bring those stories to the stage.”

The “research” process begins with Trice challenging students to think about themselves within the context of societal expectations, norms, and perceptions. Whiteboards, flip charts, and open conversation in the dance studio plant seeds for ongoing self-reflection through new understandings and perspectives.

“I ask students, ‘What is self-objectification? What does it feel like to be objectified? Do you think you have ever been objectified? What is that like?’” explains Trice. “Students were not only asked to reflect on those topics outside of class, but to interview their friends and classmates to learn about their experiences, then unpack that for themselves.”



Trice worked with students in Sarah Surber’s dance classes during his residency. The Paley Studio walls were also with filled with notes for his Recognizing Women Project, developed through work done by students in Johanna Valdez’s English department elective, Sexual Politics in the 21st Century.

—continued from previous page

ideas about self-objectification. We had a thoughtful discussion about identity, agency, self, and community. The students started to understand the possibilities, not just the academic achievement, that open up when they integrate the skills they learn in class to who they are as a people. Nathan's energy and expertise to speak with young people and pull out these often personal and challenging parts of themselves was inspiring."

Adds Trice, "There is a way to sort of listen to the students' stories and peel them back a bit more. In doing so, I can begin to see how they intersect—how maybe your story and my story can intersect and tell maybe a societal story. I wanted students to take a step back, look at their own lives and say, Who am I? How did I become this person, and where do I want to go from there? It is about taking some control, understanding that you have some agency, some autonomy in this, and some responsibility in this."

The content developed by and with Valdez's students informed the work being done by Surber's Advanced Dance students in the studio, and punctuated points in the overall narrative shaped during Trice's residency at Taft. That narrative was the heart and soul of a 10-minute theatrical movement piece performed at both the Taft Dance Ensemble Winter Concert and a special Music for a While concert series performance by Trice's dance company. *I, The Object In My Eye*, featured six students from the

Advanced Dance class. The piece was the culmination of months of emotional and physical self-exploration and discovery.

"Early in the school year Nathan showed us some base phrases just to get a feel for his movements and his movement language," explains dancer Haylee Snow '19. "In the months that followed, we had a lot of really important discussions about how we view our own bodies and how other people view us, about how our identities may change in different contexts. Over time, we learned

how to connect our movements and our feelings around that research, and the things we discovered about ourselves."

Snow and her peers literally wrote their stories—pen to paper verbal records of thoughts, feelings, and discoveries. Bits of those stories were verbally articulated during the dance performances.

"I have never spoken in a dance before," says Snow. "Dance, to me, has always been a form a communication. But it was not until I worked with Nathan that I actually came to

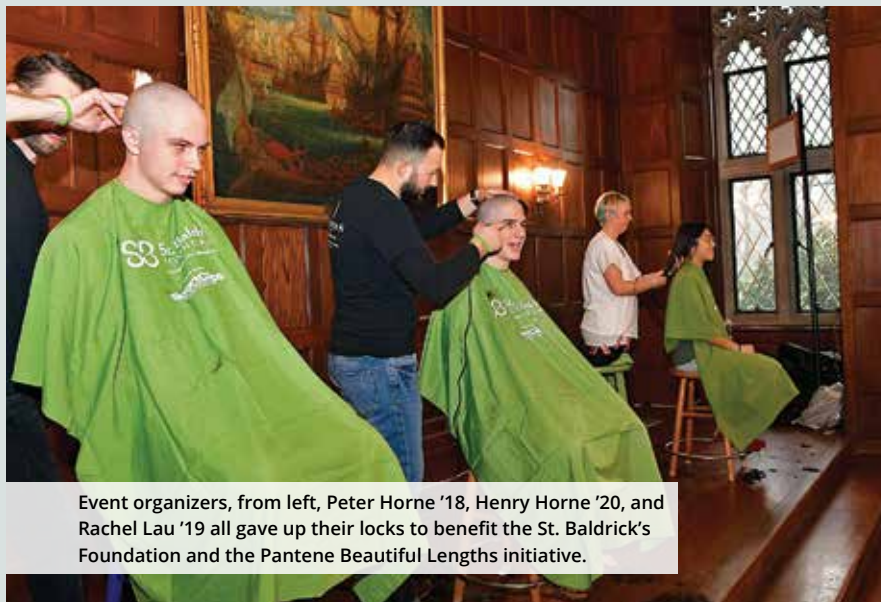
understand how to connect words, feeling, and movement for the first time."

And in making that connection, Snow's dancing was elevated, and forever changed.

"My movements have become more fluid," says Snow. "There is more intention behind each movement and more meaning behind each phrase." ■

To learn more about Nathan Trice, the Recognizing Women Project, and his company, nathantrice/RITUALS, A Project-by-Project Dance Theater Company, visit www.nathantricerituals.com.

student SPOTLIGHT



Event organizers, from left, Peter Horne '18, Henry Horne '20, and Rachel Lau '19 all gave up their locks to benefit the St. Baldrick's Foundation and the Pantene Beautiful Lengths initiative.

Horne Family Values: Shaping Our Community

THE FIRST TIME PETER HORNE '18 shaved his head was in fifth grade, at the urging of his humanities teacher.

"He was involved with the St. Baldrick's Foundation," Peter says, "and encouraged our class get involved, too."

Thirty students joined their teacher in shaving their heads that year, and in securing sponsorship dollars to do so. All of the proceeds went to St. Baldrick's, a volunteer- and donor-powered charity

dedicated to funding promising research into cures for childhood cancers.

"I just thought it was a cool idea," says Peter. "Being able to do something so small that makes such a big impact on so many people seemed very important to me, even as a fifth grader."

Peter shaved his head again in middle school; brother Henry '20 soon joined the cause. This year, Henry introduced St. Baldrick's to the Taft community:



► Brothers Henry '20 and Peter '18 Horne brought their longtime connection to the St. Baldrick's Foundation to the Taft community in February.

More than a dozen Rhinos shaved their heads on one February afternoon, an initiative that raised more than \$6,000 for the St. Baldrick's Foundation.

"I wanted to get the Taft community as excited about St. Baldrick's as Peter and I have been," explains Henry. "Mrs. Frew suggested getting the Community Service Board involved. It was great to work with them—we were able to raise a good deal more money working together than I could have on my own."

Working with the Community Service Board also brought an additional component to the service initiative.

"St. Baldrick's is such a wonderful cause," says Community Service Board member Rachel Lau '19. "I was excited to bring the event to Taft, but didn't think a lot of girls would want to shave their heads. I had heard about opportunities

for people to donate their hair to make wigs for cancer patients, which would make the event completely inclusive with opportunities for both boys and girls, thereby allowing us to help more people."

Rachel researched three different organizations and decided on Pantene Beautiful Lengths.

"At 8 inches, Pantene Beautiful Lengths required the least amount of hair for each donation," explains Rachel. "That smaller requirement made the opportunity available to more girls on campus."

Pantene Beautiful Lengths is the largest national movement and first campaign to create free, real-hair wigs for women with cancer.

"They have a great reputation and seemed the most genuine of all the organizations we considered," adds board member Megan Sng '19. "We really liked what they do with the donations."

With Henry leading the charge on fundraising (he raised more than half of the total donations himself), Peter—who is co-head mon and a member of the Community Service Board—worked to build interest and understanding in the community, while growing the roster

► Rachel Lau '19 with her Pantene Beautiful Lengths donation, which will be used to make a wig for a woman battling cancer.

► Far right: Spanish teacher and Mid Class Dean Phillip Koshi, known for his uniquely stylish coif, agreed to shave his head if fundraising reached the \$2,000 mark.

of students willing to shave their heads or donate their locks. Peter spoke to his peers during an assembly, sharing a story that was both personal and powerful.

Peter worked as an intern in the government relations department of Chicago's Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital last summer. One of his projects involved planning a trip to Washington, D.C., for a young patient and her family. Peter accompanied 6-year-old Jamela, her mom, and her two brothers to the nation's capital, where they met with congressmen and women, senators, and officials with the Children's Hospital Association. They spent a day on Capitol Hill lobbying against cuts to Medicaid. About 30 million children nationally and 1.5 million children in Illinois

rely on Medicaid, Jamela among them.

