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“You have been at Taft in the most complex and demanding years, and I believe here you have learned a kind of resilience, courage, and strength that the times demanded and which our world needs.”

An excerpt from Taft’s 2019 Commencement Remarks

To this class not long ago I said that to become a Taft graduate is to join a family of men and women, of all ages, and around the globe. A dinner three weeks ago reminded me of this.

When the Class of 1969 returned to campus on Alumni Weekend for their 50th Reunion, I joined them for dinner. Some were regular visitors to campus, but others had not set foot here for half a century. I was the guest, privileged to see them greeting each other, the years and distance melting in hugs and handshakes, blessed to hear stories of their days here, interested to hear them remark on how Taft in many ways was the same and in others so utterly different. They had the full range of memories and experiences: For some, their adolescence was difficult and even painful; for others, their Taft days were among their happiest. It was a gathering of remarkable men.

Whoever made that aside at the 1969 dinner was on to something. I am very comfortable arguing that whoever made that comment was wise. You seniors have seen incredible change, and you well might feel like those graduates—as if the world was shifting under your feet. In your years, the cultural and political landscape was shifting and fracturing in such extreme ways, one wonders how this nation could stand—and it very nearly did not. The Vietnam War was drawing us deeper and deeper, the 1968 Tet offensive launched their senior year. Our struggles and advances in civil rights continued. President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act the week before their lower mid year began. Tommy Smith and John Carlos, African-American track medalists, raised their fists in protest on the medal stand. The long hot summer of their upper mid year saw confrontations with police and race riots in Newark and Detroit. There were powerful movements elsewhere. Environmental consciousness was expanding dramatically, and the National Organization of Women (NOW) was founded when they were mid. And before they would become seniors, they witnessed the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy. I marvel at how these Taft boys could study algebra and Shakespeare and wake up for classes and clean their rooms and attend sit-down dinner as the landscape under their feet was grinding, shaking, and upheaving along the fractures of cultural and political iconoclastic points.

And so, as I concluded my remarks, I said, “I posit this. No class in this school’s 128-year history experienced so much change in so few years. None.” There was a second of reflection and then the to-be-expected murmurs of agreement, nods. And then, in some brief and unexpected silence, I heard someone say, almost as an aside, “Unless it’s your senior class this year.”

And with that, you in the Class of 2019, without even knowing it, were connected to the Class of 1969—without knowing you, they had declared a kinship, extended you a hand to grasp, tossed you a line to knot. And with that, you in the Class of 2019, without even knowing it, were connected to the Class of 1969. It would be a disservice to history and both Taft classes to say that these were identical times, but whoever made that aside at the 1969 dinner was on to something. I am very comfortable arguing that the landscape feels similarly unstable. We all know that history does not repeat itself, but as they say, it surely rhymes. Whatever one’s views, surely we would agree that these seniors have lived in a time of incredible change, and that that is no coincidence.
“You seniors have seen incredible change—as if the world was shifting under your feet. In your years, the cultural and political landscape has again buckled in the tremors, some familiar, some new, along the fault lines of race, class, gender, environment, class, equity, party.”

And so to you, seniors, I posit this: you have been at Taft in the most complex and demanding years, and I believe here you have learned a kind of resiliency, courage, and strength that the times demanded and which our world needs. And I am very confident in saying that the need for leaders of strength, kindness, and principle is as great now as it was then.

Here’s what I have seen in you: a deep awareness of and interest in the issues of this day; a love for the school we are and also for the one we aspire to become; a passion for justice and a commitment to change; an ability to build bridges across difference of all kinds; a resilience and toughness in the face of setback; a willingness to listen empathically to those with whom you disagree; and a commitment to caring for—dare I say loving—each other.

You did not know it when the Class of 1969 reached out, if accidentally and unexpectedly, but they did. They seemed to empathize, maybe even know you. They are just a few of the thousands of alumni who will welcome you and say, "We need you. We need what you have learned at Taft. We need your leadership. We need your service."

So here’s a dream: that 50 years from now you will come back for your reunion, just as those men from 1969 did. The head of school will watch you in the Faculty Room as you greet each other. Hugs and handshakes. Smiles. Tears. There will be photographs of faculty on the walls, some of teachers you love. You will joke about how different the school is, but smile at how the Main Hall feels the same. Someone may say, “I don’t remember much of what he said at graduation, but didn’t Mr. Mac say something about us coming back to our 50th?”

“Here’s what he said: ‘I am so grateful to you for the ways you have grown, for the resiliency you have shown, for the love you have shared, for the service you have given, for the hope you have kindled.’

“He said, ‘Thank you. I will miss you. I hope you come back.’

“He said, ‘Non ut sibi.’”

Willy MacMullen ’78
Decoding Cancer

UNLOCKING THE DARK SECRETS of why brain tumors respond better to some treatments than others is more than just science and medicine for Dr. Ranjit Bindra ’94. It’s personal for the co-director of Yale University’s Brain Tumor Center, who lost his father to a different type of cancer five years after being diagnosed.

Bindra is a physician-scientist and biotechnology entrepreneur, specializing in the study of pediatric glioma. Fewer than one in four children survive the aggressive form of brain cancer five years after being diagnosed. To understand such a terrible disease, clinicians such as Bindra frequently try to harvest tumor cells from terminally ill toddlers and young children.

It’s a tough ask—and it’s an even more heart-wrenching proposition for parents.

“That’s probably one of the hardest parts of treating pediatric brain tumors,” says Bindra, an associate professor of therapeutic radiology and experimental pathology at Yale. “They actually realize that in the big picture they can contribute to prevent heartache to another set of parents. People have been remarkably open to doing that.”

The approach to treating cancer is ever-changing, Bindra says. “There’s going to be a large sea change or shift,” he says. “We’re going away from organ cancers. Over the last five to 10 years, we are now understanding that all of the tumors out there are more importantly driven by specific tumor mutations. We may actually target the mutation across five or six tumor types.”

Bindra received his undergraduate degree, M.D., and Ph.D. from Yale. He did his residency and internship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan, and overlapped at MSKCC with Will Polkinghorn ’95, a radiation oncologist. “Will and I were residents at Memorial Sloan-Kettering for five years,” Bindra says. “We actually did not realize that we had both gone to Taft until after we finished.”

He teamed up with his thesis advisor while in medical school to found his own company, Helix Therapeutics. But then the biotech bubble burst in 2008–09.

Bindra wasn’t discouraged, however. Taking the lessons from his first setback, he started Cybrexa Therapeutics two years ago at Science Park, a biotech incubator established by Yale, the city of New Haven, the state of Connecticut, and the Olin Corp. in the former Winchester Firearms factory.

Cybrexa employs 20 people and has raised more than $27 million in capital to bring its best tumor-targeting technology to patients. Bindra compares it to a “heat-seeking missile.”

“We can unleash the immune system to actually target the tumor,” Bindra says. He travels extensively, between supervising clinical trials and going to conferences, attending three or four a month.

Science is a lot like rock and roll—you play songs and to make them popular, you have to get out and promote them,”Bindra says.

