A close-up of the new aquatic biomes center in Wu lobby which incorporates three tanks representing distinct aquatic zones: tropical freshwater rivers, coral reefs, and tropical estuaries. The center relies on sustainable aquarium protocols so all fish and corals are captive bred or aquacultured.

Conserving the Caribbean
By Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow ’84

It’s Not Easy Being Green
Five Alums with Vision
Lead the Way
By Neil Vigdor ’95

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“Committing to our residential spaces—our many dormitories, some over a century old, others quite new—is a really important part of the school’s long-term planning.”

In 1890, not long after Horace Taft decided to open a school for boys, he found a house in Pelham Manor he could rent from a family friend, and in September, our school was born. Taft wrote in his memoirs, “The furniture arrived at the same time that the boys and their parents did. Carpenters were at work upstairs, putting up the beds. It was a most comical beginning of a school.” And so, even from that comical start, ours was a boarding school.

With this as our history, it will not surprise anyone that committing to our residential spaces—our many dormitories, some over a century old, others quite new—is a really important part of the school’s long-term planning. After all, we cannot separate what Taft is from the fact that many faculty and students live and learn together. Ours is not an original model, but it is a really good one, and an old one, shared by many great kindred schools which see powerful educational benefits in having students live at their schools.

In the past dozen years, we have been in a dorm renovation campaign, which had several goals: ensure that students had safe, beautiful, and functional spaces; offer faculty housing of high quality; honor the architectural excellence of the campus; keep ahead of deferred maintenance; and create spaces that affirmed community and furthered our mission of the education of the whole student. I feel we’ve been able to meet the goals and with a real commitment to containing costs, in no small part due to the leadership of the board of trustees, the vision of our architect, the expertise of general contractors, and the management by business and facilities offices. It’s a good and important story.

In these years, we have fully renovated McIntosh House (19,000 square feet, with 35 rooms, and 3 apartments), Congdon House (17,000 square feet, 36 rooms, and 4 apartments), HDT (42,000 square feet, 74 rooms, and 9 apartments). Renovating these existing spaces proved far less costly than constructing new buildings—and we preserved our history as well. For each dorm, we had a consistent approach of completing the work in summers, thus ensuring we did not have to take the building off-line or disrupt school. Each dorm took three summers to complete. The first summer, as I often noted, was “the stuff you don’t see,” but which is vital: new fire safety, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical systems. The second summer was the work you did see, the complete transformation of all living spaces: new bathrooms, common rooms, student bedrooms, and hallways. A student asking the dorm after that summer would barely recognize it from a few months before. Consider, for instance, the mid

On MAIN HALL

A Word from Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78

SPRING 2019

Volume 89, Number 2

Send Alumni News to Taft Bulletin Alumni Office The Taft School 110 Woodbury Road Watertown, CT 06795-2100 taftbulletin@taftschool.org

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Summer—May 15
Fall—August 30
Winter—November 15
Spring—February 15

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This week 24 Taft students competed in the annual Technology Student Association (TSA) Tests of Engineering Aptitude, Mathematics, and Science (TEAMS), a national competition focused on engineering applications. This year’s theme was “Engineering and the Brain.” Each of Taft’s three teams wrote an essay—researched and completed before the test—on Artificial Intelligence applications. Event-day challenges included a 90-minute multiple choice test based on eight scenarios related to the theme, followed by a “build it” challenge, during which participants worked to rescue a bear cub (stuffed bear) from a well (recycling basket).

Follow @thetaftschool on Facebook and @taftschool on Instagram for daily glimpses of Taft life.

“Those who come after us and are looking for the experience of a boarding school. This is our past and our future. After all, every night, a lot of day students finish extra help with a teacher in the dorm and then head home, and hundreds of boarders finish their work and get ready for bed in their home. It’s only the scale that’s changed since that day in 1890 when the carpenters finished making those beds and Mr. Taft bid 14 boys good night.” - Willy MacMullen ’78

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Photo: Jim Mooney.
Lawrence B. Morris III ’65

2019 Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal Honoree

LARRY MORRIS ’65, who receives this year’s Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal, is a modest but social man. From the earliest days of his career, he understood—instructively it would seem—that conservation and resource management are really about relationships.

Morris describes himself as someone who never grew up or knew what to do with himself. But the fact remains that he has led the Quebec-Labrador Foundation, or QLF, for nearly 40 years, and he leaves behind an incredible legacy in the people he has mentored there.

QLF works around the world investing in nature to help cities and rural communities, companies, and farmers—one person at a time—for a future where the needs of people and the environment can be balanced.

These years into his president emeritus role, in which he is a sort of roving ambassador, Morris continues to serve QLF.

“It was hard at first,” he says, “in a psychological sense, but I’m enjoying it.” In his typically self-deprecating tone, Morris refers to his exalted sounding title of emeritus as “learning to keep my mouth shut.”

This new role has given him the opportunity to take care of unfinished business and given him time to write and reflect. He calls it a labor of love. “It’s hard work unless you’ve had familiarity with it. Keep your friends and relations connected.” He mentions numerous Tafties who’ve supported him in QLF’s work along the way. Former Headmaster John Esty, when he was at Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and Bob Poole ’50 both directed him early in his career, and many 1965 classmates and alumni from other classes have supported him all along.

The organization works locally, but ties into big environmental initiatives and brings them into communities. “It sounds simple,” he says, “but no one was doing it then—community-based conservation.”

That connection between community and conservation was not obvious at first, he says. The QLF team began with a focus on service and community and gradually found a niche among conservation organizations—developing local support for conservation initiatives—something not many non-profits were doing back in the early ’80s.

“QLF’s model of working across borders is one of our hallmarks,” says Morris, “and has been responsible for our being invited to share our Atlantic region and our operational methodologies with other regions around the world.”

His colleagues credit him for building a formal year-round internship program. “They hired young people, interns, was key,” he explains, “in that they avoided the Ph.D. hubris: 'that might come in and say 'we know best.' QLF’s goal has always been to work with communities and really listen to them.”

There are now 5,000 QLF alumni in the U.S., Canada, and around the world. The organization has worked in 24 countries. He pushed boundaries from U.S. and Canada to Central Europe, Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

As an NGO, they are able to address transboundary environmental issues, like watersheds or wildlife migration corridors, in ways not possible by governments. As for what specific initiatives Morris is most proud of, “The Middle East Program begun in the mid-’90s to promote communication among countries there based upon common concern for the environment which they all share, is one,” Morris says. “It’s built on the QLF model of working across borders and focusing on the individual and community.”

Another, he says, “was QLF’s ‘friendly takeover’ in the 1990s of the former Sounds Conservancy (Essex, Connecticut), providing education and research opportunities in the marine environment of southern New England and New York that rounded out QLF’s home region geography to the sounds.”

Larry has lived out our motto in an incredible fashion,” says Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78. “He has been a leader in the environmental and conservation fields, not just through QLF, but also other organizations and boards. He is at once a big-picture leader, with strategic vision, the ability to shape policy, and connect with leaders around the world, and yet he also knows what it is to roll up his sleeves and mentor young people, clean water, and preserve habitats. In an age when we are made intensely aware of the interconnectedness and fragility of our planet, we need leaders like him.”

From the beginning of his time at QLF, Morris showed his passion and commitment to its cause. His bio from 1975, in fact, emphasizes his interest in the “socioeconomic implications of resource issues and resource management decisions on an international level, especially those relating to wildlife conservation.”

Ten years later he became president of the organization. And his interests have stayed remarkably true to that early custom. He may tell you he never grew up, but it seems he simply knows what really mattered before the rest of us did. And then he stayed the course.

—Julie Reiff

“Larry Morris is an outstanding choice for the 2019 Alumni Medal. His life has been dedicated to the protection of critical and irreplaceable natural resources and the education of people, young and old, about the importance of that mission. His leadership has also transformed the QLF into an organization of international prominence, with influence far beyond its home communities. It is an honor to bestow the award upon Larry this year.”

—Holcombe T. Green III ’87, trustee and outgoing chair of the Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal Committee
WHEN ABBY FABIASCHI ’98 decided to leave her high-stress corporate job, her boss said it would be the biggest mistake of her life. She took the risk anyway and hasn’t looked back since. Fabiaschi turned her sights toward writing a book, taking care of her two children, and becoming a human rights advocate. A few years later, she’s now a published author and cofounder of Empower Her Network (EHN), a nonprofit that collaborates with survivors of human trafficking to help them on a path toward independence.