"It was an incredible experience," says Peter, "and meeting Jamela and spending time with her family was quite meaningful. I was planning on shaving my head in her honor, then she passed away. It was only three days before the St. Baldrick's event at Taft. It made me feel even more strongly that I was doing something good and important for her and her family."

Sharing that story, Peter believes, inspired more Taft students to get involved.

"Talking about a friend—a 6-year-old child who had cancer—made it more tangible and emotional," says Peter. "I think people began to recognize the significance and impact such a simple act could have on a child's life." ■

Though saintly in its mission, St. Baldrick's has no ecclesiastical ties. St. Baldrick is a portmanteau, marrying bald, shaven heads with St. Patrick's Day revelry. The idea was born in 1999 with three New York businessmen looking for a way to share their good fortune. It came to fruition the following year at a St. Patrick's Day party at a pub in Manhattan. The first-year goal of shaving 17 heads and raising \$17,000 turned into 19 bald heads and \$104,000 donated to fund the research of the Children's Oncology Group. Since their incorporation as an independent foundation in 2005, St. Baldrick's has raised more than \$234 million for research into curing childhood cancers. Learn more at stbaldricks.org.



Non ut Sibi: Serving Those Who Serve



Taft’s Red Rhino Fund awarded four nonprofit organizations grants totaling \$7,135 earlier this year, the culmination of a months-long process designed to support groups working to impact the lives of children in the Greater Waterbury community. Percussionists from Bravo Waterbury!, an organization that received grant dollars from the Red Rhino Fund last year, performed in Bingham Auditorium during the awards ceremony.

Founded in 2007, the Red Rhino Fund is an endowed charitable fund run this year by an eight-member student board with two faculty advisors. At its core, the fund’s mission is an extension of the school motto, Not to be served, but to serve. The board works to create positive change in the Greater Waterbury community for children, especially those who are underprivileged, by awarding monetary grants and promoting local organizations in support of education, literacy, and the

arts. Along the way, they gain solid perspectives on both the mechanics and importance of philanthropic work.

“Our group is successful due to the culmination of many students working hard and in unison,” Red Rhino Fund Board President Hanna Murphy ’18 explains. “Serving on the board has not only given each of us the opportunity to experience philanthropic work, it has also allowed us to see how our hard work helps other students.”

In September, the board set a budget for the academic year, which included grants and marketing costs on one side, and income generated through events like Denim Day, an annual badminton tournament, and the Spring Fling on the other. Grants Committee Chair Raveeno Douglas ’18 led the initiative to identify and evaluate grant recipients, largely through site visits.

“Though the work of the majority of not-for-profit organizations is consistent with their specific missions, we find

that an organization is best evaluated through actual site visits,” says Douglas. “We wanted to be able to observe the educational impact on the lives of the youth in the Greater Waterbury area.”

In making their awards, the Red Rhino Fund board considers things like the breadth of an organization’s reach and how it plans to spend the grant dollars. They extend their own reach by adhering to a policy that prevents any organization from receiving a fund grant in two consecutive years. The 2018 grant winners are the United Way of Greater Waterbury, offering a broad range of philanthropic services across the region; the St. Vincent DePaul Mission, working to make a positive difference in the lives of the homeless, hungry, and mentally ill; Save Girls on F.Y.R.E., Inc., enhancing the lives of girls and young women who live in underserved communities; and Reach Out And Read, Inc., working to close achievement gaps through early literacy interventions. ■

Website Continues to Wow!

THE COUNCIL FOR ADVANCEMENT and Support of Education (CASE) recognized the Taft School website with a gold Circle of Excellence Award. The site earned top honors in the Marketing Communications/Website category in the 2018 District I Circle of Excellence Awards competition. Awards were presented at the CASE Conference in Boston in March. Boston University’s Shipley Prostate Cancer Research Center took silver in the same category, with the MIT Chemical Engineering Department rounding out the field with bronze.

CASE is a professional association serving educational institutions and the advancement professionals who work on their behalf in alumni relations, communications, development, marketing, and allied areas. Its membership includes more than 3,670 colleges and

universities, primary and secondary independent and international schools, and nonprofit organizations in more than 82 countries across the globe.

The Arts microsite, housed within the Taft School website, also took home top design honors, earning gold in the inspirED School Marketers 2017 Brilliance Awards competition. InspirED is an online professional development resource and community for PK-12 private school marketing and communications administrators in the U.S. and abroad. ■



DAN CALORE WORKS WITH PERFORMANCE ENGINEERING students in Taft’s new Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) Laboratory. The lab consists of a technologically and ergonomically progressive classroom; a project-based, mechanical-build workspace with advanced safety features; and a technology laboratory with, Calore says, high-tech additive and reductive engineering tools.





HEADMASTER
WILLY
MACMULLEN '78
REFERS TO THE
ANNUAL
LOWER MID
MACBETH
RECITATION
CONTEST
as "the best night
of the year," and for
Ivy Zhuang '21,
it may have
been just that.
Ivy placed first
in the 2018
competition for her
delivery of Lady
Macbeth's
Act I, Scene V plea to
the spirits.



BEST-ON-BEST BARNBURNER?
Maybe...but most definitely a great time when
alumni took to the ice in Odden Arena for the
annual Alumni Hockey Game. ■



THE BOLD,
VIBRANT
PAINTINGS
OF ALUMNI
ARTIST
WILLIAM
HUDDERS '82
(above) set the
table for the
multimedia
sensory feast of
student art
(at left) that
brought Potter
Gallery to life
during the
Winter Term.

EVERY SUMMER, TAFT STUDENTS chase their dreams through a broad range of artistic endeavors, some with assistance from the Kilbourne Summer Enrichment Fund. Established by John Kilbourne '58, in memory of his parents, Samuel W. and Evelyn S. Kilbourne, these summer grants help students attend enriching programs in the arts. The 2017 Kilbourne Scholars shared their adventures with the Taft community during a Morning Meeting in February. They are, from left, Brady Grustas '19, Cami Long '19, Lily Turner '18, John Kilbourne '58, Gerry Calles '18, Haylee Snow '19, and theater teacher Helena Fifer.



Of Trembling Winter, the Fairest Flowers o’ the Season

SHAKESPEARE RETURNED TO TAFT for his annual winter visit, this time not only for the traditional recitation competitions, but also for a uniquely imagined staging of *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, in which six students shared the title role.

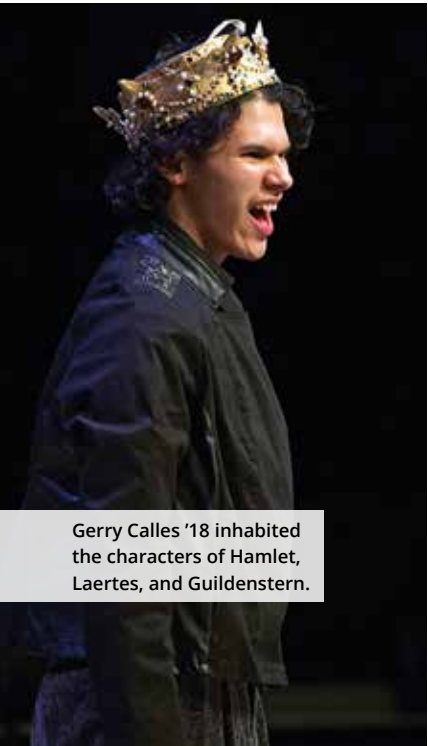
“Many years ago, I saw a production of this play in which the role of Hamlet was played by four actors,” notes Performing Arts Technical Director David Kievit. “They were always on stage together sharing lines, thoughts, and emotions.”

The dynamic, he says, was a “formidable force,” and one that added clarity to the storytelling and to the theatrical experience.