Social media is also playing a significant role raising awareness about clinical trials. “People are now on Facebook talking about support groups and trials,”he says.

But cancer isn’t the only obstacle facing medical pioneers. So is government funding, which he laments has flatlined.

“It’s a major problem,” he says. “It is actually a growing crisis. The National Institutes of Health is really the critical lifeblood.”

Bindra fears the funding glut could diminish the talent pool in oncology. “Many people are rethinking, from the middle of graduate school, whether they want to go into academia,” he says. “That’s really not the problem you should be thinking about.”

Visit Bindra’s cancer lab website, and the camaraderie is evident between Bindra and his Yale colleagues. Each lists his or her favorite “gene” next to their favorite New Haven restaurant and television show or movie. Bindra’s is DNA PKcs, which stands for protein kinase, catalytic subunit. It’s a metabolic gene that Bindra likens to the furnace of a cell. He and his colleagues play laser tag and do group dinners. “We have a vibrant atmosphere, where we make the hard work of science fun,” he says.

Bindra traces his love of science to Taft’s chemistry classes with longtime faculty member David Hostage—he even dedicated his thesis to him. He recalls spending Saturdays doing questions in the back of his chemistry book for fun.

“When Will Polkinghorn and I continue to communicate and joke that we need to start a company together,” he says. “There’s a weird thing that all roads seem to lead back to Taft.”

—Neil Vigdor ’95

Bindra reviews experiments and data at the bench with medical student Chris Jackson in Bindra’s lab.
LIZ OSTERHUS FLEUETTE ’84 was already busy enough. She wasn’t looking to get involved in anything more than her demanding career and raising her family, leaning up with friends and generally enjoying life, she says. But that all changed the morning of November 9, 2016. She awoke to the news that the ultimate glass ceiling, the presidency of the United States, had not yet been shattered.

“We’ve had 45 male presidents, many of whom have been excellent. But how can it be that we haven’t had a woman president yet?” she wondered at the time.

She looked at her daughter, Maggie, who at age 5 had announced that she wanted to be the first female president when she stood at a podium embel-

lished with the presidential seal at the National Constitution Center. Something needed to be done to change the trajectory, Fleuette thought.

“If change isn’t taking place on itself,” she says now, “then I need to do my part.” And so Ms President US was born.

That very morning, Fleuette bought a “Ms President US” website and email, rented a PO box, and called a contractor to build an office in her home so she could begin the work of turning the tide.

The mission of Ms President US is to inspire girls to run for political office, at the podium at local government, at local/state/federal government, and wom-

en’s history, while having an opportunity to meet and greet exemplary female leaders.

There are comparable programs for adult women, such as the Women’s Campaign School at Yale University, and the direc-
tor of that program, Patti Russo, serves on the Ms President US advisory board.

Ms President US also aspires to impart exemplary values in future leader-

ers—values that unite, uplift, and inspire regardless of gender, race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender iden-
tity, national origin, or disability.

The program takes place during the school year, and girls come to eight monthly sessions after school. “In the fall we teach them what it looks like,” Fleuette says. “In the spring, they begin learning about public speaking, and the girls prepare a campaign for Ms President of their town.

Ms President US also aims to encourage girls to run for political office, at the podium at local government, and to meet and greet exemplary female leaders. These are programs that inspire girls to run for political office, at the podium at local government, and to meet and greet exemplary female leaders.

Ms President US aims to encourage girls to run for political office, at the podium at local government, and to meet and greet exemplary female leaders.
To explain what all that means through a blockchain solution for the food and beverage industry called ClearThru. ClearThru effectively translates data into a blockchain-readable format. Take, for example, oranges. Using ClearThru, the information coming from growers, producers, packers, shippers, distributors, and retailers can all be bundled and cryptographically stored on a blockchain platform to allow for more accessible and accurate information about the orange in various states throughout the supply chain. Through the utilization of blockchain technology, ClearThru also allows clients to generate a QR code on the orange that provides a verifiable and trustworthy source of provenance for the orange directly to the consumer. This moves our clients away from a fragmented system to a more transparent, secure, and efficient system that captures the entire value chain, and it creates a fully auditable trail of transactions and information. Over time, we may see the ability for value transfers, authorizations, supporting documentation in digital form, and the related journal entries on both sides of a transaction to be recorded on a blockchain. This could result in a shift away from retrospective auditing to a more real-time review of clients’ books by external auditors and regulators.

Tell us a bit about your position and how you became interested in this line of work.

I am a lead blockchain technical resource at RSM US LLP, and I became interested in this line of work. I act as a subject matter expert on client engagements and internal projects related to the use of blockchain or digital assets across our three lines of business—audit, tax, and consulting. I am involved with the education of the firm on blockchain technology and its impact to our clients, and I have developed and delivered presentations, workshops, and educational courses on blockchain both internally and externally. My primary focus today is on helping our clients implement enterprise blockchain systems and navigate the lack of tax and regulatory guidance from the IRS and other governmental bodies. I’ve always had an interest in finance and the stock market, which was definitely cemented during my time at Taft, where I participated in the Economics and Investment Club. While I was studying accounting and financial management at Bucknell University, I had a summer internship at an asset management firm. Looking back at what seems like a stroke of luck, I was tasked with giving a presentation to the firm on Bitcoin. This ultimately led me to blockchain technology.

After the internship, I continued to spend numerous hours each day researching the space. Ultimately, I began my professional career at RSM as a tax associate. The experience made me realize how much I wanted to focus on technology and the impact it has on business. Over time, I became interested in understanding and navigating the space of blockchain. This ultimately led to my current role and involvement with the education of our clients and colleagues on blockchain technology and its impact.

Where do you see blockchain technology going in the future?

In the future, blockchain could act as the new digital infrastructure that will connect and allow other technological innovations. Similar to the internet in the early 1990s, no one could have predicted Facebook, Google, etc., and no one will quite predict what blockchain will provide in future decades. We’re already seeing blockchain permeate every industry and facet of life. There are two use cases of blockchain that I think help speak to its potential—decentralized identity and nonprofit.

Decentralized identity is the idea of individuals directly owning and maintaining their own data, including certifications like college degrees or a CPA license; government-issued documents, such as driver’s licenses and Social Security numbers; and even health records in a digitized format secured through a blockchain that is immune to ransomware attacks. With decentralized identity, an individual can allow access, prospectively or employer, or government agency to access only pertinent information and revoke that access when it is no longer required. This could reduce the amount of customer information exposed through cyberattacks, as well as cut down on time spent verifying information.

A United Nations World Food Programme blockchain pilot is another interesting example. Today, one million Syrian refugees have their intakes scanned into a decentralized identity tied to a virtual wallet loaded with a digital certificate representing a Jordanian dollar. Refugees purchase daily essentials at certain local stores using iris scanners. The cost is then deducted from their account and transmitted to the merchant’s virtual wallet. The merchant then exchanges the digital certificate with the UN for local currency. The UN no longer needs to organize expensive shipments of supplies that may be susceptible to theft or interception, so the UN can now focus on building the local economy to boost economic growth and work to stabilize regions.