Operating in several large cities and regions throughout the U.S., EHN helps break down barriers for victims of human trafficking. “Domestic survivors of human trafficking go into immediate aftercare services,” Fabiaschi explains. “When they’ve exhausted those services, there’s a handoff to society, and that is often unsuccessful. So these women are at very high risk for re-trafficking and for homelessness due to a lack of viable alternatives. They often leave aftercare services in the same vulnerable circumstances that led to their initial exploitation.”

That’s where EHN comes in. The organization works closely with victims of human trafficking to ensure the handoff to society is successful. EHN advocates begin by taking time to get to know each participant and her specific needs in order to create a 12- to 18-month individual “empowerment plan.” The goal is that after completing the plan, participants will have reached fiscal independence and ultimately end the exploitation cycle. In short, their life will have been transformed.

The biggest barriers for these women include housing, education, and steady-wage employment. Fabiaschi shares examples of how EHN steps in to help overcome these barriers. “Most women have no credit, or very poor credit if their trafficker used their credit. So in those examples, we have relationships with landlords who work with our survivors on a special case, taking their application even though they have this barrier,” she says. “The women then pay full rent, and two years later, they do have credit and a landlord who can be their reference.”

Fabiaschi also describes an example of how the organization assists with steady-wage employment. “We have survivors who are ready and would love to go back to school, but they have to work two minimum wage jobs—because a minimum wage isn’t a livable wage. Our partners pay a minimum of $15 an hour. And we get these women into jobs where they can go from working 80-hour weeks to making just as much money in one 40-hour a week job…”

Prevalent in all 50 states, human trafficking is a $28 billion industry in the U.S. alone. At EHN, 40 percent of victims are American-born (often runaways or children placed into foster care), while 60 percent are immigrants who were lured to America with the false promise of a better life and a job. Despite the unimaginable hardships these victims have been through, Fabiaschi emphasizes that these women are capable, hardworking, and ready to rewrite their narrative. EHN is currently helping 40 women and will be adding 70 more this year pending funding.

What is most amazing is that the women who complete the program want to give back and be part of the solution. “To get through what they’ve gone through and then be thinking about other people is pretty humbling,” says Fabiaschi.
SCOTT BARNSBY ‘94 spent more than 10 years crisscrossing the country as a scout for the Cleveland Indians before he finally got a full taste of why it was all worth it.

It was the ninth inning of Game 7 of the 2016 World Series against the Chicago Cubs, and Barnsbys was behind the first-base dugout when Indians outfielder Rajai Davis—not a powerhitter by any stretch—clubbed a miraculous game-tying home run to keep Cleveland’s title hopes alive.

“Looking around, the excitement, seeing everybody hug each other,” Barnsbys recalls. “I don’t think I’ve ever felt anything like that in a ballpark before. The ballpark exploded.”

The Indians wound up losing the game, and the series, in extra innings. But getting that close to securing a world title has kept Barnsbys going ever since. And as the director of amateur scouting for the organization, he has a big hand in determining Cleveland’s future success.

A former pitcher for Taft and the University of Massachusetts, Barnsbys was drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1998 and played for two years in the minors before his playing career ended. It was then that a former coach suggested he come to Cleveland as an intern to work with him in the Indians scouting department.

There, he helped assemble an advance report for pitchers to prep for upcoming opponents. It was a time-consuming task in those days before everything was digital. “Somebody needed to clip all the video and chart all the pitches,” Barnsbys says. “But it also requires a personal touch.”

When scouts would come in from around the country to discuss prospects, Barnsbys found himself gravitating toward them. He loved hearing the stories about players and families, and he missed being at the ballpark.

So he moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to become an area scout for the Indians. He was responsible for canvassing Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi for talented high-school and college players that Cleveland might be interested in selecting in the Major League Baseball amateur draft in June. There are 40 rounds to fill, and Barnsbys had to be prepared to provide detailed information about any of the prospects from his region.

“The job of an area scout is simple: you know the player inside and out,” he says. “Most people assume that simply means his abilities on the field, Barnsbys says. But it also requires a personal touch.

“To really learn what makes a guy tick is one of the most important things an area scout can do, along with building a relationship with the player and the family,” Barnsbys says. “To really learn what makes a guy tick is one of the most important things an area scout can do,” Barnsbys said, “along with building a relationship with the player and the family.”

When he started, 80 percent of a scout’s job was reliant upon what he calls “gut feel” about a prospect. But that was before advanced analytics swept across baseball, led by the “Moneyball” Oakland A’s in the early 2000s, who used strictly objective indicators to find advantages over franchises with much larger budgets. Now, scouting departments across baseball are filled with statisticians with Ivy League degrees crunching a head-spinning amount of data about players and tendencies.

That doesn’t mean that instincts and subjective analysis have been entirely excised from the scouting process. “They’re still important pieces of the puzzle,” Barnsbys says. “But smaller pieces.”

As scouting director, Barnsbys time is largely consumed with reading reports and talking with his staff about the directions the club could head in the draft. His time is primarily spent in front of a computer sorting through spreadsheets. And he misses spending more time at the ballpark.

“With all of the travel that he used to do in his various scouting roles. “We joke about the Marriott points,” he says. “Let’s just say we’re at the highest level of status. It was well over 100 nights a year on the road.”

Regardless, he is still connected to the game he loves. “You’re in your car, you’re driving, you’re thinking about baseball,” Barnsbys says. “You’re talking about baseball. That’s a lot of fun.”

—Zach Schonbrun ’05
“IT IS AN IMPRESSIVE LINE in elevator talk to say that I teach newly blind adults to use power tools,” says Bill Reynolds ’69. After a 35-year career as a painter and muralist in Washington, D.C., and Boston, Reynolds became a woodworking instructor at the Carroll Center for the Blind, a leading blindness rehabilitation center in Newton, Massachusetts, in 2010 and never looked back.

Enrolling as a premed student at Franklin & Marshall College after graduating from Taft, he quickly developed a love for the visual arts. “At that time, I wasn’t aware that art was a possible avenue, but I ended up taking a lot of philosophy classes—philosophy of aesthetics—and some art courses,” he remembers. From there, Reynolds built an exciting career as a freelance artist, painting everything from courtroom illustrations for the Supreme Court to vast murals in government buildings and museums. “At the same time, I also had an interest in the field of blindness and Braille,” he continues. “It was the opposite of my intense focus on visual work, but really Braille is all about communication, and that’s what painting is about too.” And when the Great Recession hit in 2008 and he struggled to acquire commissions to paint new works, the time was right for Reynolds to transform this lifelong fascination into a career opportunity.

“When the economy went down, mural projects went down too,” he explains. “I was wondering what to do next and ultimately came across the Carroll Center.” But when he inquired about a possible position at the center, he was surprised with his assignment. “I was more interested in woodworking.,” he continues. “It was the opposite of my fascination into a career opportunity. As a freelance artist, painting everything from courtroom illustrations for the Supreme Court to vast murals in government buildings and museums.”

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Top left: As a longtime freelance artist, Reynolds painted this 20-foot by 5-foot mural, which depicts the Boston waterfront around 1916.

Bottom left: Reynolds working with a Braille reader at the Carroll Center.

Bottom right: Reynolds teaches a blind client how to use his hands and tools safely through woodworking.

Visualizing Through One’s Hands

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Enrolling as a premed student at Franklin & Marshall College after graduating from Taft, he quickly developed a love for the visual arts. “At that time, I wasn’t aware that art was a possible avenue, but I ended up taking a lot of philosophy classes—philosophy of aesthetics—and some art courses,” he remembers. From there, Reynolds built an exciting career as a freelance artist, painting everything from courtroom illustrations for the Supreme Court to vast murals in government buildings and museums. “At the same time, I also had an interest in the field of blindness and Braille,” he continues. “It was the opposite of my intense focus on visual work, but really Braille is all about communication, and that’s what painting is about too.” And when the Great Recession hit in 2008 and he struggled to acquire commissions to paint new works, the time was right for Reynolds to transform this lifelong fascination into a career opportunity.