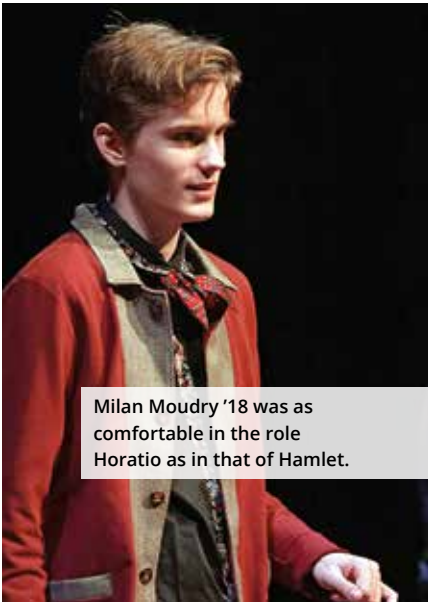
“When I watched other productions with one actor in the role, I sometimes

thought that if I could just take him out to the lobby for a minute or two I could straighten this whole thing out. But with four I never had that thought,” Kievit says. “Hamlet does a great deal of introspection, and having another Hamlet to talk to—or talk with—at times can be comforting for the other characters in the play.” ■

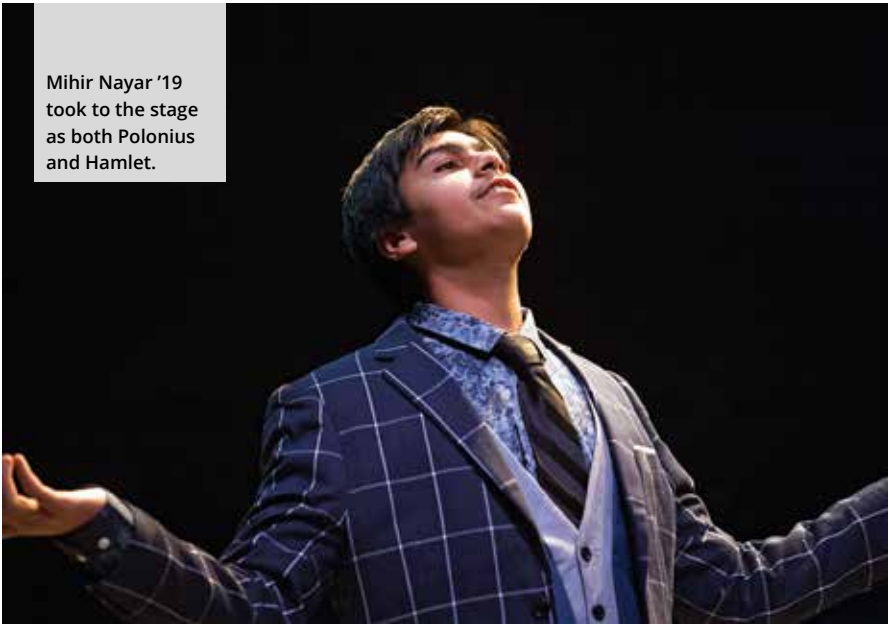
◀ Louise Gagnon ’18 and Will de Melo ’19, here as Queen Gertrude and King Claudius, also shared the role of Hamlet.



Gerry Calles '18 inhabited the characters of Hamlet, Laertes, and Guildenstern.



Milan Moudry '18 was as comfortable in the role Horatio as in that of Hamlet.



Mihir Nayar '19 took to the stage as both Polonius and Hamlet.



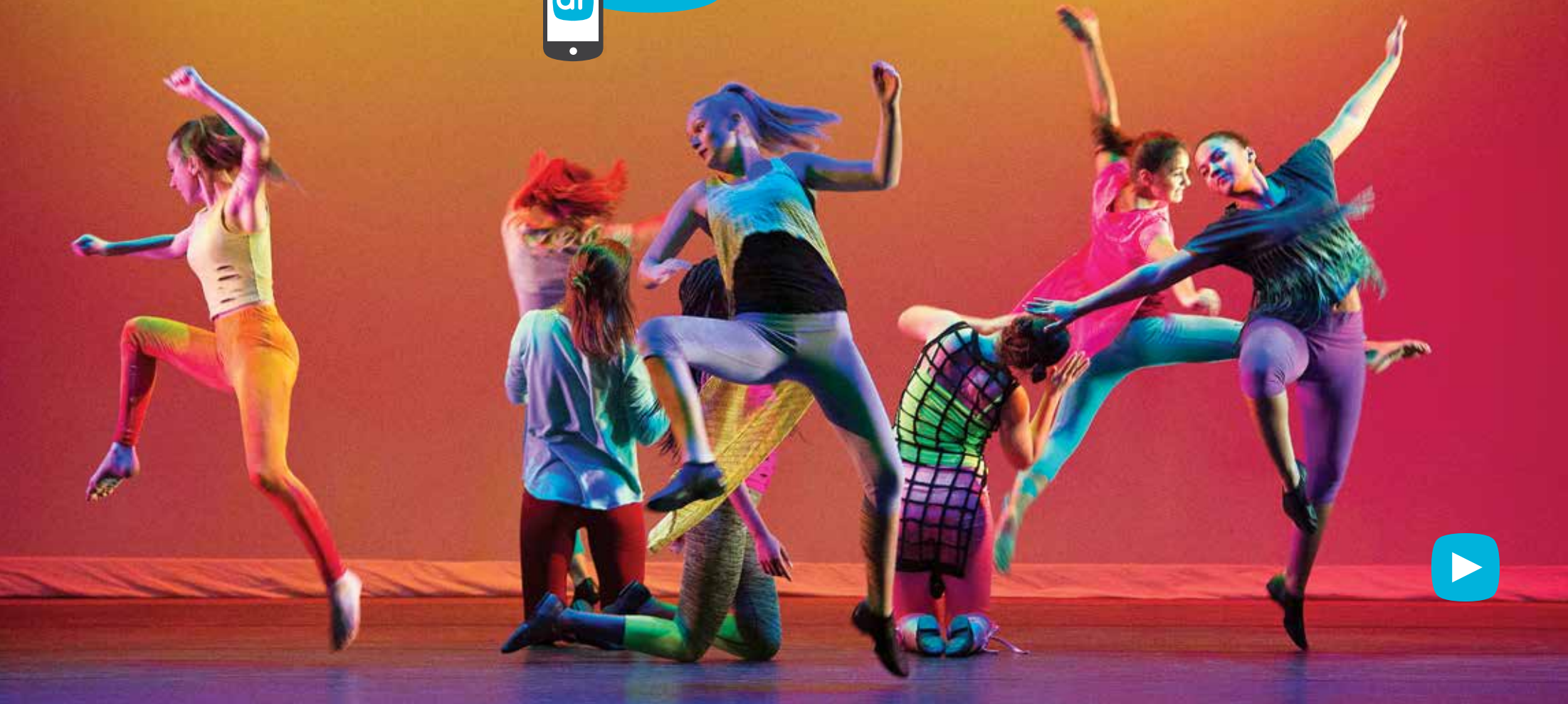
Tania Tsunik '20 played both Hamlet and Ophelia.

The Dance Ensemble

WINTER CONCERT WAS A VIBRANT CELEBRATION OF MOVEMENT, CULTURE, POWER, AND EXPRESSION.



Watch a clip from *Restart*, choreographed by the performers and directed by dance teacher Sarah Surber.





Empowering Youth to Wage Peace

“HOW MANY OF YOU READ THE paper and have a sense that there is more conflict today than you remember?” asked Nancy Lindborg, president of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) during her Morning Meeting visit to Taft in January. “It seems that we are really engulfed in conflict right now....This is a time that all of us need to be very mindful of what is happening, and what our role is both as individuals and as part of our greater country.”

USIP was founded 34 years ago, Lindborg explained, by Congress in an effort to provide a nonpartisan, independent federal institute that was devoted to better preventing and resolving violent conflict.

“There was a group of leaders in Congress who had served in World War II and the Korean War who were seized by the fact that we needed, as a country, more capacity and greater focus on how to wage peace as well as how we wage war,”

said Lindborg. “They noted that there were many military academies, and that there needed to be an academy for peace, as well.”

Conceived as a national peace academy in the 1960s and married in principle with grassroots efforts in the '70s, the legislation that established the institute was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1984. Its efforts today span the globe and include identifying, training, and empowering youth leaders living in conflict zones around the world. ■

Nancy Lindborg's visit to Taft was made possible by the Rear Admiral Raymond F. DuBois Fellowship in International Affairs, which offers Taft students the opportunity to learn more about international affairs through annual presentations by guest lecturers. Her talk and most Morning Meeting presentations are available on Taft's website at www.taftschoool.org/multimedia.



**UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE**
Making Peace Possible

“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable....Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Taft's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration began with WorldFest, an evening of cultural immersion; continued with an international dance, exceptional speakers, workshops, and a unique keynote experience; and concluded with our Cultural Arts Celebration, featuring powerful performances by students and faculty. Pictured is soloist Kaedi Dalley '18 and the ensemble singing the finale, *I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free*.





Lexi Cafiero '18 hustles for the puck against Hill School.

For more on the winter season, please visit www.taftsports.com

Winter Sports **WRAP-UP**

BY STEVE PALMER
Photography by Robert Falcetti

Girls' Hockey 17-6-0

- FOUNDERS LEAGUE CHAMPIONS
- NEPSAC QUARTERFINALISTS

The Taft girls' hockey team made a significant leap this season, achieving several firsts in many years, including making it to the PKO Tournament Championship game (eventual runners-up), earning the Founders League Championship (a 3-way tie), and qualifying for the

NEPSAC tournament for the first time since 2004, as the #6 seed. Highlights of the season included a post-holiday eight-game winning streak, with five shutouts. Taft had tremendous leadership from its eight seniors, led by captain Natalie Witkowski '18, who was selected to receive the Patsy K. Odden Hockey Award this year. Selected as Founders All-League players were defender Claudia Vira '18, forward Lexi Cafiero '18, and goalie Sidney Molnar '18. Selected to

All-NEPSAC First Team were Sidney Molnar and, for the Honorable Mention Team, Claudia Vira. Next year, a solid core of returning players will be led by captain-elect Shannon Bucci '19.

Boys' Hockey 9-13-1

This year's team will be recognized for their growth throughout the season both on and off the ice. Led by 10 seniors



Shea Courtmanche '18 wins a faceoff against Salisbury in late November.

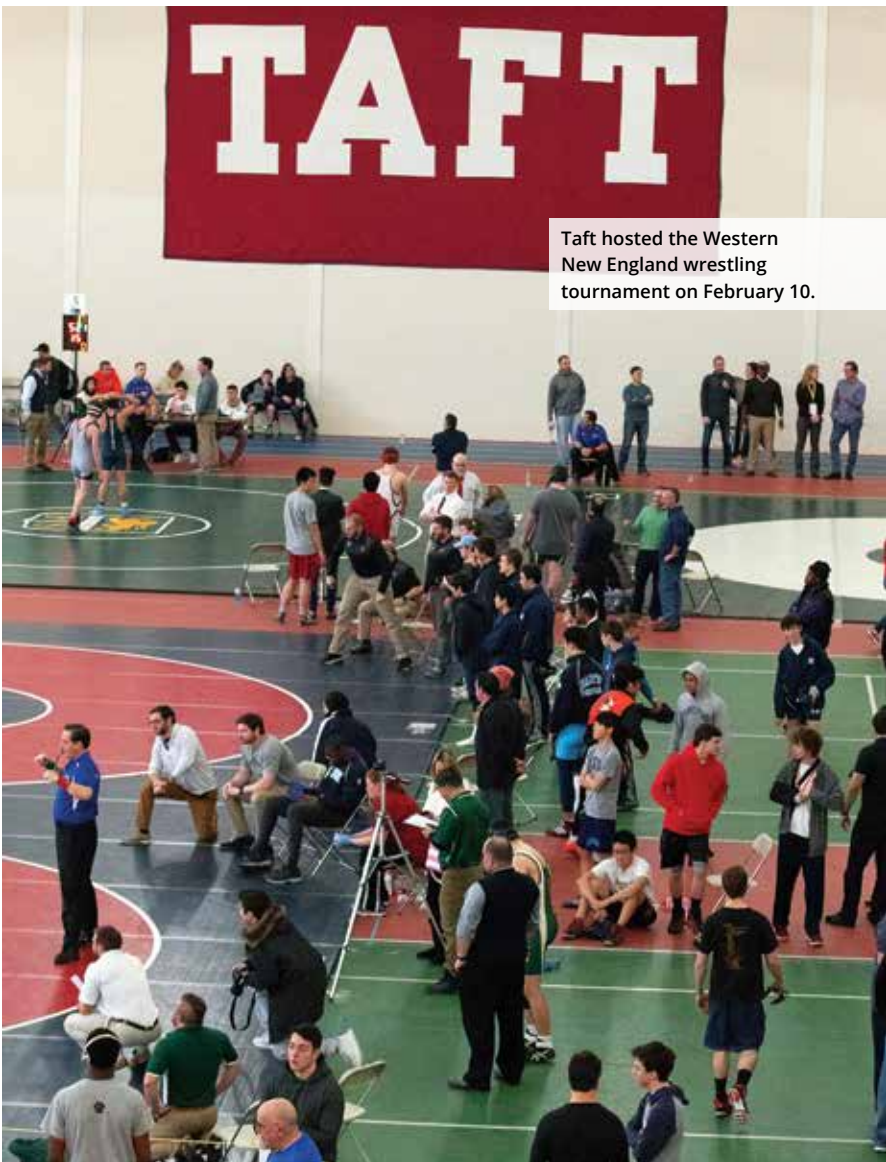


Omar Veliz '20 tangles with a Trinity-Pawling wrestler in a February match.

Wrestling 10-3

With a balanced lineup, the Rhinos powered to a 10-3 record in dual meets but missed three critical contests due to the weather. Key victories included a 58-21 win over what appeared to be a resurgent Hotchkiss team and a 54-30 win over the always tough Avon squad. While injuries and some bad luck hampered the team's showing at the league tournament, Taft did crown two league champions for the first time since 2011. Frank Robertshaw '18 at 170 and Alex Jones '18 at 195 both pinned their way through the finals. The tri-captains went to New England's the following weekend, where Drew Dye '18 at 160 and Robertshaw both won matches and Jones took 3rd place, Taft's highest finish since 2009.

and co-captains Jordan Tonelli '18 and Billy Dobensky '19, the focus of the season was to play a high-paced style of hockey by committing to a team-first mentality. The Rhinos started the season well with a 2-1 record at the St. Paul's jamboree and a 2-2 record at the Lawrenceville tournament, and finished with eight 1-goal games against some of the top teams in New England. Key wins came against strong teams from Avon (3-2), Kent (4-2), and Loomis (5-2). The second half of the season was fueled by Taft's skill and stability on the power play and penalty killing units. All-Founders League selections were Jack Feinstein '18 and Johnny Hartfiel '18. For his overall play and contributions to the team and the spirit of hockey at Taft, Jordan Tonelli earned the Coach's Hockey Award. Goalie Caleb Hannon '18 earned the Angier Hockey Trophy as the player who did the most to promote good sportsmanship in the interest of the team. Taft's leading scorers for the season were Ryan Colwell '19 (26 points), followed by Jordan Tonelli (23 points) and Christian Jimenez '20 (15 points). Next year's team will be led by captain-elect Billy Dobensky.

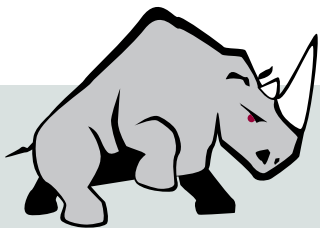


Taft hosted the Western New England wrestling tournament on February 10.

Girls' Basketball 18-6

► NEW ENGLAND QUARTERFINALISTS

With an 18-6 regular season finish, wins in the quarterfinals and semifinals of the New England 8 Tournament, a 6-1 Founders League record, and another appearance in the Class A New England Tournament, the girls' varsity basketball team enjoyed one of its most successful seasons in years. Four-year varsity players and co-captains Lauren Pelosi '18 and Juliana Yamin '18, three-year letter-winner



WINTER ATHLETIC AWARD WINNERS

Patsy Odden Hockey Award
Natalie Witkowski '18

Coach's Hockey Award
Jordan Tonelli '18

Angier Hockey Trophy
Caleb Hannon '18

John L. Wynne Wrestling Award
Alex Jones '18

Harry F. Hitch Wrestling Award
Frank Robertshaw '18

1978 Girls' Varsity Basketball Cup
Lauren Pelosi '18
Juliana Yamin '18

James Paynter Logan Memorial Basketball Trophy
Shamir Johnson '18

Girls' Ski Racing Award
Maddie Savage '18

Boys' Ski Racing Award
Max Fossland '19

1986 Girls' Squash Award
Aariya Patel '19

Boys' Squash Award
Raunak Advani '19



Kayla Robinson '19 intercepts a pass intended for a Berkshire player.