You mentioned Bitcoin. Can you explain the confusion over the relationship between blockchain, Bitcoin, and other cryptocurrencies?

Blockchain is the technology that underpins Bitcoin. Blockchain, as we now know it, and Bitcoin were essentially invented simultaneously. Today, blockchain also underpins almost all other cryptocurrencies. One can think of cryptocurrencies as a mechanism to transfer value, information, or ownership of property securely across a blockchain network. Additionally, a blockchain can be used without cryptocurrencies.
FOR ACTOR AND IMPROVISER
ALEXANDRA DICKSON ’99, who performs and teaches at New York’s famed Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre, it all began in an introductory acting class during her mid year at Taft. “A lot of what we learned was improv-based,” she remembers. “It was all really fun, and it never made me nervous or felt scary or hard.”

She continued to study acting over the next three years and even joined the school’s improv group. Then, after graduating in 1999, Dickson found herself at Emory University, where, despite not studying theater, she made sure to follow an important piece of advice from one of her favorite Taft teachers. “Mrs. Fifer was always really supportive,” Dickson says, “and when I was looking at colleges, she told me that she didn’t care what I studied—I just had to keep improvising.” As a member of Emory’s improv team, she traveled around the country, performing and taking workshops, including at Chicago’s The Second City.

“At Second City, I realized that I could actually be doing improv as a career,” she recalls. “Up until that point, I had thought that it was just something that was fun but that I would eventually stop doing. Then I saw that there was a place where I could actually do this professionally.” Dickson ultimately moved to Chicago and was soon cast as part of Second City’s touring company. After five years with the ensemble, she relocated to New York, studying traditional acting at the Circle in the Square Theatre School.

“Then I really missed improv, though,” she admits. So a year after graduating, she started doing shows at Upright Citizens Brigade and quickly flourished there. “Acting school had made me a much better improviser, and since I already had experience with improv from my time at Second City, I came in with a good level of confidence,” she says. Dickson also has a pretty strong work ethic. Now, Dickson appears every Friday night as a member of The Stepfathers, a five-person ensemble of improvisers that has been performing for nearly 15 years. “I joined the group in 2015, and I really believe that it is one of the best teams in the country,” Dickson says. “Over the years, a lot of really talented people have been in the Stepfathers, like Bobby Moynihan from Saturday Night Live and Zach Woods, who was on The Office.”

She’s also been part of another show called Improvised Seinfeld. The show has four improvisers who play Elaine, Jerry, George, and Kramer every time. “I play whatever support characters come up—George’s girlfriend, Elaine’s boss, Kramer’s pizza delivery guy, etc.,” Dickson says.

Dickson points out that, unlike the short-form variety of improv found on most college campuses, “with long-form improv, there are no games. The scary thing, and the hard thing and the great thing, is that we don’t have a gimmick. It’s just unscripted theater, and that could mean 30 minutes of a bunch of small scenes, or it could mean 30 minutes of one long scene, like a one-act play,” she says. “It’s not really a gimmick. It can really be so many things.”

The second half of every Stepfathers show always begins with an audience interview. Dickson and fellow performers conduct an impromptu interview with an audience member, building an entire set around that conversation. “They don’t have to be funny, they just have to tell the truth,” she explains. “Sometimes they tell us a funny story, and sometimes the responses are very truthful but maybe dicey. No matter what, we’re always trying to pull the comedic idea from it.” Whether interacting with a packed theater or a single scene partner, this quality of improv—its ability to connect people—is what brings Dickson the greatest satisfaction.

“This, truly my favorite thing, is that it only works when you’re honestly connecting with someone,” she says. “You have to hear them. You have to see them. You have to be affected by them and take them in. And when it’s really good improv, it feels so great because you’ve put yourself out there, and somebody across from you genuinely connects with you.”

—Christopher Browner ’12
Helping Uprooted Families

FOR BAY AREA-BASED DONNA ELDRIDGE ‘76, delivering furniture to a family of Afghan refugees in her truck is just another day. But for these uprooted families who have landed in the U.S. with nothing, her services are invaluable and ultimately, life-altering.

Eldridge’s refugee outreach work began in 2016, during a period when her youngest daughter was applying to colleges and the reality of becoming an empty nester loomed. Then Donald Trump won the presidential election, and, as for many others, Eldridge’s world was flipped on its head. “After the election I was left with this strong desire to take action,” she says.

“I wanted to do something that would help people.” Eldridge, who has valued the Non ut sibi mission since before her Taft days, had previously been involved in a holiday giving drive through her daughters’ school. When she discovered that the woman who organized the drive needed help resettling refugees whom are Afghan or Iraqi translators here on special immigrant visas,” Afghan women watch a video as part of an introduction to American culture.

through her work with Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay (JFCS East Bay), Eldridge felt called to the task. “JFCS works under an umbrella organization, HIAS [originally founded as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society], which helps refugees resettle in safety and freedom,” Eldridge explains. “They needed local volunteers to help resettle refugees, most of whom are Afghan or Iraqi translators here on special immigrant visas. Afghans who worked with U.S. personnel in Afghanistan are eligible for a special immigrant visa to bring their families to the States. Her work started out with furniture delivery—getting refugees items such as beds, couches, and bath and kitchen essentials—but quickly grew more personal as she helped families cope with the often overwhelming reality of their new lives in America.

“Seeing a family settle into their new home, feeling safe and reassured that they made the right decision to come to the U.S. and try for a new life—that’s the most rewarding part of this work,” she says. -Carola Lovering ‘07

Alumni SPOTLIGHT
Peter Redfield, an RAF photo-reconnaissance pilot, went to Mexico in 1962 with Time/Life International. He was a team member of 23 mission leaders, including 12 biographies of America’s Founding Fathers, and three histories of the early Republic. The biography of the man whose pen set America ablaze, inspiring its revolution, and whose ideas about reason and religion continue to reverberate today. Thomas Paine’s striking words were like no others in history; they inspired people to change their lives, governments, kings, and even their gods. An Englishman who emigrated to the American colonies, he formed close friendships with Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, and his ideas helped shape the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. The most widely read political writer of his generation, he proved to be more than a century ahead of his time, concocting and demanding unheard-of social reforms that are now widespread elements of modern republican societies. Among them were government subsidies for the poor, universal housing and education, pre- and postnatal care for women, and universal social security. These were incredibly radical (and modern) ideas for the age.