“When the economy went down, mural projects went down too,” he explains. “I was wondering what to do next and ultimately came across the Carroll Center.” But when he inquired about a possible position at the center, he was surprised with his assignment. “I was more interested in woodworking.”

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Top left: As a longtime freelance artist, Reynolds painted this 20-foot by 5-foot mural, which depicts the Boston waterfront around 1916.

Bottom left: Reynolds working with a Braille reader at the Carroll Center.

Bottom right: Reynolds teaches a blind client how to use his hands and tools safely through woodworking.

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write something and a few short months later, it’s onscreen. In that sense it’s the opposite of theater, which can sometimes be an excruciatingly slow process.”

While writing for Rubicon, Clark met her husband, Zack Whedon, a writer who was also working on the AMC series. The pair married in 2012 and now have two young sons.

“Finding a work-life balance is always a challenge,” admits Clark, who’s still a passionate playwright when she’s not busy working on Animal Kingdom and caring for her children. Over the course of her career, Clark has written four plays that have been produced, the latest being Quack, which recently went into its second production and has received rave reviews.

As for the future, Clark would love to create a television series that “comes from [her] brain.” She and Zack are currently collaborating on an AMC adaptation of Fates & Furies, Lauren Groff’s bestselling novel. “We’re in a very exciting time for TV,” Clark says. “The possibilities are endless.”

—Carola Lovering ’07

WHEN WATCHING A PLAY OR FILM, it’s easy to forget that behind the acting and the set and the costumes is the one enabling the creation of it all—the writer. Or writers plural, as is often the case in television shows. And as both an accomplished playwright and a showrunner for TNT’s popular drama Animal Kingdom, Eliza Clark ’03 is one such voice behind the scenes.

Based in Los Angeles, Clark has been writing for Animal Kingdom since its debut season in 2016, and is currently the show’s executive producer. She works alongside her brother, Spencer Treat Clark ’05, an actor and recurring character in the series. The cast also includes actors Ellen Barkin and Denis Leary, to name a few.

“As the showrunner, I lead the writing staff and produce the series,” Clark explains of her role. “On any given day, I am in the writers’ room, the editing suite, on set, or in production meetings.”

Clark’s interest in showbiz can be traced back to her days at Taft, where she was the first student with two Taft alumni parents, Rob Clark ’72 and June Pratt Clark ’72. (Her mother graduated in Taft’s first coed class.) As a Rhino, Clark was heavily involved in theater and even wrote and directed her own play, Talk of Pleasant Things. “The play was terrible,” she laughs. “It was a very dramatic, dark sort of Eugene O’Neill rip-off.”

Clark did a ton of performing at Taft—she was member of Hydrox and Collegium in addition to acting in numerous productions—and this would set the stage for her career.

“When I played Stella in A Streetcar Named Desire, that was very exciting. I remember feeling like this was a world I wanted to be a part of.”

Clark went on to Yale for its esteemed theater program, and it was there that she began to focus on playwriting over acting. After graduating as a theater studies major in 2007, Clark moved to New York, where she started producing plays with friends. She soon got an agent, which led to her interest in TV and eventual move to LA to write for AMC’s Rubicon.

“It’s very rare to be able to make a living working in theater, and that’s initially why I started writing for television,” Clark explains. “TV pays the bills. But quickly, I fell in love with it. It’s so rewarding to see how quickly things move in TV.”

Alumni SPOTLIGHT
SIX PROFESSIONAL ACTORS from the "The workshops were designed to from the page, breathing new life into the opportunity to lift the Bard's words Shakespearean study, and gave students part of Taft's monthlong immersive commitment to language, physical prowess, the "classical ideals and visceral experience of Shakespeare's work: collaboration, performance is a central component of Taft's monthlong dive into Shakespeare, a movement that gained momentum seven years ago, when the English department committed to a school-wide study and gave students the opportunity to lift the Bard's words from the page, breathing new life into the texts through voice and movement. "The workshops were designed to provide background for understanding the work as performance, not simply as literature," notes English Department Head Ken Hincker. "Shakespeare's work was created to be performed and to be seen. Performance it both deepens understanding and makes it more accessible." Performance is a central component of Taft’s monthlong dive into Shakespeare, a movement that gained momentum seven years ago, when the English department committed to a school-wide study and celebration of all things Shakespearean. In practice, says Hincker, that means that every student in every grade is not only reading Shakespeare during the month of January, but that all students are invited to experience the Bard's work through a variety of performance mediums and venues. Including lower mid Macbeth recitations. “Late in January, lower mids memorize short monologues or sonnets to perform for their individual classes,” says Hincker. "Class winners then compete in an evening of Shakespearean sonnets. This year, scenes from Othello upstaged the sonnet recitations. These foundational experiences allow upper schools to engage in deeper and more creative explorations of Shakespeare's work. Many upper mid and senior courses include projects that put students into "acting companies," where they cut a script, block, memorize, and perform. The event goes back 10 or 12 years, Hincker says, and used to be held in the Faculty Room in front of a roaring fire, with sweet treats for all, and cheering fans filling the upper catwalk. This was one of the highlights of my first year at Taft; it was fantastic to see how the kids supported each other and dug deeply into this beautiful language," recalls Hincker. "I was so surprised to see the camaraderie and the enjoyment of top-level Shakespearean performance...from freshmen, not less!" Though the event has moved to Laube, the raucousness, camaraderie, high-level performances, and sheer enjoyment of the night not only remain the same, but inspired mids to continue the tradition: beginning January, but that all students are invited to enjoy the Bard's work through a variety of performance mediums and venues. The event concluded with an evening performance of "The Taming of the Shrew," which Tom Choi ’21 embraced with gusto.

Approaching the text in this way asks students to see it as more than just words on a page," says Hincker. "What do these words mean? Who are they directed to? What feelings are behind those words?" Which was exactly what Ellie Ketchum ’20 took away from the experience.

“Sometimes when you read, you hear the words in your mind in just one voice or just one tone," says Ellie. “Performing in this way not only brings it to life, it brings perspective. Performing required me to think more deeply about the meaning of each line, and how best to convey that. Shakespeare & Company’s visit to Taft concluded with an evening performance of "The Taming of the Shrew" on stage in Bingham Auditorium, which, says Tom, "challenged students to examine their understanding of important social issues, while sparking fruitful conversations about gender, marriage, and violence" in English classes.

“Why are they Shakespeare in a new light, and come away energized by that revelation.”
Tafties Win Girls in Math at Yale Competition

“The individual round embodied the best of mathematical combat, old school style, with drama and controversy at every turn.”

Controversy, Zipoli says, rooted in a three-way tie for first place at the end of the individual round. Chloe Ye ’20 was one of three competitors with a perfect score at the end of competition. All were moved to the front of the auditorium to sit for a sudden-death tiebreaker.

“We all sat in an anxious silence as the girls got to work—it was tense!” notes Zipoli. “Chloe and one of the other competitors raised their hands indicating they had reached solutions at virtually the same instant. Both had the correct answers, though the proctor who fielded the responses accepted the other competitor’s answer first. After a brief conference among the organizers, Chloe was awarded the first-place honor on an exceptional showing.”

EIGHT YOUNG WOMEN TRAVELED to Yale University in January to compete in the second-ever Girls in Math at Yale competition. The group took home top honors at the event.

Conceptualized by the Math Majors of America Tournament for High Schools, Girls in Math at Yale was introduced in the fall of 2018, with the goal of cultivating “a love for math and the sciences in a younger generation and celebrating the diversity that is already present in these fields at the university level.” The events include both individual and team components, with teams of four students from across the region competing for top honors. Taft fielded two teams at the January event.

“In two rounds of competition, the Taft mathletes dominated, winning first place in the team round and placing Linh Vu ’21 and Chloe Ye ’20 in the top five of the individual round,” said Math Teacher Joseph Zipoli ’84.

“The individual round embodied the best of mathematical combat, old school style, with drama and controversy at every turn.”

The complex resolution contained, among many things, language condemning the Sandinistas’ infringement of human rights, recognizing the “widespread disapproval of colonialism,” examining and defining the role of both the Soviet bloc and the United States, setting deadlines for Sandinistas to halt human rights violations and restore “legitimate political stability,” and creating an International Criminal Tribunal to examine possible war crimes. It passed the General Assembly by a vote of 61 for, 10 against, and 4 abstaining.