Kristin Manfredda '18, and postgraduate Amara Chidom '18 were joined by upper mid Kayla Robinson '19 to comprise an experienced and talented starting five, with newcomer Natalie Hodak '21 seeing substantial minutes off the bench. The Rhinos' defeat of perennial power Northfield Mount Hermon in December was a highlight, as were three

victories over Hotchkiss and one each over Choate and Deerfield. Pelosi, who will play at Amherst College next year, Chidom (headed to Pomona-Pitzer), and Robinson were voted All-New England Class A All Stars by opposing coaches—the first time three Taft players were so honored. This was also an exceptionally close and mutually supportive squad.



Captain Shamir Johnson '18 rises over the defense in a game against Suffield.

Boys' Varsity Basketball 11-13

For only the third time in the past 11 years the boys' basketball team finished with a losing record, but the Rhinos did not play a single game this season with their whole roster and were challenged by injuries. Taft was anchored by Shamir Johnson '18, who was the team's leading scorer and rebounder, and was second in assists. On the defensive end, Johnson led the team in steals and deflections and was called on to defend the opposing team's best player. Johnson scored over 1,000 points and was selected to the NEPSAC All-League team. Point guard Adam Drummond '18 was pivotal in creating offense and dictating the pace of play for teammates, and led the team in assists. A bulk of the scoring came from Connor Printz '19 and Kai Kostmayer '20, who were threats to score from behind the 3-point arch as well as in transition. The team's 6-foot 9-inch center, Frank Lumaj '18, held down the middle with his ability to block, making it tough for teams to score inside. Season highlights include sweeping both Hotchkiss and Kent for the second straight year. The 2018-19 team will be captained by Connor Printz, who has proven himself as a leader on and off the court.



Sadie Pollack '21 gets ready to return a shot against Nobles.



Hunter Lord '19 returns a shot against Loomis Chaffee.

Skiing

The boys' and girls' ski teams both had solid seasons, getting faster with each race, and by the Carl Williams Championship Slalom, the boys placed 3rd and the girls tied for 5th out of 13 schools. The girls were 10-7 in the regular season and 7-1 against all girls' teams. They placed 4th of 13 teams in the New England, narrowly missing the podium, and were 8-1-4 in the Brigham Ski League Championships. The boys posted a record of 12-5 during the regular season and placed 6th of 14 teams in the New England and 3rd of 13 in the Brigham Ski League Championships. Natalie Waldram '18, co-captain Maddie Savage '18, and Jake Wasserstein '18 provided senior leadership for the 16 skiers on the varsity team, and each contributed significantly to the team's success. All three skied in the New England, and Waldram earned All New England honors in the giant slalom. Co-captain Max Fossland '19 skied to All New England

Honors in both the giant slalom and slalom and, with co-captain-elect Abby Ford '19, will lead the team next year.

Girls' Squash 5-6

Led this year by co-captains and returners Aariya Patel '19 and Zoe Eberstadt-Beattie '18 (unable to play due to injury), the team was comprised of two more returners, Eliza King Freedman '19 and Yasmeen Bae '18, and five new players, Carolina Salvatore '21, Sadie Pollack '21, Tiffany Tam '20, Nina Brockelman '19, and Minna Holleck '18. Key wins for the season came against Groton, Exeter, Hopkins, and Westminster. The Rhinos competed against top teams in the country in the Division II High School Nationals, dropping close early-round matches before finishing with a close final win against Harriton-Lower Merion, and finished tied for 11th at the Division A of the New England. At this championship #1 Patel and #2 Salvatore fought hard for two big

wins each, and Brockelman earned three wins and a 7th-place finish. Taft looks forward to many players returning next season, and the team will be captained by Aariya Patel and Eliza King Freedman.

Boys' Squash 8-6

Taft finished with an 8-6 record and competed at the Division II High School National Tournament and the Class A New England Tournament. The Rhinos were led by co-captains #3 Peter Keigher '19 and #2 Raunak Advani '19, and also by three seniors in the top 9, #6 Dylan Powell '18, #8 Isaiah Jones '18, and #9 Zander Salmikoff '18. Highlights of the season included team wins against Choate, Exeter, Loomis, and Westminster. Next year the team will be led by captains-elect Peter Keigher and Raunak Advani, as well as returners #1 Sanjeev Jayabalan '19, #4 Hunter Lord '19, #5 Peter Denious '20, and #7 Teddy Schoenholtz '21. ■

TO SERVE.

HOW THREE YOUNG ALUMS ARE LIVING OUT NON UT SIBI
IN THEIR DAILY LIVES IN THE MILITARY.

THREE RECENT GRADUATES CREDIT TAFT
WITH INSTILLING IN THEM A SENSE OF
SERVICE TO OTHERS THAT HAS INSPIRED
THEM TO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY. A NAVAL
METEOROLOGY AND OCEANOGRAPHY OFFICER,
A COMMUNICATIONS AND CYBER WARFARE
OFFICER, AND A MARINE CORPS TEST PILOT
HAVE TAKEN THE SCHOOL'S MOTTO TO HEART.

BY BONNIE BLACKBURN-PENHOLLOW '84

EGD/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE KEEFE RAFFERTY '10

"TAFT INSTILLED
MY CALLING
TO SERVE IN SUCH
TREMENDOUS WAYS."

After completing his deployment as a surface warfare officer aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Theodore Roosevelt*, Keefe Rafferty joined the Navy Meteorology and Oceanography Command this year—METOC is a branch command of U.S. Navy Information Warfare. He's stationed at the Stennis Space Center with its fleet survey team. Rafferty says the team travels the world's oceans to bottom map nearshore regions for publishing charts and safe navigation of military platforms and vessels.

Rafferty was awarded a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal from his commanding officer on the *Theodore*

Roosevelt when he transferred from the aircraft carrier. It's a difficult medal to earn during a first tour as an officer (two years after his graduation and commissioning). "I was humbled and honored to receive it," he says. "I can absolutely attribute the award to the crew I worked with onboard, but I also can attribute this to Taft, where my call to service all began."

As Rafferty was growing up as a faculty child at Taft—his mom is Jennifer Zaccara, former associate dean of faculty and English teacher, who served from 2001 to 2013—the school's motto, *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*, Not to be served but



◀ "During my spare moments in my office while on deployment, my chief and I broke out his ukulele and jammed out some tunes," Rafferty says. "A good way to relieve a busy schedule."



"IT'S A CALL TO HUMILITY. A DESIRE TO PLACE OTHERS BEFORE MYSELF IN EVERYTHING THAT I DO."

“FOR FIVE HOURS EACH DAY OR NIGHT, 5,000 SOULS WERE IN MY HANDS. A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOMEONE RIGHT OUT OF COLLEGE, BUT ALSO VERY FULFILLING.”



to serve, made a huge impression on him. He credits that motto with helping spark his desire to join the military.

“When I entered middle school, I quickly began to notice how I was different than a lot of my peers. Not in a bad way or a better way, but more of a disciplined way,” he says. “I focused on life

from a strategic and innovative mindset, focusing on mental and strength development and teamwork. I thought at the time that the military team, or family, would be the best fit for me for my initial career.”

His love of history and the ocean led to his decision to enter the U.S. Naval Academy, as well as for its education. “Annapolis gave me that opportunity,” he says. “I’ve always been a scholar at heart.

“I chose the Navy because I love the ocean,” he says. “I pretty much was always in the water whenever I could be. I also did not know what particular branch of the Navy I wanted to serve in, whether it be surface, submarines, aviation, special warfare, or the Marine Corps, so, I thought entering the Navy through the U.S. Naval Academy gave me that best option to prepare and have time to see what I wanted to pursue.”

Taft’s motto—and the school’s help when his brother, Bryce ’07, had a near-fatal diving accident just days before Rafferty’s senior year at Taft began—reinforced his desire to serve others.