Thomas Paine and the Clarion Call for American Independence
Harlow Giles Unger ’49

The Redfield family are owners of El Ombú, a 60,000-acre estancia (cattle and sheep ranch) on the plains of the Argentine pampa. Seen through the eyes of Lieutenant David Redfield, an RAF photo-reconnaissance pilot, in World War II, readers follow his unlikely wartime romance in Great Britain as an Anglo-Argentine volunteer. Redfield’s narrative relates Redfield’s experiences in Great Britain, North Africa, Italy (as a prisoner of war), and his escape to Malta, a secret trip to the British Mandate of Palestine, and a visit to a kibbutz, where he learns of Nazi atrocities carried out in Argentina against Jews. His Italo-Argentine boyhood friend and half-brother, “Vico” Mancini joins the OVRA (Italian SS) in Mussolini’s Italy. His Italo-Argentine boyhood friend and half-brother, “Vico” becomes the reason MI6 recruits David and Vico, despite the latter being branded a war criminal. As the Third Reich crumbles, the leaders make plans to create the Fourth Reich in Nazi-friendly Argentina. Redfield returns to Argentina as it spins out of control under the dictatorship of Juan Domingo Perón and his wife, Eva, as the country proceeds to destroy the British economic hegemony and Anglo-Argentine presence. The book ends with the capture of Adolph Eichmann by a team of Mossad agents and his being sent to Israel to stand trial for his crimes against humanity. The author of several previous books, Butterfield went to Mexico in 1962 with Time/Life international. He is a dual national and lives in San Miguel de Allende.

Robert W. Barker ’63

When the Taft School | 110 Woodbury Road | Watertown, CT 06795-2100
Scientific Ethics: Joining the Global Conversation

FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK throughout the spring semester, eight seniors gathered around a conference table in Wu to lend their voices to some of the most pressing ethical conversations of our time: stem cells and cloning, advances in genetics and genetic engineering (including genetic testing, CRISPR, and gene modification in plants and humans); physician-assisted testing, CRISPR, and gene modification genetic engineering (including genetic cells and cloning; advances in genetics and ethical conversations of our time: stem

BY DEBRA MEYERS

Scientific Ethics is Science Department Head Shannon Guidotti’s brainchild and passion. “One of the things I found really exciting when I first arrived at Taft was that teachers are empowered to create classes we think students might like or want to take,” says Guidotti. “I took a class in general ethics when I was a student at Ethel Walker and a medical ethics class when I was in college. They were the kind of courses that just stuck with me—courses that taught me a lot about being a good person and about how to think about important questions, like should we do things just because we can because science and technology allow us to? I wanted to bring that kind of experience to Taft.”

The semester begins with objective lesions—presentations, videos, fact sheets—then asks students to develop and share additional science-based content using more contemporary teaching strategies, including the jigsaw method and four corners exercises. Both advance learning by marrying independent research and thinking with peer-to-peer interdependence and cooperation. “One of the things I found really exciting about this class is rooted in scientific fact. There is a lot of student research involved,” she says. “It is critical to the conversation that they all understand the science before we jump into the ethics.”

Guidotti introduces each topic through a variety of traditional classroom methods—presentations, videos, fact sheets—then asks students to develop and share additional science-based content using more contemporary teaching strategies, including the jigsaw method and four corners exercises. Both advance learning by marrying independent research and thinking with peer-to-peer interdependence and cooperation. “One of the things I found really exciting about this class is rooted in scientific fact. There is a lot of student research involved,” she says. “It is critical to the conversation that they all understand the science before we jump into the ethics.”

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reasons why that number remains so high, students presented research on vaccine-preventable diseases and watched clips from news programs like PFF’s Frontline, various TED Talks, and interviewed with celebrities, authors, and scientists. They also revisited their scientific misconduct conversations, recalling British physician Andrew Wakefield’s 1998 paper linking vaccines with autism and bowel disease, which was not only debunked but proven to be falsified; it was ultimately retracted.

They read journal articles that talk about something completely different in another. They read journal articles that talk about various TED Talks, and interviews with celebrities, authors, and scientists. They learned to do research, to approach each topic with a critical eye, and to question everything. For me, it was a complete journey from not knowing much about it at all to having a fully formed and informed opinion that allows me to argue about it intellectually with my peers,” she says. For most, developing informed opinions that allow them to argue intellectually with their peers is just the tip of the learning iceberg. They have developed critical thinking skills—and a dose of empathy—that they will carry well beyond the bounds of the science classroom.

“I thought we could make something good out of something we already read about,” says Shaelyn. “And we wanted to do something good for other students who might not get vaccinated as often as we do.”

“We talked about where all this comes from in America,” says Guidotti. “They actually read primary sources, firsthand journal articles, and blogs representing both sides of the debate. But when we considered the vaccination question globally and learned about countries with lower vaccination rates, students came to understand what it is a choice in our country may be something completely different in another. They read journal articles that talk about the challenges for vaccinations globally and saw that not getting vaccinated often has to do with factors like infrastructure and economics, challenges to access, or lack of understanding of the science. Having students understand that the reasons someone might not get the flu vaccine at Taft are very different than why someone might not get a lifesaving vaccine in a developing country is awesome to see, and incredibly important.”

“Physician-assisted death was difficult to learn about, it was also really satisfying. For me, it was a complete journey from not knowing much about it at all to having a fully formed and informed opinion that allows me to argue about it intellectually with my peers,” she says. For most, developing informed opinions that allow them to argue intellectually with their peers is just the tip of the learning iceberg. They have developed critical thinking skills—and a dose of empathy—that they will carry well beyond the bounds of the science classroom.

“This class taught me to think more deeply about all of the different sides and different ethical arguments that surround a whole range of issues, not just those rooted in science,” says Caeley. “In doing so, I’ve come to more fully understand different sides of an argument I wasn’t really aware of before, or didn’t necessarily agree with. This has given me a better perspective on how and why ideas differ, how different backgrounds shape our thinking, and how all of these differences shape the global conversation in really meaningful ways.”

TAFTIES THINK ABOUT THE SCHOOL motto—Not to be served but to serve—a lot. They think about it when they plan their afternoon “us,” when they sign up for a service trip, when they plan charity events, and when their sports teams hold youth clinics or toy drives. Shaelyn Kennedy ’19 was even thinking about it last summer on vacation, while relaxing on the sofa.

“I was thinking about how important service is in our country,” says Shaelyn, “and I wanted to come up with a way of giving something back once the school year started up again.”

As day students, Shaelyn and friend Olivia Wrowestad ’19 have something a lot of other students don’t: wheels.

“We were doing Starbucks runs all the time, offering to pick things up for our friends when we went,” Shaelyn says. “I thought we could make something good out of something we already do and that people really appreciate and enjoy.”

And they have. Taft Coffee for Charity is an Instagram-based initiative that has allowed Shaelyn and Olivia to donate HOPE kits for cancer patients to a local hospital, and to purchase equipment for the Watertown-Rhino Youth Disabled Hockey Team, a program established nearly two years ago by Casley Smith ’19. A few times each week, Shaelyn and Olivia post an Instagram story in the Taft Coffee for Charity account letting people know when they’re about to make a Starbucks run, subscribers get notifications from Instagram when they do. People then place their order using the Starbucks app.” Olivia explains, “and we run and pick it up. We ask that people make a minimum donation of $1 when we deliver their coffee to them. We definitely have our loyal customers, and some people have been quite generous, making donations as large as $20.”

Shaelyn and Olivia launched Taft Coffee for Charity in October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

“We thought it made sense to start with the National Breast Cancer Foundation as our first charity,” says Shaelyn. “Our goal was to raise $250 to purchase HOPE kits for cancer patients—we were very happy to not just meet our goal, but to exceed it.”