Dylan also submitted written work in advance as part of the event’s first-ever essay contest. In his response to a prompt that addressed the situation, “The complex resolution contained, among many things, language condemning the Sandinistas’ infringement of human rights, recognizing the ‘widespread disapproval of colonialism,’ examining and defining the role of both the Soviet bloc and the United States, setting deadlines for Sandinistas to halt human rights violations and restore ‘legitimate political stability,’ and creating an International Criminal Tribunal to examine possible war crimes. It passed the General Assembly by a vote of 61 for, 10 against, and 4 abstaining.”

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Students in History Teacher Megan Valencia’s Honors Model United Nations class were among the nearly 2,000 delegates from 80 schools and 40 countries to compete at YMUN XLV, the 45th session of the Yale Model United Nations conference. The annual conference invites young scholars to think critically about contemporary global issues, and to develop solutions to world problems from a variety of informed cultural and geopolitical perspectives. Seniors Dylan Kim and Jamal Ahmad earned accolades for their work at the event, with Dylan winning the conference’s first-ever essay contest and an honorable mention for his committee work, and Jamal earning outstanding delegate honors for his work representing Mali on a committee exploring economic issues.

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In the Gallery
THE ANNUAL STUDENT ART SHOW in Potter Gallery opened in February and featured work across mediums, including ceramics, photography, glasswork, painting, and drawing.

Honoring Exceptional Faculty
FOUR FACULTY MEMBERS WERE RECENTLY HONORED WITH ESTEEMED teaching chair appointments. Congratulations to (from left): Art Teacher Claudia Black, Mary and Robert Scott Chair; English Teacher and Lower Mid Class Dean Robert Campbell ‘76, Littlejohn Family Chair; Dean of Students, Admissions Officer and History Teacher Mark Traina, Donald Oscarson ‘47 Master Chair; Dean of Academic Affairs and Mathematics Teacher Jennifer Kenerson, Henry L. Hillman Chair. For a full description of all Taft chairs and faculty honors, visit bit.ly/TaftChairs.

Being Potter
THERE ARE PRECIOUS FEW DAYS EACH winter when the stars align to bring thick enough ice, warm enough temperatures, and hearty enough souls together to celebrate Potter’s Pond in the tradition of its namesake. Mark Winslow Potter ‘48, the renowned artist who taught at Taft for more than 40 years, loved skating—and a little pond hockey—nearly as much as he loved teaching and creating art.

Game On
ALUMNI FROM THE CLASS OF 1965, THE CLASS OF 2018, AND EVERY DECADE IN BETWEEN gathered on the ice in Odden Arena in February for the annual Scott W. Richardson ’82 Memorial Hockey Game. The “Scotty Cup” is played in the spirit of good fun, good sportsmanship, and great memories of Scott.

A Great and Powerful Welcome
GUESTS AT THIS YEAR’S WINTER formal, “A Night in Emerald City,” may not have seen good witches, flying monkeys, tin men, or scarecrows, but they were welcomed to the City by a Great and Powerful wizard. Bruce Fifer’s familiar face and booming baritone emanated (somewhat eerily) from the building, issuing compliments and a warm welcome to all. Check Taft’s Instagram (taftschool) to see the full effect, and taftphotos.com for images from the night.

Bringing the Love
A FAVORITE TAFT TRADITION is the annual Valentine’s Day Morning Meeting concert, where faculty musicians—and a few students—bring the love to the Bingham stage.

Around THE POND

Around THE POND

Around THE POND
Living Out Loud

“If you ask me what I came to do in this world, I, an artist, will answer you: I am here to live out loud.”

—Émile Zola

DIRECTOR DAVID KIEVIT, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR KHALID TELLIS, AND A TRULY EXTRAORDINARY CAST AND CREW BROUGHT THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHTTIME (A PLAY BY SIMON STEPHENS BASED ON THE BOOK BY MARK HADDON), TO THE WOODWARD “BLACK BOX” THEATER IN FEBRUARY. SET IN ENGLAND, THE PLAY DEALS WITH COMPLEX THEMES OF ABANDONMENT, AUTISM, ADOLESCENCE, TRUTH, AND LOGIC, AND IS STAGED AS A COMPLEX GESTALT OF RAPIDLY MOVING PARTS. AS LEAD CHARACTER CHRISTOPHER BOONE, NICHOLAS BAIRD ’20 DELIVERED AN EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCE THAT CAPTURED BOTH THE CHARACTER’S ESSENCE AND THE COMPLEXITY OF HIS WORLD.

THE DANCE ENSEMBLE WINTER CONCERT IS ALWAYS ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF PARENTS’ WEEKEND. THIS YEAR’S PROGRAM FEATURED A BROAD RANGE OF DANCE STYLES AND MUSIC GENRES.

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Support Community Nonprofits

TAFT’S RED RHINO FUND AWARDED $8,130 in grants this year to five local nonprofit organizations. It is the larg- est award total in the fund’s history.

"In addition to using the endowment spending-plan funds or donor, says Grants Committee Co-Chair Henry Horne ’20. "We also raised the Spring Fling ticket price last year, effectively increasing Fund income and allowing for a more generous grant budget."

The Red Rhino Fund is an endowed, charitable fund run by a nine-member student board with faculty advisors. The board typically sets a budget at the begin- ning of the academic year, which includes grants and marketing costs on one side, and income generated through events like Denim Day and Spring Fling on the other. The full board reviews and votes on the merits of each organization’s applica- tion for support. And while fund bylaws preclude any one organization from earn- ing grant dollars in consecutive years, the 2019 grantees did include eligible orga- nizations recognized during prior grant cycles, including the Children’s Community School (CCS), a nonprofit organization providing educational, social, and personal items to learn about differ- ent cultures and experiences—they can literally ‘unpack’ history. It is a great way to learn about immigration and the immigrant experience in the city across its history.”

CCS will use their grant dollars, Maggie says, to purchase Chromebooks, Chromebook chargers, and carts to house the technology. "Access to Chromebooks can help limit the digital divide CCS students sometimes face," Maggie notes. "Standardized testing in the state of Connecticut is now done on computers. For students without access to technology, these test results may reflect a lack of digital literacy, rather than intellec- tual ability. Putting this kind of technology in their hands can help bridge that divide.”

Henry visited the Mattatuck Museum during the review process. Located in the heart of Waterbury, the museum’s offerings include programs geared toward local children and families, from Community Free Days and Black History Month celebra- tion and kick-off events, to Story Time for Toddlers and programs for schools, scouts, and community groups. They welcome nearly 15,000 school children each year, including every third, fourth and fifth-grade Waterbury Public School student.

"Our grant will help fund a really interesting and new hands-on learning experience,” Henry explains. "Children can look through suitcases filled with historical memorabilia and personal items to learn about different cultures and experiences—they can literally ‘unpack’ history. It is a great way to learn about immigration and the immigrant experience in the city across its history.”

Grazie were also awarded to Grant’s Closet, Boys and Girls Club of Greater Waterbury, and the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra. In making their awards, the Red Rhino Fund board considers things like the breadth and impact of an organization’s reach, their overall mission, and how they plan to spend the grant dollars.

Welcome New Trustees!

THE TAFT SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES RECENTLY SEATED THREE NEW MEMBERS: CURRENT PARENT NANA CHIU, ALUMNA AND CURRENT PARENT KATAMA GUERNSEY EASTMAN ’95, AND ALUMNA AND CURRENT PARENT JACQUELINE ROSA ’82.

Nana Chiu P’18, ’21
Born and raised in Hong Kong, Nana gradu- ated from Philadelphia University with a B.S. in textile engineering in 1992, and received an EMBA degree from Guangzhou School of Management, Peking University, in 2011. After graduating with her B.S., Nana began working in health food production and sales at her family’s business. In 1997, she joined the ESCADA Group in Hong Kong, where she worked to develop the fashion market in China. Nana is currently the CEO for Eagle Wealth Group Co., Ltd. The group’s invest- ments include real estate, battery cells, power banks, clean energy, and financial corporates in China. She served as a member of the CPPCC in the Shandong Province of China, as vice chairman of the China Federation of Industry and Commerce Women Entrepreneurs Chamber, and as vice chairman of Belt and Road General Chamber of Commerce. Hong Kong. Nana takes an active role in representing and promoting business between Hong Kong and China in all of these associations. She has also actively devoted herself to various chari- table activities in Hong Kong and China.