“It’s a call to humility,” he says. “A desire to place others before myself in everything that I do. Hard to do when I am a pretty competitive person, notably on the athletic pitch, but I approach life as a servant leader and follower as opposed to a strict manager or egocentric leader concerned with one’s own career and personal gain. Money is not one of my life pursuits. In my faith, life is about serving—serving God, serving my country,

► Rafferty, with his former ship captain and a chief engineer, at a ceremony when Rafferty was promoted from ensign to lieutenant junior grade. The photo was taken next to a portrait of President Theodore Roosevelt, whom the ship is named after.

serving in any avenue where I can put my talents that God gave me to good use for the greater good. Taft instilled my calling to serve in such tremendous ways. When I look at schools, I always ask or see what their motto is, and I have yet to find one as powerful as Taft’s.”

Rafferty’s previous posting had him leading more than 60 sailors. “I was a surface warfare officer (SWO) on the aircraft carrier in the engineering department, where I led over 60 sailors in the management of all electrical systems on the ship outside of the nuclear reactor plant. I’m not an electrician by trade, but SWOs are placed into many different departments on the ship to lead and manage respectively, to include engineering, combat systems, operations, deck, navigation, and weapons,” he says.

“While out to sea, I also stood officer of the deck, where I was the leading officer and direct representative of the ship’s captain on the bridge. I ensured safety of navigation, ship and crew, mission completion, and seamanship innovation and training, maintaining situational awareness at all times of all radars. For five hours each day or night, 5,000 souls were in my hands. A lot of responsibility for someone right out of college, but also very fulfilling. It never gets old placing the ship into the necessary headwind and crosswind wind limits to launch and land our fixed and rotary wing aircraft.”

Sailing at night, Rafferty says, was the most difficult. “I was definitely



thinking about the past sailors, back when it was all sails. They didn’t have GPS or all the instruments,” he says. “We have technology today, so it’s really hard for present-day officers to think about that. We did learn how to navigate by the stars if the GPS goes down. It’s definitely a little more labor intensive!”

And even though he’s only 26, Rafferty feels personal satisfaction in watching those under his leadership rise to the occasion.

“I have the opportunity to affect other people’s lives every day,” he says. “Carpe diem! I can help and get to see my sailors accomplish their goals and dreams, whether that be promoting to the next rank, getting college-level degrees, obtaining qualifications, or raising a family. I get to have the opportunity to lead fine men and women each day.

My job encompasses being a directive officer holding sailors accountable one second, and the next second I may be giving them recognition for their accomplishments and training them how to be a team of teams. The Navy is about teamwork. In our field of work, when we do not operate as a team, sailors’ lives may unfortunately be in jeopardy. Succeeding as a team at the end is an amazing feeling. We grind it out and complete the missions. It’s a great feeling.”

“SUCCEEDING AS A TEAM AT THE END IS AN AMAZING FEELING. WE GRIND IT OUT AND COMPLETE THE MISSIONS. IT’S A GREAT FEELING.”



ENSIGN RHYDIAN GLASS '12

"MY LOVE AND PRIDE FOR OUR COUNTRY
MOTIVATE ME, PARTICULARLY CONTRIBUTING TO
AND SERVING SOMETHING GREATER THAN MYSELF."

Coming from a military background, Rhydian Glass always felt patriotic. Her grandfather and several other family members served in the military.

Glass is currently an ensign and a communications and cyber warfare officer stationed in Norfolk, Virginia, aboard the USS *Leyte Gulf*.

"I'm from a very patriotic town, and ever since I was young, I've always highly regarded the military," she says.

A star softball player at Taft, Glass went to Yale after graduation. The thought of joining the military was pushed back as she concentrated on her studies.

"I never knew becoming an officer was an option for me until my junior year of college—before then, I thought ROTC or the military academies were the only routes," she says. "When I learned that Officer Candidate School was an option for college graduates, I became very interested in the opportunity. It's always been a goal of mine to apply all

that I learned from my studies at Yale toward my career, and I saw the Navy as a challenging yet solid place to start."

Glass earned a bachelor's degree from Yale in environmental studies concentrating on national security and policy. She focused primarily on nonproliferation, electromagnetic pulses, and nuclear warfare issues. "A lot of what I studied actually pertained to the Navy and global naval issues," she says.

"I just turned 24 years old, and I am in charge of a division of nearly 20 sailors. Every day I lead them, from making sure work is properly and efficiently executed to providing support and guidance on a personal and career level," she says. "The travel is also every exciting. I've gotten a chance to see some incredible places around the world, from the Middle East to the Arctic Circle."

Glass says she joined her current ship as it was halfway through its deployment last summer.



▲ Rhydian Glass '12, ensign and communications and cyber warfare officer, above, and at right on the bridge of her ship, the USS *Leyte Gulf*, a Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser, with the USS *Kearsarge* in the background.

"EVERY DAY I STRIVE TO IMPROVE MYSELF AND MY SAILORS, SET STANDARDS, AND STRIVE TO MEET GOALS."



“I FLEW OUT OF BAHRAIN, SPENT SOME TIME IN THE ARABIAN GULF AND RED SEA. WE ENCOUNTERED PLENTY OF SANDSTORMS OUT THERE...AND WE SAILED THROUGH A MONSOON.”

▼ Glass received a gift from her parents after her commissioning ceremony in 2017 as she graduated from Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island.



“I flew out of Bahrain, spent some time in the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea,” she says. “We encountered plenty of sandstorms out there. Within my first week on board, we sailed through a monsoon. The Suez Canal is quite an interesting experience, traveling on a warship with land 50 meters to each side. I’ve been through the Mediterranean and saw Spain, went up north to Scotland—saw lots of sharks up there—and can proudly say I ‘Bluenosed,’ having crossed and spent time over the Arctic Circle. The water up there is *cold*. The fjords of Norway are absolutely surreal, and the views from the top of a warship’s mast are incomparable.”

Being in the military has changed her, Glass says. “I’m more confident and direct. I’m becoming a much stronger and efficient leader, and am learning how not to put up with silly nonsense. I can quickly adjust and adapt to any situation and circumstance, and I’m definitely more courageous.”

Those considering a career in the military should think hard about their choice, Glass says. You should “know what you’re getting into. Do the research, talk to people, consider the long-term pros and cons. And understand you can’t just take vacation time or slack off. Every day is mission critical, and no matter who you are, you play an important role. Commitment is serious.”

Glass says that civilians might not understand certain things about those who serve. “How much we sacrifice on a daily basis and the overall commitment. Planning vacations or even

weekend trips is very difficult,” she says. “When I’m out at sea, I’m limited on how often I can talk to family and friends. The hours are early and late. As convenient as uniforms are, I find that I miss that individualism that I can express through my own personal style.”

Maintaining long-distance relationships is also tough, she says, and so is keeping a sense of one’s nonmilitary self.

“I think it’s important to separate your civilian self from your military self. I don’t want to bring work home, especially the frustrations,” she says. “I leave work on the ship. Home and off-ship are my escape and fresh air. Little things like dressing up nice when I can, exercising, and making sure I stay connected to my friends and family are critical for mental, emotional, and overall physical health and stability.”

Looking to the future, Glass says she’s excited for the possibilities. “I’m very fortunate with the position I currently hold, as it could potentially lead to some great opportunities in the long run, as long as I continue to work hard, do my job right, and put forth every effort to be the best leader and division officer I can be. Every day I strive to improve myself and my sailors, set standards, and strive to meet both short- and long-term goals.”

It’s a difficult job, but Glass is proud of her service. “My love and pride for our country motivate me, particularly contributing to and serving something greater than myself,” she says. “It’s a challenge, but I know in the long run it’s worth it and every day I’m making a difference in the overall safety of Americans.”



▲ Glass in her working uniform, when she earned her “Bluenose” for crossing the Arctic Circle on ship.

“IT’S A CHALLENGE, BUT I KNOW IN THE LONG RUN IT’S WORTH IT AND EVERY DAY I’M MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE OVERALL SAFETY OF AMERICANS.”

MAJOR JOHN "JAY" ALSPACH '03

"THERE IS NO MORE FULFILLING EXPERIENCE THAN EXECUTING SAFE, PRODUCTIVE, AND EFFECTIVE FLIGHT OPERATIONS OVER DANGEROUS TERRITORIES."