According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, patients undergoing breast cancer treatment consistently look for common comfort items—things like lip balm, unscented lotions, fuzzy socks, educational resources, and journals. The foundation ships the kits to donors, who often assemble them during HOPE parties, then deliver them to local hospitals, which Shaelyn and Olivia did in February. Around the same time, they made their second crowdfunded gift.

“Our great friend Casley Smith ’19 created a nonprofit hockey program for disabled children, giving them the unique opportunity to play the sport of their choice,” Shaelyn explains. “One of the players, 8-year-old Owen, has cerebral palsy, meaning he doesn’t have full mobility in his legs. Casley received a grant from the Connecticut Hockey Conference to buy him a sled, allowing him to experience hockey more independently. We purchased specialized sticks with picks on the end that allow him to move the sled on his own.”

“It was such an amazing surprise when Shaelyn and Olivia let me know that they had chosen to support my program through Taft Coffee for Charity,” says Casley. “I am unbelievably grateful that other students in our school—as well as members of the greater Watertown community—see what I use in those kids and in this program. Growing this program as really been incredible for me and for the players. I couldn’t have done it without all the support I’ve received.”
End of Year Program

LAST SPRING, TAFT STUDENTS TOOK PART IN A NEW “End of Year Program” that included community service activities for lower mids, leadership training for mids, and college counseling workshops for upper mids. The End of Year Program also included a day of “Crash Courses” for the Rhinos, who spent time with Taft faculty members engaging in two-hour courses on a wide range of topics. The Science Olympiad is a nationwide organization dedicated to promoting science education through competitive science tournaments. About 15,000 schools participate each year. The Science Olympiad is specifically cited in the National Science Standards as a model science activity.

Sci Oly

THIRTY TAFT STUDENTS TRAVELED to the University of Connecticut in Storrs to compete in the Connecticut Science Olympiad last spring. They came home with eight medals, including a first-place win for Marcus Valenta ’19 and Ernest Protas ’20 in the Chemistry Lab event, which required them to solve problems using scientific process skills in physical properties, and acids and bases. “Ernest Protas did a fantastic job as team captain,” notes science teacher Jim Mooney, “and also gets a shout-out for winning three medals.”

The weekend event brought 48 teams from across the state to the UConn campus. Each team was allowed a maximum of 15 members who competed in 23 different events. The events challenged competitors to apply their knowledge and skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Some events required students to construct projects in advance, while others involved on-the-spot problem-solving. Students competed in pairs for most events; most entered three events during the competition.

Congratulations to all of Taft’s Science Olympiad team members and to the following 2019 medal winners:

TEAM A
- First Place, Chemistry Lab: Ernst Protas ’20 and Marcus Valenta ’19
- Second Place, Circuit Lab: Eric Yingard ’19 and Carlyn Yee ’19
- Third Place, Astronomy: Stefan Kim ’20 and Ernest Protas ’20
- Third Place, Fermi Questions: Peter Yu ’20 and Bill Lu ’19
- Third Place, Sounds of Music: Ernst Protas ’20 and Coco Zhang ’21

TEAM B
- Third Place, Mission Possible: Chris Pellegrini ’20
- Fourth Place, Chemistry Lab: Anna Serbina ’21 and Ben Le ’21
- Fourth Place, Write it, Do it: Theo Norledge ’21 and Eli Juvan ’22

Special thanks to team coach David Hostage, Brian Norledge, and Jim Lehner, and to mentors Shannon Guidotti, Parker Washburn, Mike McAloon, and Dan Calore.

The Science Olympiad is a nationwide organization dedicated to promoting science education through competitive science tournaments. About 15,000 schools participate each year. The Science Olympiad is specifically cited in the National Science Standards as a model science activity.

Independent Study Program

FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS, TAFT’S Independent Study Program (ISP) has allowed students to pursue their passions through high-level, inquiry-based, self-directed courses of study. Taft’s program was the first of its kind in the nation and continues to offer students a unique opportunity for advanced learning outside the traditional classroom. In May, students undertaking ISP projects during the 2018–19 academic year presented their work. In all, 16 students worked on projects ranging from the highly academic and analytical to the highly artistic. Projects included Human Rights Law in the U.S.; Primary Determinants of Refugees’ Economic Success in the USA and Canada; Lionfish in Tropical Marine Ecosystems; Computer Security; The Opioid Epidemic; Educational Policy Around the World; The Lexical Similarity Among the English, French, and German Languages; and an original musical album.
Hitting the Open Highway

English Teacher Chris Brown ’64 Retires

“RETIREMENT IS NOT THE END OF THE ROAD. IT IS THE BEGINNING OF THE OPEN HIGHWAY.” —Author Unknown

FOR ENGLISH TEACHER Chris Brown ’64, it is all open highway ahead—he retired at the end of the academic year, after a lengthy career and extraordinary dedication to Taft.

Brown first joined the Taft community as a student in the early 1960s. He was, he says, lucky enough to have spectacularly good English teachers. “I remember sitting in [Bill Sullivan’s] class and thinking, I want to do what he does.” And for more than 40 years, he has. After graduating at Yale and completing graduate work at New York University, Brown earned a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania. As both a lawyer and a law professor, Brown found his greatest joys in the latter; he made a permanent switch to the classroom, teaching Latin and English at a few peer schools before landing back at Taft, a place that still feels like home.

“Chris’s love of literature and passion for students make him truly special,” says Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78. “And the joy he brings to every class is inspiring, intoxicating.” Brown is the kind of teacher students love. He recites incredible amounts of poetry, drops lines from any number of scholarly works at will, tells fascinating personal stories of a life well led, and injects energy, enthusiasm, and just a touch of drama into every lesson. He keeps in touch with hundreds of former students, representing every decade of his long and storied teaching career. They write to let him know that his work mattered: they say he taught them not just to write, but to think, and that his belief in them taught them to believe in themselves. After a 2011 retirement that didn’t quite take, Brown is ready to hit the open road, after a “phenomenally rewarding career.”

A Career of Devotion, Energy, and Passion

Director of Development Chris Latham Retires

CHRIS LATHAM CAME TO TAFT in 2007, after serving as director of alumni and development at Tabor Academy for 17 years, and holding similar posts at both Holderness School and Dartmouth College.

Before moving into development, Latham worked as a credit analyst in the corporate banking division of Princeton Bank & Trust. During his 12-year tenure as director of development at Taft, Latham’s adroit financial insights and intellect, coupled with his genuine warmth, charisma, and professionalism, enabled him to effectively take development initiatives to new heights, benefiting every aspect of school life. Latham recently led Taft through “Ever Taft, Even Stronger,” a multiyear campaign designed to sustain and advance Taft’s excellence as a school by growing its endowment to support faculty, financial aid, program growth and development, and campus maintenance and improvements. Under Latham’s leadership, campaign giving exceeded the original goal of $175 million.

Latham led a talented, seasoned development team, which includes alumni relations, major gifts, annual giving, planned giving, parent relations, stewardship, publications, and database management and research professionals. His fundraising teams consistently set and achieve meaningful goals, both in terms of dollars raised and donor participation. One example: the Parents’ Fund has consistently achieved a participation rate above 90 percent, and this year raised more than $2 million, the highest among Taft’s peer schools.