Nana and her husband, Davide, have three children; Brian ’21 is now a freshman at Wharton. Chris ’21 is a sophomore at Taft, and Salma is an 8th-grade student in Beijing.

Katama Guernsey Eastman ’95, P’22
Katama, the oldest of five children, grew up in Bedford, New York. Following in the footsteps of 11 previous Guernseys—including great-grandfather Otis ’12, grandfather Peter ’40, and father Tony ’66—Katama enrolled at Taft in the fall of 1995, where she played varsity field hockey, varsity lacrosse, was a dorm moni- tor her upper-mid and senior years, and graduated with cum laude honors.

Katama graduated from Williams College in 1999 and began a career in fashion as a retail buyer for Saks Fifth Avenue in New York. City. In 2001, she and her husband, Jay, moved to London, where she was the buyer for Ralph Lauren’s men’swear divi- sion in Europe. After the birth of their daughter, Merrill, in the summer of 2003, the Eastmans returned to New York.

Merrill was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes in the fall of 2004, plunging Katama into the world of research, advokacy, investing, and prevention. She joined the board of the New York/Long Island chapter of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) in 2004 and is now chapter president. Katama chairs the Children’s Congress, which lobbies senators and congressmen on the Hill for diabetes research funding. She and Jay also co-chair the advisory board of the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, and were early investors and sponsors in the T1D Fund, a first-ever venture philanthropy fund dedicated to investing in diabetes related businesses.

Katama and her husband, along with two other families, recently bought, renovated, and reopened a historic inn and restaurant in Peru, Vermont, called Johnny Sewn’s. She is also a yoga instructor, and mother of four—Merrill ’22, Jack, Oliver, and Otis. The entire Eastman family loves the outdoors, and enjoys skiing, hiking, snowshoeing, camping, playing golf, and riding bikes.

JACQUELINE ROSA ’82, P’22
Jacqueline began her career as a marketing manager for Creative Games International (CGI). During her tenure, CGI, Jacqueline negotiated gaming con- tracts for international governments. During that time, she made her home in a number of foreign countries, including Mexico, Japan, Hungary, and Russia.

Jacqueline transitioned to Wall Street where she spent 12 years at Morgan Stanley, first as head of their Global Supplier Diversity Program and later becoming co- head of their global diversity and inclusion initiatives. After Morgan Stanley, Jacqueline became managing director and global head of supplier diversity at JPMorgan Chase and was appointed the global head of branding and communications for strategic sourcing. She was featured in Hispanic Executive magazine for her work in the supplier diver- sity industry and made their “Top 10 Latinos” list. Jacqueline has served on several boards including the US-India American Chamber of Commerce and the Hispanic Business Group, an organization dedi- cated to closing the racial wealth divide.

She has dedicated her career to liv- ing the Taft motto, Nos et arum minervae sed et minervitis. Jacqueline and husband, Victor Brown, live in Montclair, New Jersey, with their daughter, Susannah ’22.
“Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve.... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

—The words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., shared during Taft’s Unity Breakfast by Congresswoman Jahana Hayes
THE CURRENT COHORT OF TAFT’S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (GLI) SCHOLARS RECENTLY TOURED WATERBURY’S 17-ACRE ANAMET PROPERTY WITH MAYOR NEIL M. O’LEARY.

Once the largest producer of metal hose in the world and a huge employer in the city of Waterbury, Anamet closed in 2000, and its property has fallen into disrepair. The state of Connecticut gave the city $2.1 million to aid with the redevelopment of the property, which involves soil remediation and demolition. (Also see Around the Pond page 28.)
Girls’ Basketball 14–8

Since four of last year’s starting five were seniors, this year’s girls’ varsity basketball team needed contributions from players who saw little action last year. And the team got just that: senior co-captain Maggie O’Leary stuck 25 3-pointers; Anna Csigirinszkij ’19 contributed 4.5 points per game and reliably heady play off the bench; upper mid and rising co-captain Natasha Hodal’21, who pumped in 10.7 a game from her point guard position. But even considering the team’s unexpected 14–8 finish—including wins over Exeter, Hotchkiss, Deerfield, and Kent—and return appearance in the Class A New England Tournament as a #6 seed, senior co-captain Kayla Robinson’s play highlighted the season. Robinson, who averaged 15 points and 11 rebounds and will play at Haverford next year, joined Katie McCabe ’04 as the only other member of Taft basketball’s 1,000 point club when she hit a corner jumper against Miss Porter’s on February 19.
Boys' Hockey 10–10–2
LAWRENCEVILLE TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS

This year’s team had much to celebrate. Winning the D'Arco Cup versus Berkshire, taking home the Erdmann Trophy from winning the Lawrenceville Tournament, and not one but two overtime wins versus rival Hotchkiss were highlights of the season. Other big wins against tournament-bound Northfield Mount Hermon (4–1), Loomis (4–1), and Choate (5–1). The Rhinos were led by two-year captain Billy Dobensky ’19 and a committed senior class. Dennis Franklin ’19 and Ryan Cubell ’19 were honored as Founders All-League selections, and seniors Finn Walker ’19 and Peter Kenerson ’19 were awarded the Coach’s Award, and Dobensky won the Angier Hockey Award. Thomas McAlear ’19 and Andrew Eberson ’19 jumped into NEPSAC hockey as PGs and immediately impacted the team with strong goaltending and defensive prowess. Next year’s team will be led by tri-captains Christian Jimenez ’20, Zack Tonelli ’20, and Tristan Fasig ’20.

Girls’ Hockey 11–11–1

After graduating eight seniors, the Taft Rhinos looked to continue their growth, building on the momentum they gained last season. While the team fell short of repeating a berth in the New England playoffs, they earned some key wins against several talented teams, including league rivals Loomis (3–2), Choate (5–2), Berkshire (6–3), and Westminster (3–1). Senior Morgan Trimmer ’19 led in scoring with 15 goals and 13 assists, followed by Kristina Cornelio ’20, with 10 goals and seven assists. Lower mid goalie Jenna Guglielmi ’22 was solid in net and Claudia Vira ’19, who returned as a postgraduate, once again anchored the defense, emerging as one of the top defensive players in the New England Prep School League and was named to the NEPSAC Honorable Mention Team, as voted on by league coaches. Captain Shannon Bucci ’19 and Ally Trimper ’19 were named Founders All-League players, and Patsy O. Odden Hockey Award winners were Morgan Trimmer and Claudia Vira. The Rhinos bids farewell to nine seniors, but look to remain solid with a strong core of returning players, led by captains-elect Kristina Cornelio ’20 and Olivia King ’20.
Boys’ Squash 9–4

The Rhinos finished with a 9–4 regular season record, 16th in the Division I National Championship, and 7th in the New England Class A tournament. Taft was led by a strong senior class this season, #2 Sanjeev Jeyabalan ’19, #3 Raunak Advani ’19, #6 Hunter Lord ’19, #8 Rex Ruoff ’19, and #9 Gus Harper ’19. Highlights included wins against rival Hotchkiss (4–3), when Keigher came through in the deciding match, St. Paul’s (4–3), and a tough 4–3 loss to a very strong Avon team. Advani placed 4th in the #3 flights at New Englands. The team next season will be led by captains #1 Marwan Elborolossy ’21 and #7 Peter Denious ’20, as well as returners #4 Jesse Sarfo Brew ’22, and #10 Teddy Schuenscholtz ’21.