Major John Alspach is a U.S. Marine F-35A operational test fighter pilot on exchange with the U.S. Air Force, flying over the deserts of Nevada, testing out fighter planes.

"I recently transitioned to my new job following a three-year tour as an FA-18 Hornet instructor pilot at Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One, the Marine Corps' advanced weapons school," he says. "I have deployed three times, to Afghanistan, Syria, and the Pacific theater of operations. One of those deployments was off the USS *Nimitz* aircraft carrier. I have been stationed everywhere from Pensacola, Florida, to Las Vegas, Nevada. However, I have spent the majority of my time living in Coronado, California, and flying out of Miramar, California, with aircraft carrier-based FA-18 squadrons."

■ "After my last flight as a Marine adversary pilot, I was showing my little girl the cockpit of an F-5N Tiger," Alspach says.



"BEING IN THE MILITARY HAS SHOWN ME A SIDE OF LIFE THAT I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPERIENCED IF I HAD GONE A MORE TRADITIONAL ROUTE."

Alspach also served as an aggressor pilot in the F-5. "As an instructor pilot, I was in charge of the development, standardization, and instruction of various systems and tactics in the FA-18," he says. "As an aggressor pilot, I flew against American forces in an adversary role, training them how to fight and win against threat nations."

As a boy, Alspach says he watched movies about military planes and knew he wanted nothing more than to fly fighter jets off aircraft carriers.

"I wanted to have a profession that was unique, exciting, and purposeful," he says. "It was alluring to think of a career that involved adventure, adrenaline,

purpose, and challenge. I chose the Marine Corps because I wanted to have options, from flying jets to jumping out of airplanes, to leading men and women, to furthering my education.

"After seeing all the services during my time at the Naval Academy, the Marines proved themselves to be more disciplined, confident, and aggressive than the other services. I fit in well with that group and wanted to be part of that team, especially if I were going to combat."

The best part of his job, Alspach says, has been the opportunity to lead servicemen and aircraft into combat.

"Combat operations require an immense amount of maturity, clear

thinking, and decisive decision-making due to the responsibility entrusted to me and fellow pilots," he says. "There is no more fulfilling experience than executing safe, productive, and effective flight operations over dangerous territories. In a sense, the feeling of accomplishment post-deployed flight operations is the most euphoric sensation one can imagine. After my last combat flight, I was relieved, proud, worried, sad, giddy—everything. Leading men and machines into combat is an awesome and unreal experience, an experience that is forever etched into my memory."

The down side? Being away from his family. "My last position mandated

► Jay Alspach, left, with a friend after their deployment, next to an FA-18 Hornet.



that I was gone flying, instructing, and researching for roughly six months out of the year," he says. "When I was in a fleet FA-18 squadron, (one that is operationally ready and deployable), I was gone for 29 out of the 44 months I was with the squadron. Leaving my wife and 2½-year-old little girl is something that has only gotten more difficult."

Yet Alspach has seen more things than he ever expected. "Being in the military has shown me a side of life that I never would have experienced if I had gone a more traditional route," he says. "I have seen the absolute highs and lows of society and humanity, and this experience has matured me rapidly. I would say, overall, I have become a very detail-oriented, skeptical, and wise person as a result. Serving has really opened my eyes to a lot of things."

There's a lot that people don't realize or acknowledge about those who serve, Alspach says.

"The military was not the most popular professional career option coming out of Taft," he says, "but if a person looks past the stereotypes of the military, one will realize that the military is full of opportunity, incredible people, and unbelievable experiences. Coming from a place such as Taft, where students are told, 'Not to be served, but to serve,' a young military officer is given an immense amount of responsibility and can make significant impacts on everything from young enlisted personnel to national strategic policy."

"I flew my first combat mission at age 26, leading FA-18 Hornets into Afghanistan to support coalition forces on the ground," Alspach says. Being responsible for men, machines, weapons, and policy at that age is a priceless experience. As clichéd as it sounds, you really can make an impact on something other than yourself as a military officer. You just have to choose what that impact is." ■

"YOU REALLY CAN MAKE AN IMPACT ON SOMETHING OTHER THAN YOURSELF AS A MILITARY OFFICER. YOU JUST HAVE TO CHOOSE WHAT THAT IMPACT IS."

■ Alspach in mid-air, waiting to get fuel from a U.S. Air Force tanker over Afghanistan.



While we have highlighted here only three young alumni now serving in the military, we fully acknowledge and express gratitude for the service of many other Taft graduates through the decades, both those currently enlisted and those who have nobly served in the past. We thank them all for their commitment to serve, a profound manifestation of *Non ut sibi*.

THANK YOU

A Ground breaking Approach to Cancer Treatment

Dr. Will Polkinghorn '95
is empowering patients to
gain access to the best treatments

By Neil Vigdor '95
Photography by Gary Fong/Genesis Photos





After presenting his thoughts during a Driver staff meeting, Polkinghorn carefully listens to ideas and thoughts from others.

We use them to hail rides and order coffee on the go. They can route us around traffic jams. But what if there was an app that could truly save your life?

It's not hyperbole. The company's name is Driver.

Will Polkinghorn '95 is the cofounder and CEO of the San Francisco-based treatment access platform, which has the technology world buzzing. The Driver app enables cancer patients to securely upload their medical records and tissue sample information, and most importantly, gain access to the best treatments across a network of more than 30 cancer centers.

A consumer platform that connects cancer patients to the world's largest inventory of treatments was the vision of Polkinghorn and Petros Giannikopoulos, who met on their first day at Harvard Medical School.

"What if we built a consumer platform that enabled cancer patients to access

treatments in the same way that Amazon transformed how we buy a book?"

Polkinghorn says. "Give the patient access to everything. That was the idea—to empower the patient to be the driver."

It almost didn't happen.

In 2014, Polkinghorn left his job as a radiation oncologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York to embark on the transcendent project. Something dawned on the Rhodes Scholar during his tenure at MSKCC, where he spent four days a week in its research building and one day taking care of patients in the hospital across the street. There was a glaring disconnect.

"It was in crossing that street and entering the hospital where I felt as if I was going back in time," said Polkinghorn,

“What if we built a consumer platform that enabled cancer patients to access treatments...to give the patient access to everything—to empower the patient to be the driver.”

who specialized in prostate cancer.

Peer-reviewed studies have shown that up to 80 percent of cancer patients want to participate in clinical trials. Yet only 3 percent of patients participate in clinical trials, and 60 percent of trials get shut down because there's a shortage of patients participating in them. Today, patients simply don't know what is available to them.

"The realization was, wow, the model of the existing retail space—the hospital—hasn't fundamentally changed in over 150 years," Polkinghorn says.

"In order to access a treatment, a patient has to enter a physical space and interact with a human clerk, the doctor. And that one doctor processes your information,

in a very short period of time, in order to show you the treatment options the individual doctor is aware of. In a world of Uber and Airbnb, cancer patients just don't have the access they deserve."

And so Driver was conceived. Now came the hard part—raising money.

The startup didn't want to be obligated to Big Pharma or the insurance industry to help it get off the ground. Driver's first investor was the well-known former Goldman Sachs executive, George Wellde Jr.

"We were literally done," Polkinghorn says. "I was in Hong Kong fundraising and when I came back to San Francisco, we were going to be out of dough."

Driver needed a breakthrough. And

▼ Dr. Will Polkinghorn '95, cofounder and CEO of Driver, a consumer platform that connects cancer patients to a large and most advanced inventory of treatments.



“We are uncovering more and more information about what causes disease. It’s exponential.... But there is now a huge gap between the potential of this science and that which is reaching the patient.”



it would come from Li Ka-shing, one of China’s most influential businessmen. While in Hong Kong, Polkinghorn emailed Solina Chau, Li’s life partner, and after a short meeting, Chau decided to invest \$10 million.

The infusion of cash enabled Polkinghorn and Giannikopoulos to begin building the world’s first treatment access platform. Today, Driver employs over 100 software engineers, product managers, laboratory scientists, and other entrepreneurs. Among them is Toni Pryor Leavitt ’07, an oncology nurse practitioner. Driver has offices in San Francisco, New York, and Shanghai and Shantou, China.