“With Chris Latham’s retirement, we say goodbye to a singularly classy and successful leader,” Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78 says. “Chris has served Taft—and Tabor Academy for nearly two decades before us—with incredible devotion, energy, and passion. Taft was changed and made better by him, as he has led a terrific office through a major capital campaign, a dozen alumni weekends, hundreds of events, thousands of communications—and more miles on planes, trains, and automobiles than anyone can count. We will miss him deeply. He has been an inspiring partner for me—and many others.”

—Willy MacMullen’78
A Growing Concern

TAFTIES CELEBRATED ARBOR DAY BY PLANTING A TRICOLOR BEECH TREE IN HEADMASTER’S CIRCLE AND A FUJI APPLE TREE ON THE GROUNDS OF A FACULTY RESIDENCE.

ESTABLISHED IN 1961 TO HONOR TRADITIONAL NEW ORLEANS JAZZ, PRESERVATION HALL HOSTS INTIMATE, ACOUSTIC CONCERTS ALMOST EVERY NIGHT OF THE YEAR. PERFORMERS INCLUDE ENSEMBLES FROM A COLLECTIVE OF MORE THAN 100 LOCAL MASTER PRACTITIONERS, AND, IN MARCH OF THIS YEAR, TALENTED TAFTIES. JAZZ BAND TEACHER T.J. THOMPSON LED STUDENTS IN A SUNDAY EVENING PERFORMANCE AT THE STORIED AND HISTORIC MUSIC VENUE.

Living History

Whose Woods

TAFT PHOTOGRAPHY TEACHER YEE-FUN YIN SPENT THE 2017–18 ACADEMIC YEAR ON SABBATICAL; HE SPENT THIS PAST MAY SHARING THE FRUITS OF HIS SABBATICAL LABOR THROUGH WHOSE WOODS, AN EXHIBIT IN POTTER GALLERY. THE WORK EXPLORER PRIVATE LAND OWNERSHIP THROUGH BOTH THE WRITTEN WORD AND IMAGES, INVITING THE AUDIENCE TO REFLECT ON THEIR OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH LAND. THE EXHIBIT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE ANDREW R. HEMINWAY ’47 ENDOWMENT FUND.
Spring Dance Showcase
TAFT ACTORS AND CREW EARNED 11 nominations and two wins in the Seven Angels Theatre 16th Annual Halo Awards last spring. More than 60 schools from across Connecticut participated in this year’s awards, which honor high school students’ achievements in all aspects of theater. Taft won the Halo for Best Dancing for Chicago and Best Specialty Ensemble (Fiona Connolly ’21, Erin Farrell ’20, Rati Matome ’19, Michelle Tetro ’20, and Lily Thompson ’20 as The Merry Murderesses in Chicago).

GIRLS INC. OF WESTERN CONNECTICUT recently named the Taft School as its 2019 Community Partner of the Year. The award recognizes Taft’s “instrumental role in working with Girls Inc. in support of its mission to ‘inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.’” Community Service Director Baba Frew travels to Girls Inc. in Waterbury throughout the school year with a dedicated group of student volunteers, who were on hand to receive the award in May.

Spring Play

TAFT ACTORS SOARED TO NEW HEIGHTS WITH A SPRING PRODUCTION OF BOEING-BOEING, a 1960s, international romp featuring one lothario, three fiancées, a best friend, and a maid who sees it all. Seniors Brady Grustas, Cami Long, and Piper Forstl wowed in their Taft swan songs.

Community Partners

Senior Service Day

FROM LITTLE FARM ON MAIN and Cows Around the Corner to the White Memorial Foundation, Bantam Civic Association, Brass City Harvest Urban Garden, the Watertown Greenway, and so many more sites in and around Watertown, Taft’s Class of 2019 spent one last day of service as Taft students in May. Senior Community Service Day is a meaningful tradition and a fitting culmination of life at Taft.
Dr. Nikki Mayhew Greene ’93
Elected to Trustee Post

This past spring, Taft alumni elected Dr. Nikki Mayhew Greene ’93 to serve her alma mater as the newest member of Taft’s board of trustees.

Greene is assistant professor of art history at Wellesley College and the visual arts editor of Transition: The Magazine of Africa and the Diaspora, published by Harvard University (Indiana University Press). She received her B.A. with honors in art history from Wesleyan University, and her M.A. and Ph.D. in art history from the University of Delaware. Teaching art history at Wellesley College is Greene’s dream job! She finds teaching particularly rewarding in a predominantly women’s environment. She views the professorate as a vocation that entails amplifying students’ voices, advocating for access and equity within higher education, and preparing our country’s future leaders to think critically and with perseverance with the Taft community.

Greene has traveled throughout the United States and abroad, including to Chile, England, Ethiopia, Italy, and South Africa, to deliver lectures on the arts of the African diaspora. She has held numerous fellowships, including the Bara Foundation Fellowship at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, and the Richard D. Cohen Fellowship at the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University. She is currently completing her forthcoming book, Greene, Glass, and Glitter: The Body and the Sonic in Contemporary Black Art (Duke University Press).

A proud native of Newark, New Jersey, Greene was awarded a scholarship to attend Taft through the Wight Foundation, an organization that supports bright students from the greater Newark region in attending independent schools. She credits Taft as being a springboard to pursue her alma mater as the newest member of Taft’s board of trustees.

Dr. Nikki Mayhew Greene ’93 to serve as newest Trustee

A divergent spectrum

Diving into Summer Reads

IN A TWIST ON TAFT’S TRADITIONAL SUMMER READING selection, the Summer Reading Committee selected not one but nine texts for students to choose from for their summer reading. The books were selected based on the theme of grit and perseverance. The wider selection of texts is designed to allow students to select the book they are most interested in. The summer reading books are:

> City of Thieves by David Benioff
> Coach Wooden and Me by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
> Hidden Figures by Margot Lee Shetterly
> Neverwhere by Neil Gaiman
> The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas
> The Martian by Andy Weir
> The Scree of Siesta by Melodia Winters
> The Thing Around Your Neck by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
> This Is How It Always Is by Laurie Frankel

This fall the Summer Reading Committee will bring author Sarah McBride to campus to continue the conversation around grit and perseverance with the Taft community.

College Bound

THE CLASS OF 2019 begins the next step in their education at exceptional colleges and universities across the country and around the world. More Rhinos have enrolled at University of Pennsylvania this year than any other school.

The number of students from this year’s graduating class attending a given university is reflected in parentheses following the school name. Those with no parenthetical reference will welcome one Taft student this fall.