Girls’ Squash 9–5

This year, the team was composed of four more returners, Nina Brockelman ’19, Tiffany Tam ’20, Carolina Salvatore ’21, and Sadie Pollack ’21, and three new players Lulu Bradley ’21, Annabel Pick ’22, and Julissa Mota ’22. The Rhinos were excited to defeat Hotchkiss twice this season and also to take down Hopkins, Westminster, and Miss Porter’s, all 7–0. Competing against top teams in the country in the Division II High School Nationals, Taft defeated a Greenwich Academy team in the first round before losing tight matches to Germantown Friends, St. Catherine’s, Andover to finish in 8th place. In Division A of the New Englands, the Rhinos did not have as much team success, finishing 14th, but had individual successes with Brockelman winning three of her five matches to place 9th in the 5th flight, and Tam, Salvatore, and Pollack each winning two matches during the weekend to place 11th, 13th, and 13th in the #6, #2, and #3 flights respectively. Taft looks toward many returning players next season and will be captained by Salvatore and Pollack.

Wrestling 7–8

The 7–8 record was largely the product of a smaller roster than in recent years. While Taft was able to notch victories over Canterbury, Williston, and Salisbury, the Rhino wrestlers typically gave up several forfeits at the higher and lower weights, making victories against teams with full rosters difficult. Nevertheless, most Taft wrestlers finished the year with individual winning records, including Gavin Pintro ’20 (15–7 at 126 lbs.), Austin Omala ’21 (10–5, 5th place at Westerns at 138 lbs.), Kelvin Welbeck ’20 (15–5, 6th place at Westerns at 152 lbs.), Jacob Rooks ’21 (7–3, 4th place at Westerns at 160 lbs.), Sean Cummings ’20 (10–5 at 170 lbs.), and Elijah Cohen ’21 (10–6, 4th place at Westerns at 195 lbs.). All of these wrestlers will be returning next year, which should allow for the team to build towards a strong 2019–20 season.

Alpine Skiing

The varsity alpine ski teams both had a solid season this winter. The young team, led by captains Abby Ford ’19 and Max Fossland ’19—both significant four year contributors to the team—had great success at the New Englands, particularly for the girls who placed second in the Class B New England Championships. Taft hosted the New Englands Prep School Championships at Ski Sundown on a beautiful February day, and both teams made the best of the home hill advantage. The girls skied well, with Logan Clew-Bachrach ’20 and Abby Ford earning All New England honors in giant slalom, and Ford in slalom. The boys finished in fourth place, led by Fossland, who earned All New England honors in both slalom and giant slalom. The team had equally good success in the Brigham Ski League, with the boys placing 3rd and the girls 8th of 15 teams. The team will miss seniors Ford, Fossland, Collin Amelsberg, Piper Forstl, and Jake Marx and are excited for their returning group who looks to continue the strong performances of the team over the last several years.

Winter SPORTS
Conserving the Caribbean

Through the Lens of
Eladio Fernandez ’85
Meet *Anolis eladioi*. This unassuming green-brown lizard with a whiplike tail and a speckled throat pouch was named for its discoverer, nature photographer Eladio Fernandez ’85, who has become one of the world’s experts on the flora and fauna of the Caribbean. He and his camera travel throughout the region, documenting endangered species that are at risk of disappearing.

Fernandez is now working on a documentary series, *Island Naturalist*, which he is filming in his homeland of the Dominican Republic, and also in Haiti and other Caribbean countries. When asked what drew him to nature photography and conservation, he says, “Initially it was the thrill of hunting with a camera. I wanted to see how many birds, reptiles, orchids, etc. I could amass. Later I saw the need for imagery that could give faces to many animals and plants that were unknown by the public and deserved protection,” he says. “Surprisingly the Caribbean is only thought of as beautiful beaches, sun, and turquoise-colored waters, when in fact it holds a huge diversity of plants, animals, and habitats.”

Fernandez made it his mission to concentrate on portraying the natural heritage of the Greater Antilles instead of dispersing himself in distant parts of the world that probably have already received enough exposure from other colleagues, he says.


Fernandez fell into the current video project by accident. “A friend (turned producer), Jake Kheel, asked me to help him out with a photo shoot for a magazine. We went to one of my favorite locations in the Dominican Republic, Sierra de Bahoruco.”

“While we were there, I kept getting distracted with a plant, a lizard, or whatever else was around. Jake was impressed with the amount of information I was providing for each particular thing along the trail that day—things he would have ignored otherwise,” Fernandez says.

The eight-episode series will cover a range of subjects and environmental situations in the Caribbean region. The idea is to provoke the viewer, and there will be a call to action for those who want to become part of the solution at the end of each episode, he says. “Subjects range from how Bahamas generates $80 million a year from shark tourism, and fishermen in the Dominican Republic continue to hunt them for food, to rescuing a critically endangered magnolia species from one of Haiti’s last fragments of primary forest so we can help a terminally-ill conservationist fulfill his dream,” he adds.
“Living on islands with limited space and resources leaves us with no choice but to be highly concerned with managing and conserving spaces and resources that will ensure the future of our nations.”
The reaction
Fernandez and the film crew get when researching subjects has been varied. "Dominicans love having their photograph taken so it has not been a problem there—even by those who are committing environmental infractions," he says. "Haiti is another story, as a lot of people there don’t like to be photographed or filmed. This requires us to spend some time obtaining people’s trust first."

Though he has only taken one photography course (while a student at Taft), his love of nature goes back to childhood. "Since I was a kid, I’ve always liked animals, horseback riding, and the outdoors in general," Fernandez says. "It wasn’t until I finished college and went back to the Dominican Republic that I started going hiking and birdwatching."

"A group of friends would often trek to Pico Duarte, the highest point in the Caribbean, and I started to join their hiking trips. Birds are one of the most charismatic groups of animals in the DR, so I bought a field guide and started to observe them every time we went on these trips," he says. "When I tried describing some of the birds I saw, I became aware that no one knew them, and in fact, my friends wouldn’t even believe my descriptions."

"That triggered my next move, which was to buy a camera and a 300mm f4 lens. It was enough of a telephoto lens that made it possible for me to have my first photography exhibit called Aves (Birds) in a local gallery," he says. "At the time there were no specialized bird photographers in the Dominican Republic. Today we have a couple of bird photography clubs that are giving me a run for my money."
“Richardson, an immigrant from Anguilla, was 104 years old when I took this image. He worked in sugar cane fields all his life. People’s stories can be as dramatic as the ones in nature,” says Fernandez.

“We now have to be part of the story. The planet can no longer afford people on it who are not paying rent.”
Over time, Fernandez became interested in other fields of nature photography: landscapes, flora, man’s relationship with the environment, and more. Each discipline within nature photography requires learning a separate set of skills using the camera.

“My favorite images are very different from the ones the public prefers,” he says. “People love landscapes or images that portray someone that is part of a story. Some people have their preferred groups of plants and animals and love images for those reasons.”

“My favorite images are those that have a story of hardship behind them, or perhaps a sense of accomplishment because it is the first image taken of a particular flower since its discovery,” he notes. “It might not be something special in terms of light or composition, but the stories of what I went through to make them is what gives them value for me and make them my favorites.”

While he’s known as a conservation photographer, he also is doing scientific work. For example, he is a coauthor with colleagues from Harvard of an article about several new species found on Hispaniola with the help of his photography.

Fernandez is encouraged about the growing awareness of the need to protect native species in the Caribbean. “Twenty or 15 years ago people in the Dominican Republic were not as aware of conservation issues,” he says. “That is not the case today. “Living on islands with limited space and resources leaves us with no choice but to be highly concerned with managing and conserving spaces and resources that will ensure the future of our nations.

“My favorite images are those that have a story of hardship behind them or… a sense of accomplishment because it is the first image taken of a particular flower since its discovery.”
We can no longer afford to be conservation photographers, filmmakers, and storytellers. We need to take it a step further and do the conservation work itself.
Aristolochia passiflorifolia is one of the pipe vine species from Cuba that is part of the study that Fernandez is currently conducting in the Greater Antilles.

Mother and calf humpback whale in the Silver Bank of the Dominican Republic.

“Every island in the Caribbean has its own conservation story. Conservation laws in Cuba get enforced, thanks to an authoritarian regime. Haiti has a huge deforestation problem and is undergoing mass extinctions of flora and fauna. Dominican Republic has preserved a third of its territory as protected areas (at least on paper), thanks to the political decisions of a past president who considered preserving nature a national priority. But the current governments have horrible environmental policies,” says Fernandez.

“Puerto Rico has a small territory, but the U.S. enforces laws that protect important areas and forests. Jamaica is currently under economic hardship, and its politicians are trying to kick-start the economy again by expanding mining and leasing protected areas for ports. The story goes on and on.”