Polkinghorn now travels the globe to forge partnerships with the world’s best cancer centers. But long before he was an internationally respected physician, he came to Taft as a postgraduate from a Jesuit high school in his native Los Angeles.

He credits Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78, his advisor, for helping mold him into a gifted student, as well as longtime chemistry teacher David Hostage and retired English teacher Bill Nicholson.

“Taft was the most important year of my life,” Polkinghorn says. “If it were not for Taft, I would never have succeeded in college the way I did. I never would have won a Rhodes Scholarship. I never would have gone to Harvard Medical School. I certainly never would have started Driver.”

Another major influence was Larry Stone, the legendary Taft baseball coach who passed away last year. Polkinghorn pitched and played first base on the varsity team for Stone.

“At Taft I learned discipline,” Polkinghorn says. “I owe everything to Taft.”

Polkinghorn and his colleagues have gone to painstaking lengths to validate its core treatment, matching technology with the National Cancer Institute, Driver’s flagship partner.

Driver has also assembled a powerful board, including both Jennifer Doudna, the coinventor of the groundbreaking genomic editing technology known as CRISPR, and American fashion designer Tory Burch.

◀ Driver’s team includes over 100 software engineers, product managers, laboratory scientists, and other entrepreneurs.



▲ A highly interactive staff meeting held at Driver’s San Francisco office.

During the past 10 years, biology and medical science have undergone what Polkinghorn characterizes as an exponential explosion of knowledge and discoveries—passing a true tipping point that has been made possible by new technologies like genomics and gene editing.

“We are uncovering more and more information about what causes disease,” he says. “It’s exponential. It’s literally exponential. But there is now a huge gap between the potential of this science and that which is reaching the patient.

“When you look at the delta between what’s happening in the laboratory and what’s happening with the patient, it doesn’t take a domain expert to realize these are two different movies,” Polkinghorn says. “And there I was, a physician scientist straddling these two universes—struggling to reconcile the

two. The why of Driver is pretty simple.”

Polkinghorn is a man in motion, bouncing back and forth from San Francisco and New York to Europe and China. Hopping into an Uber. Grabbing coffee with investors. Meeting researchers. Hiring a public relations firm to handle the growing number of media inquiries. His laptop is running out of juice as we speak. So is his cell phone. He hands them both to a restaurant waiter to charge.

“Our message is really driven not toward a hot shot Silicon Valley crowd but instead toward our customer, the cancer patient,” Polkinghorn says. “And to serve this customer we are building the most powerful marketplace in the world.” ■

Neil Vigdor ’95 covers politics for *The Hartford Courant*.



“When you look at the delta between what’s happening in the laboratory and what’s happening with the patient, it doesn’t take a domain expert to realize these are two different movies.”

Tales of a **TAFTIE**

BY CHRISTOPHER BROWNER '12

Composer William Mayer, Class of 1944

MUSIC THAT "SINGS OUT WITH REAL BEAUTY"

Reflecting on a career spanning more than half a century and a body of work that included symphonies, operas, oratorios, ballets, chamber music, songs, and compositions for solo instruments, William Mayer '44 described his style as "a plaintive lyricism, motoric drive, humor, and a suggestion of great distance—whether of time or space."

Born in 1925 in New York City, the son of John, an amateur violinist, and Dorothy Ehrich Mayer, Mayer arrived at Taft when he was 15 and did not immediately find a home within the school's rigorous academic routine. Instead, he savored stolen moments improvising at the piano. After Taft, he enrolled at Yale, but before he could earn his degree was drafted into the Army, serving in Japan during the American occupation after the end of the Second World War.

Mayer returned to Yale in 1947 to complete a degree in history, but he felt something missing in his life. "An invisible wall seemed to prevent me from reaching my feelings," he recalled, and seeking a remedy to his malaise, "what first burst out was music....I knew then that, without slightest doubt, I would devote my life to music. I would become a composer."

This renewed purpose led him to study at both Juilliard and Mannes School of Music before launching his career. He scored his first major successes penning songs for children, including the popular "Bongo and His Baboon Drum," a tune later recorded by Burl Ives. The notoriety of these compositions ultimately led him to

create *Hello, World!*, a work introducing young listeners to different countries by teaching them to say "hello" in seven languages. The piece became so popular that humanitarian and former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, alongside baritone John Langstaff, recorded it for the Book of the Month Club. A television version of *Hello, World!* on CBS would go on to earn a Peabody Award.

Mayer also used his talents to tackle more serious subjects, though, as he admitted years later, he "was unprepared for the fact that getting one's 'adult music' programmed was a lot harder." One such work, *Letters Home*, was a setting of letters from members of the military serving in Vietnam that had its 1968 premiere as part of a memorial for the recently assassinated Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Mayer continued to garner great acclaim, and a number of prominent artists performed his works around the United States and abroad. Throughout his career, he collaborated with world-class singers including Eleanor Steber, Heidi Grant Murphy, and Christine Brewer. In 1971, Leopold Stokowski—famous not only for his time as music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra and New York Philharmonic but also for his role as the conductor in Disney's *Fantasia*—led the premiere of Mayer's piano



▲ William Mayer '44, from the interview "Quiet Rebel: Mayer at Seventy," by Zeke Hecker for Institute for Studies in American Music. CARL FISCHER MUSIC/THEODORE PRESSER COMPANY



▲ Composer William Mayer '44, along with librettist Susan Otto and child actors, at the RCA Victor recording session of *Hello, World!* narrated by former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt in 1958. MEREDITH NEVINS MAYER

concerto, *Octagon*, at Carnegie Hall. Critic Robert Weinstein hailed the piece as "a shattering, bold, and strangely beautiful piece of music."

Mayer's most enduringly popular composition, *A Death in the Family*, an opera based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by James Agee and Tad Mosel's play *All the Way Home*, first hit the stage in 1983. Of a recording of the work a few years later, commentator Charles Parsons proclaimed, "I was surprised to find my eyes welling up with tears at the ineffable beauty of the wedding of text and music." While John Rockwell of *The New York Times* wrote of Mayer's career, "[He is] especially known for his operas and songs... his work sings out with real beauty, both in the vocal writing and the instrumental settings."

In addition to composing, Mayer lectured at some of the country's most prestigious institutions, from Juilliard and Columbia to Yale and Boston University, and he served as a trustee of the record label Composers Recordings Inc. for

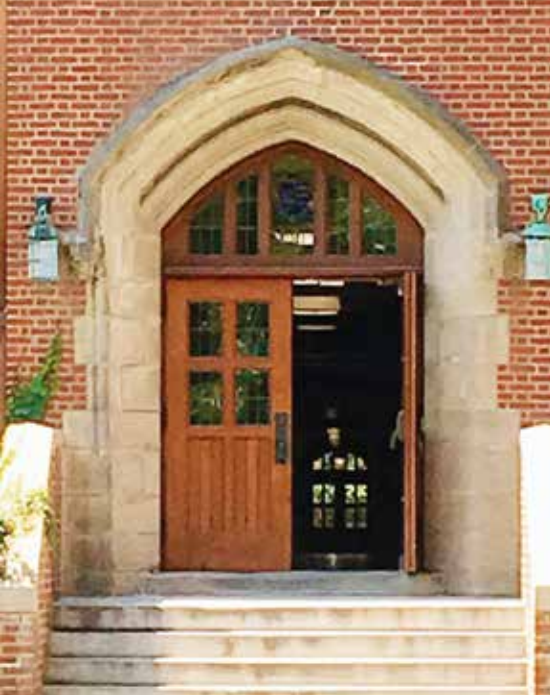
more than 30 years. He also received a number of awards and honors, including grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, and the American Music Society; a Guggenheim Fellowship; and a lifetime achievement award from the Center for Contemporary Opera, among many others.

But above all, the greatest achievement of Mayer's career was the thrill he received from communicating through his music. As he once observed, "The medium of music itself has always been a natural outlet for imaginative flights....A special joy is transmitting your emotions directly to the singer and then to the audience." ■



▲ William Mayer '44 (center) and his wife, Meredith, at his Taft 50th Reunion in 1994.

What successful Taftie, no longer living, would you like to see profiled in this space? Send your suggestions to beyusl@taftschoool.org.



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