- American University (5)
- Babson College (2)
- Bard College (2)
- Barnard College (3)
- Berklee College of Music (3)
- Boston College (3)
- Boston University (2)
- Brandeis College (2)
- Bucknell University (5)
- Carnegie Mellon University (2)
- Chapman College (2)
- Colby College (2)
- Colgate University (2)
- College of the Holy Cross (2)
- Columbia University (4)
- Connecticut College (2)
- Cornell University (5)
- Duke University (2)
- Durham University (5)
- Elon University (3)
- Fordham University (2)
- Franklin & Marshall College (4)
- George Washington University (2)
- Georgia Institute of Technology (2)
- Harvard University (3)
- Haverford College (3)
- Hobart and William Smith Colleges (2)
- Howard University (2)
- IUP – Springfield (3)
- Lafayette College (2)
- Lake Forest College (2)
- Lehigh University (2)
- McGill University (2)
- Miami University, Oxford (3)
- Middlebury College (5)
- New York University (5)
- Northeastern University (4)
- Oberlin College of Arts and Sciences (2)
- Occidental College (2)
- Ohio State University (2)
- Oxford College of Emory University (2)
- Princeton University (2)
- Rhode Island School of Design (2)
- Rice University (2)
- Saint Anselm College (2)
- Santa Clara University (2)
- Scripps College (2)
- Soka University of America (2)
- St. Lawrence University (2)
- Stanford University (2)
- SUNY College of Technology at Canton (2)
- Swarthmore College (2)
- Syracuse University (2)
- Trinity College (2)
- Tufts University (2)
- Tulane University (2)
- Union College (New York) (3)
- University of Bridgeport (2)
- University of California, Berkeley (2)
- University of California, Los Angeles (2)
- University of California, San Diego (2)
- University of Chicago (4)
- University of Colorado Boulder (2)
- University of Connecticut (2)
- University of Delaware (2)
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2)
- University of Maine (2)
- University of Miami (4)
- University of Michigan (2)
- University of Notre Dame (2)
- University of Oregon (4)
- University of Pennsylvania (2)
- University of Richmond (4)
- University of Southern California (2)
- University of St. Andrews (2)
- University of Texas (Austin) (2)
- University of Western Ontario (2)
- University of Wisconsin, Madison (2)
- University of York (2)
- Vanderbilt University (2)
- Villanova University (2)
- Wake Forest University (2)
- Washington and Lee University (2)
- Wellesley College (2)
- Williams College (2)
- Yale University (4)
Varsity baseball player Nolan Grooms ’19 throws a pitch against Loomis Chaffee in May.

Taft’s Jenna Guglielmi ’22 slides into third base during a game against Westminster in mid-April.

The varsity baseball team won the Founders League Championship after defeating Loomis Chaffee and finishing the season 16–1.

Baseball 16–1
FOUNDERS LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

In winning 16 of its 17 games, Taft took home the 2019 Founders League title. The team was led offensively by PG Carson Greene ’19, who had an average of .511, with 28 RBIs, 3 homeruns, and 16 walks in 63 plate appearances. Co-captain Beau Root ’19 hit .488 in an injury-shortened campaign, while Nolan Grooms ’19 hit .351 and had 14 stolen bases.

Grooms also pitched 40 innings while accumulating an ERA of 1.40 and leading the team with 46 strikeouts. Justin Humenay ’20 had an ERA of 2.42, Root had three saves on the year, and Walker Wonham ’20 threw five perfect innings against Westminster.

Co-captain Dylan Kim ’19 led the defense as catcher and defensive captain with a fielding percentage of .953, while starting all 17 games for the Rhinos. There were more than a few dominant wins this season—including a 7–0 win over Kingswood Oxford pitched by Ryan Higgins ’21—but the “Cardiac Rhinos” were best known for their perseverance and late-game heroics. The team had five late-game wins, including a come-from-behind 7–5 win against Choate courtesy of Greene’s 3 RBI triple, a 4–3 win over Loomis on a Cole Torino ’20 2 RBI single, and a 6–4 win over Avon pitched by Humenay and Grooms. The epitome of this never-say-die attitude came in the final game of the year when the Rhinos played Loomis into extra innings and were down 4–3 going into the top of the ninth.

In the bottom of the ninth, Grooms drove in Higgins on an RBI triple to tie the game, and Humenay hit a single to walk the Rhinos off and secure the Founders League title. The Rhinos’ indomitable will to win was the hallmark of the year and is the reason that this group can call themselves champions.

Softball 9–4
WESTERN NEW ENGLAND FINALISTS

The Rhinos enjoyed another strong campaign, which ended with a loss in a rematch of last year’s championship game.
Girls’ Track 15–0
FOUNDERS LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

The 2019 girls’ track team ranks as one of the very best teams in Taft track history. Behind the leadership of their senior captains Rayla Robinson ’19 and Eleanor Streit ’19, the team finished the regular season undefeated (15–0), a feat last accomplished in 1990. The win over Hotchkiss in the season’s final meet was not decided until the final event of the day, when the 4x400m relay of Kaelyn Macdonald ’19, Streit, Stella Oldakowski ’22, and Liz Barnes ’23 raced to victory. The Rhinos won their third consecutive Founders League Championship, this time in convincing fashion. Robinson (55), Alex Prezotti ’21 (800m), and Ella Losee ’20 (PV) were individual event winners, with Losee setting a new school record height of 9 feet 3 inches in the pole vault. Of the 13 other athletes who participated, 12 earned places in the top six. The team scored points in 14 of the 17 events contested. Taft placed 4th out of 12 teams at the New England track meet, the team tied for 9th, with the returners. Taft pieced together a number of new faces, but this young group was talented and blended very effectively, and the team scored points in 10 of the 17 events contested. The 2019 Rhinos continued the tradition of strong Taft golf teams. This spring’s highlights included tournament performances in four events in which the team never finished outside the top five, including a 2nd-place finish at the Andover Invitational, where Taft had four golfers in the 70s and lost only to Exeter. With quality opponents participating in these tournaments, the team’s tournament stroke average was 77.51, a clear indication of the quality of Taft’s golfers. Excellent individual performances included that of co-captain Jonny Elkins ’20 at the New England Prep School Invitational, those of co-captain Rex Riefler ’19 at the New England Prep School Invitational, and of the 10 athletes who participated, four earned places in the top six. Co-captain Jonny Elkins ’20 and Henry Horne ’20, both shooting 72 at the 46th Annual Kingswood Invitational Tournament; and Elkins’ 75 at the Founders League Championship, one stroke out of the team never finished outside the top five, including a 2nd-place finish at the Andover Invitational, where Taft had four golfers in the 70s and lost only to Exeter. With quality opponents participating in these tournaments, the team’s tournament stroke average was 77.51, a clear indication of the quality of Taft’s golfers. Excellent individual performances included that of co-captain Jonny Elkins ’20 at the New England Prep School Invitational, those of co-captain Rex Riefler ’19 at the New England Prep School Invitational, and of the 10 athletes who participated, four earned places in the top six. Co-captain Jonny Elkins ’20 and Henry Horne ’20, both shooting 72 at the 46th Annual Kingswood Invitational Tournament; and Elkins’ 75 at the Founders League Championship, one stroke out of the
first. Throughout this spring’s wet course conditions, the team received great efforts and low scores from Gus Harper ’19, James Donaldson ’20, AJ Davidson ’20, Enrique Yen Chiang ’21, and JinYoung Min ’22.