He’s discouraged when he sees governments not valuing the importance of protecting the environment, however.

“Nature provides our most basic needs: food, water, and housing,” he says. “Wherever you are sitting, look at what surrounds you—everything comes from a natural resource. Instead of keeping nature at the center of all political policies, it has been relegated to the side.

“Instead, governments dedicate huge amounts of their budgets to education, health care—all important things when it comes to human beings, but they seem secondary when you don’t have access to drinking water,” he says. “Water may not be of any concern in developed countries, but it is a huge issue in developing countries.”

Fernandez’s commitment to and passion for his Caribbean region is deep. And it’s lived out in his work and his words.

“We can no longer afford to be conservation photographers, filmmakers, and storytellers. We need to take it a step further and do the conservation work itself,” he says.

“We now have to be part of the story. The planet can no longer afford people on it who are not paying rent. Everyone needs to get involved by volunteering and giving back to a cause. The Taft motto is more relevant today than ever.”

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhallow ’84

The documentary series, Island Naturalist, will be released and shown in fall 2019 in the Dominican Republic, followed by an eight-episode series to be available on one of the streaming platforms.
it’s not easy being green
FIVE ALUMS WITH VISION LEAD THE WAY
by Neil Vigdor ’95
Alastair Smith ’05 went way off the grid after graduating from Harvard—to Africa—far from family, friends, and creature comforts. But $10-a-night hostels to begin with and spotty electricity in his apartment in Lagos, Nigeria, were a small price to pay to bring electricity to the developing world. Since 2010, Smith has been building renewable energy power systems, including community microgrids, initially harnessing the power of wind and then the sun to help bring modern amenities to Kenya, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. He is cofounder and the head of the Nigeria office of PowerGen Renewable Energy, which is revolutionizing an untapped market on a continent where 500 million people don’t have electricity. A boarding school in Tanzania is among the many beneficiaries of the company’s work. “They’ve never had light before in the evenings at their school,” Smith says. “It really does change their life and their world. It really is a great sight to behold.”

The engineering major did a thesis on building a wind turbine during his senior year at Harvard and then joined a friend in Africa later that year. They worked with schools and health clinics to build renewable energy power systems. “After about two months, I realized I could build a small wind turbine locally for about 50 percent of the cost of one imported,” Smith says. A massive drop in solar energy prices shook up the market in 2011, however. “It essentially made small wind uneconomic,” he says. “We started to see the changing of the tide. It’s better to have a...
diversified generation source, especially when dealing with renewable energy, as you’re depending on the environment.”

The burgeoning company started selling power on a kilowatt basis and building solar microgrids. Financing for the business, which now has 140 employees, came from U.S. seed investors and family friends, and project finance came from crowdsourcing campaigns and humanitarian aid organizations.

“You’re basically dealing with two different worlds,” Smith says. “It’s been a great experience in seeing a completely different culture and perspective on values, especially in Africa. There’s an interesting juxtaposition of wealth and poverty, especially in Nairobi, Kenya.”

It wasn’t easy transitioning to life in Africa. “I think I always remember the first few months that I moved to Nairobi. We didn’t know anybody,” Smith says. “We just lived in a hostel for $10 a day. It was a really good way to get to know the city. We didn’t have computers.”

Direct flights from the U.S. to Africa are few and far between. “That’s been one of the acclimations to living over here—you’re just not close to a number of people you care about,” he says. “I never expected to be here this long. Initially, it was more of fascination. Whenever my friends would say, ‘When are you coming home?’ I would say, ‘six months.’”

Smith’s work is not without risk. He helped build a solar-powered water pumping system in Dadaab, which is home to 235,000 refugees on the border of Kenya and Somalia. The UN base is the third-largest refugee camp in the world. Humanitarian groups typically discourage visits by civilians because of the threat of terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab. “It’s one of those things that sometimes I think about what needs to get done and the work that needs to happen, and I don’t reflect on things as much as I probably should,” Smith says.
Even the Land of Steady Habits, as Connecticut is often referred to, is capable of change.

Just ask Ann Magnin ’76, who helped convince the Common Council in her city, Norwalk, to adopt a ban on single-use plastic bags. Businesses that violate the ordinance, which passed in January, face a $100 fine for a first offense and a $250 fine for each repeat offense.

The public relations specialist and cofounder of the group Skip the Plastic Norwalk isn’t stopping there, however. Not with a number of other municipalities looking to follow suit and the state under new Governor Ned Lamont moving to disincentivize the use of plastic bags.

“Some people say, ‘Well there are retailers where you can return your plastic bag.’ That’s not really the solution,” Magnin says. “It’s refusing plastic in the first place and cutting it off at the source. Recycling is not the answer.”

Magnin is trying to educate both consumers and policymakers about the environmental threats posed by plastic bags and straws, which have been blamed for a pair of giant debris fields in the Pacific Ocean. Closer to home, they are polluting Long Island Sound.
While a number of retailers tout the recyclability of their plastic, Magnin says that most communities are not equipped to handle those materials. At one point, Trader Joe’s in neighboring Darien, for example, claimed its corn-based plastic bags were biodegradable in 90 days, which Magnin disputes. “They’re essentially the same as plastic,” Magnin says. “I think the more we’re able to raise awareness, the better. People simply don’t know. They’re just not aware.”

What started as a Facebook conversation about the amount of trash produced in New York City, where Magnin runs an eponymous PR firm, blossomed into a grassroots campaign to ban single-use plastic bags in her own community. “I help a lot with the messaging,” Magnin says. “Everyone’s working hard to reduce plastic pollution. It’s a landfill issue and an incinerator issue.”

Just because the group opposes plastic bags, doesn’t mean that its advocating for consumers to use paper bags, Magnin says. In Norwalk, the city’s ban allows retailers to charge 10 cents for more costly alternatives such as paper bags. “We’re advocating for reusable,” Magnin says. “Paper has its own issues.”

At the Capitol in Hartford, lawmakers are weighing a 10-cent per plastic bag surcharge proposed by the governor Magnin says Norwalk’s ban would still stand if the surcharge is approved by the legislature unless the state passes something that explicitly overrides local law. Norwalk’s plastic bag ordinance stopped short of banning plastic straws, but that doesn’t mean straws are getting a pass from conservationists like Magnin and environmentally conscious businesses. “We did kick off Skip the Straw,” she says. “There were a number of local restaurants that were only providing straws upon request or have already made the switch to paper.”

Magnin traces her environmental activism to her upbringing in San Francisco. “I grew up with the idea of drought and water conservation,” she says. “Conserving resources and protecting our planet is really important to me.”
Tap Pryor has salt water in his veins. It comes from 50 years of harvesting oysters, the briny delicacy treasured all over the globe, from the exotic South Pacific to the rocky shoreline of Maine. But you won’t find the 87-year-old marine biologist, aquaculturist, and entrepreneur in waders or in the muck. What started off as an experiment in 1971 has turned into a cottage industry for Pryor: on-land and indoors oyster farming. "You’re in shirtsleeves year-round,” Pryor says. "Here in Maine, why can’t we grow them year-round?"

Pryor is cofounder of Maine Shellfish Developers, the small business that has taken over a large warehouse in the fishing resort town of Waldoboro, where the small business has grown to large numbers of oysters in a 60-foot-by-60-foot room protected from environmental changes and other threats. The process takes about nine months. Nobody’s doing what we’re doing.

Opposite page:
Tap Pryor ‘49, owner of Maine Shellfish Developers, with Production Manager Liam Fisher, at their indoor tank (raceway), where seedling oysters are grown.

Right: These small oysters, raised indoors during earlier stages, will be market size by this summer, Pryor says.

Beyond the sea

TAP PRYOR ‘49 PIONEERS LAND-BASED OYSTER FARMING

Nobody’s doing what we’re doing.
months, compared to two to three years for near-shore oyster farming. Pryor adds well water, imported salt, calcium, and manganese to the feed.

“When we harvest them, they are fat because they have been growing 24/7 for all those months,” Pryor says. “It’s largely the result of warm water and continuous production for the whole time. They spend a lot of energy making shells.”

The cocktail-size oysters, known as Eastern or Atlantic oysters, then get sent to local near-shore estuaries for two weeks finishing.

“The oyster picks up the local flavor profile and salinity profile right away,” he says. “The flavor is inconsequential when it leaves our warehouse.”

In contrast to Pryor’s operation, the typical offshore harvesting season only goes from July through October in Maine. Oysters raised offshore face a myriad of threats, from viruses to red tide, an algae bloom that can deplete oxygen in the water and release toxins. Then, there’s the red tape associated with environmental permitting. One of Pryor’s offshore counterparts has spent $100,000 on permitting and gone through three public hearings and still had not received approval yet, he says. Pryor got his permit to farm oysters indoors in less than a month and at no cost.

“Coastal landowners are very vigorous opponents of aquaculture in Maine,” Pryor says.

After being stationed in Hawaii as a Marine aviator, Pryor went on to study marine biology at the University of Hawaii. He spent 30 years in Hawaii and 20 years in the Cook Islands in the South Pacific. Now, he’s been in Maine for nine years. “I left the pearl farming behind,” Pryor says wryly. Oysters are big business in their own right. Close to two million oysters are harvested from a single room in a year, according to Pryor, who has been recognized by groups such as the United Nations for his innovation. In 1982, at the German European Food Fair, he won the outstanding food product award. “Nobody’s doing what we’re doing,” he says.

For Pryor, oysters are not simply an acquired taste. “You’re missing a gourmet experience,” he says.
new school of thought

JAMES RICE ’87 DESIGNS THE LEARNING CENTERS OF TOMORROW

In life, like in architecture, you need a solid foundation.

For James Rice ’87, it started when he was 16, designing and building a “net-zero” cabin in the Green Mountains of Putney, Vermont, for a summer project.

He oriented the small house toward the south to get maximum sun exposure and fitted it with solar panels, a woodstove, and ample insulation to keep out the cold.

The structure is still in use on the campus of the Putney School to teach students about sustainability and living off the grid, lessons that Rice has carried with him for the past 25 years designing and building K-12 schools, higher education facilities, and custom homes.

“The best part of being net zero or being off the grid is your awareness of the environment,” Rice says. “You’re not going to leave your lights on, especially if it’s a cloudy day. You become one with nature in a net-zero building.”

Today Rice is Energy Positive program manager for Firstfloor, a Raleigh, North Carolina, based architectural and construction administration firm that is revolutionizing the way buildings are designed, created, maintained, and even paid for. He works out of the...
company’s office in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where he’s lived for 15 years.

“Because the 21st-century student is so different from the 20th-century student, the architecture has to adapt,” he says. “The number one thing in our buildings is the people. Our architecture reflects the program and the teachers’ methods.”

At Sandy Grove Middle School in Lumber Bridge, North Carolina, Rice and his colleagues came up with a design for a 75,930-square-foot building that creates 60 percent more energy than it consumes. The cutting-edge design uses solar panels, a well-insulated building envelope, and energy efficient windows. It’s earned Rice and his colleagues numerous awards.

“It’s crazy how much money municipalities spend on energy,” Rice says. “We’re able to deliver buildings that are much better than your regular buildings and are also much less expensive to operate. There’s a lot of modeling that goes on during the design phase.”

Firstfloor and its sister company, SfL+a Architects, are also redefining how school projects get built—they come up with financing and will operate the facility for a set term, such as 30 years. Sandy Grove Middle School, serving 650 students, is the nation’s first energy positive, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certified, leased public school.

“All the district has to do is agree to the monthly lease payment. After seven years Sandy Grove decided they want to own building,” Rice says, adding that the school district was expected to close on the building sale in the spring.

The revolutionary financing program has paved the way for high quality schools to be constructed in some of the nation’s poorest areas.

“We do a lot of amazing things,” Rice says. “A lot of it we didn’t plan on happening.”

Since he was 5 years old, Rice wanted to be an architect. Taft, he says, reinforced that for the Naugatuck, Connecticut, native, who was recruited by Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island, to go to their architecture program when they learned of his net-zero Vermont cabin project.

“I’ve always been project oriented and I’m a collaborator, too,” he says.

You become one with nature in a net-zero building.

The best part of being net zero is your awareness of the environment....You’re not going to leave your lights on, especially [on] a cloudy day.
‘It’s not easy going green.

So when communities and citizen groups need direction on recycling, reducing carbon pollution, creating green jobs, and environmental best practices, more and more of them, from Boston to Brazil, are turning to Kate Bailey.

Bailey is the policy and research director at Eco-Cycle Solutions, a Boulder, Colorado, based nonprofit that has gone from a group of volunteers collecting aluminum cans and newspapers for recycling in 1976 to an international authority on resource conservation.

‘Part of my job is sharing our success stories, our hands-on experience around the country and around the world,’ Bailey says.

The University of Colorado graduate gives tips to communities with colder climates to keep compost materials from freezing at the bottom of trucks, for example. Some need help identifying areas for improvement, from developing zero waste plans to cutting back on single-use plastic bags. Others need training webinars.

‘We will often have a group of citizens reach out to us,’ Bailey says.

‘It’s great to see more and more local communities take action.’
“It’s great to see more and more local communities take action.”

Bailey’s work coincides with a national conversation about the Green New Deal, the much-buzzed about and contentious legislation seeking to address climate change and income inequality. It also comes as a number of states and cities have banned single-use plastic bags, with California becoming the first in 2014. A 2016 referendum upheld the ban. “It’s like the momentum in the last year has really picked up,” Bailey says. “It’s fun to see that from all corners of the country.”

But Bailey says that plastic bags “are just a small fraction of the problem.”

“You may have schools that have no recycling at all,” she says. “We’ve got some work that we need to do. It doesn’t happen overnight, but it’s one of those more easy-to-do solutions.”

Last year, Bailey helped Boston adopt a zero waste plan. She was also a presenter at a Zero Waste Cities Conference in Brazil and traveled to the Netherlands to learn about the circular economy initiative. Her work has also taken her to more than a dozen states in the U.S.

The onus is often on individual communities and groups to raise awareness and come up with an action plan. “My work typically is with local cities,” she says. “It’s hard having such a lack of leadership at the national level.” Bailey says that many cities and towns are not equipped to handle the ever-changing packaging of products. “Manufacturers are constantly putting new products on the market,” she says. In Europe, there is better communication between packaging designers and the recycling community, according to Bailey. “We have a little bit of a free-for-all over here,” she says.

Getting consumers and businesses to change their habits can be tough, but Bailey sees progress. Take plastic straws. “People are looking at straws as unnecessary,” she says. Other habits aren’t as easy to break, such as providing 15 soy sauce packets with takeout orders. “We’re big fans of, ask first,” Bailey says.

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The onus is often on individual communities and groups to raise awareness and come up with an action plan. “My work typically is with local cities,” she says. “It’s hard having such a lack of leadership at the national level.” Bailey says that many cities and towns are not equipped to handle the ever-changing packaging of products. “Manufacturers are constantly putting new products on the market,” she says. In Europe, there is better communication between packaging designers and the recycling community, according to Bailey. “We have a little bit of a free-for-all over here.”

Getting consumers and businesses to change their habits can be tough, but Bailey sees progress. Take plastic straws. “People are looking at straws as unnecessary,” she says. Other habits aren’t as easy to break, such as providing 15 soy sauce packets with takeout orders. “We’re big fans of, ask first,” Bailey says.
There is nothing like spending a sunny spring or summer afternoon watching a ball game. For more than 120 years, the young men of Taft’s baseball teams, and the women of Taft’s softball teams, since 1972, have slugged it out on the fields here in Watertown.

—Beth Nolan Lovallo ’93, archivist
The Leslie D. Manning Archives

Right: Archive photo from 1988 softball game. Below: Game ball with record of the 1939 lower-school baseball team. Special thanks to Taft’s Equipment Manager, Pat O’Toole, for the loan of his vintage glove for this photo.

Left: From the bench in 1988. Right: 1940 baseball jersey. Uniforms, baseball, and archival photos are part of the Leslie D. Manning Archives.

At Taft, there is little we cannot achieve when we come together as a community. Please support the Annual Fund before June 30.

Thank you!
taftschool.org/give
Student Art Exhibit

Potter Gallery