Girls’ Golf 7–9–1

The Rhinos started the season with four losses in the first five matches, but rebounded with a series of victories over Avon Old Farms, where Taft completed an excellent whole-team effort, resulting in a 15–10 decision, handing the Winged Beavers their only league loss of the season. Individually, Jeffrey Ricciardelli ’21 and Pat Kavanagh ’19 earned All-Founders League recognition, while MacGregor Peterson ’19, Peter Kenerson ’19, and Billy Dobensky ’19 earned All-Western New England honors. In recognition of his relentless approach to the game and consistent leadership, Dobensky was awarded the Odden Lacrosse Award at season’s end. At the end of year New England West I coaches banquet, Kenerson was voted by league coaches as one of five Academic All-Americans in our region.

Girls’ Lacrosse 8–7

Taft finished the season 8–7 with big wins against Deerfield (8–7), The Hill School (10–9), and Choate (14–6). Taft scored 148 goals with 14 different players finding the back of the net, and goalies Lily Cook ’20 and Chloe Meuse ’22 combined to make 86 saves. In the 8–7 win against Deerfield, Taft had four different players score, Cook made an amazing 14 saves, and the defense came up with critical stops, including five caused turnovers. Three of the seven Taft losses were one-goal games. Individually, co-captains Eva Baurmeister ’19 and Charlotte Powell ’19 received the Taft Girls’ Lacrosse Award; Emilee Adami ’19 and Asia Rupert ’19 were Founders League All-Stars; and Taft’s Western New England All-Stars were Corinna Dorr ’19 and Lucy Gretsky ’19. Next year’s returning group will be led by tri-captains Abigail Hano ’20, Eliza Travelstead ’20, and Lily Cook ’20.
Girls’ Crew 36–23
(Regular Season Record)
In their dual-meet races, Taft’s four varsity boats compiled an overall record of 27 victories versus 17 losses. The first varsity lineup of co-captain Hayley Jubitz ’19, Zoe Kemper ’20, Liz Carlson ’20, Elly MacKay ’20, and co-captain Maggie O’Leary ’19 (cox), placed 5th at the annual Founders Day regatta on Lake Waramaug. The second varsity boat, featuring Mason Delafield ’21, Logan Clew-Bachrach ’20, Sarah Sawyer ’20, Eugenia Torbar ’21, and coxswain Erin Farrell ’20, placed 5th at the Founders Day regatta and bested powerhouse programs Winsor and Deerfield several times this season. The third and fourth varsity boats placed 4th and 5th in their respective events at Founders Day. All four varsity boats qualified for the New England Championships regatta, with three of four qualifying for the afternoon finals. The first boat won the Petite Final (for an overall 7th-place finish), the second placed 8th overall, and the third won a bronze medal. It was a wonderful season with contributions coming from all members of the team.

Boys’ Crew 37–48
(Regular Season Record)
In their dual-meet races and regattas, Taft’s four varsity boats compiled an overall record of 37 wins versus 48 losses. It was a season full of challenges on a daily basis—rain, snow, sleet, key injuries, AP exams, and unforeseen absences meant new lineups several times this season. The third and fourth varsity boats placed 4th and 5th in their respective events at Founders Day. All four varsity boats qualified for the New England Championships regatta, with three of four qualifying for the afternoon finals. The first boat won the Petite Final (for an overall 7th-place finish), the second placed 8th overall, and the third won a bronze medal. It was a wonderful season with contributions coming from all members of the team.

Girls’ Tennis 7–6
This young Rhinos’ team, a mix of seven returners and three newcomers, finished with a 7–6 record and just missing an invitation to the Class A New England tournament. In Founders League play, the team defeated Loomis (6–3), Miss Porter’s (7–2), and Choate (9–0), but had two tight losses to Westminster (4–5) and Hotchkiss (4–5). Kate Zhang ’20 continued to lead the singles lineup playing in the #1 spot for the third year in a row and achieving a 9–3 record. Co-captains Regan Brewer ’19 and Kira Siebrecht ’19 led the team this year playing the #2 and #3 singles positions and achieving an impressive 6–3 record as the #2 doubles pairing. Maddie Meister ’21 earned a 7–5 record at the #4 singles spot and for the second year in a row played #1 doubles, this year pairing with Zhang. Leigh Root ’21 had an impressive 10–3 record at the #5 spot, and Janse Schoonmaker ’21 also earned a winning record of 6–3 in the #6 spot. Rounding out the doubles pairings this year were Abby Hawkins ’21 with Janse Schoonmaker ’21, Nico Gusac ’19 with Lulu Bradley ’21, and Lila du Pont ’21 with Leigh Root. Next year, the team will return many members and will be captained by Zhang and Maddie Meister ’21.

Boys’ Tennis 5–9
With half the team composed of freshmen and two seniors making the leap to JV, everyone knew this would be a challenging season. Losing co-captain Peter Demino ’20 and Lucas Eralsson ’20 for most of the season due to spring break injuries compounded the woes visited upon the team by the rainiest spring in decades. The team lost by the ridiculously close margin of two shots (reminder that this is not golf, where that is normal) three times—to Avon, Kingswood, and Hopkins—to finish the season 5–9. Despite the worst win/loss record in over 30 years, it was a really fun season. Highlights included the 4–3 victory over Berkshire, which featured six tiebreakers, and lower mid “dynamic duo” Jack Rosenburg ’22 and Scott Noh ’22 winning the League Championship at #3 doubles. Our #2, co-captain Will Wang ’19, saved the best of his Taft career for the last match, trenching his Hopkins opponent 6–2, 6–2. With returning #1 and co-captain elect Henry Molson ’20 joined by Demino, Eralsson, and the “dynamic duo,” the team has a strong foundation for next spring.

Girls’ varsity crew during a practice preparing for New England Crew Tournament.
Thank you!
Together we made it happen.

Please, join me in celebrating another terrific year for the Annual Fund and expressing sincere gratitude to our many generous donors for their commitment to sustaining Taft’s educational excellence. In addition to the philanthropy of our wonderful donors, the 2018–19 Annual Fund was driven by an incredibly devoted team of volunteers, including Sara and Bob Savage ‘81, ‘20, Chairs of the Current Parents’ Fund; Jean and Stuart Serenbetz ‘P’03, ‘06, ‘09, Chairs of the Former Parents’ Fund; Joanie Dayton GP’14, ‘16, ‘21, Chair of the Grandparents’ Fund; and hundreds of Class Agents across more than a half-century of class years.

I also want to offer special thanks to the staff of the Alumni and Development Office who work tirelessly to keep the Taft community connected and strong. I am truly grateful and humbled to work with such a wonderful group of dedicated people, and I look forward to working with many of you to reach higher and achieve even more in the year and years to come.

—Dylan Simonds ’89, Annual Fund Chair

### Annual Fund Class Awards 2018-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Percentage Increase</th>
<th>Amount ($US)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Snyder Award</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>CLASS OF 1970</td>
<td>+15%</td>
<td>114,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCabe Award</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>CLASS OF 1980</td>
<td>+15%</td>
<td>161,860</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romano Award</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>CLASS OF 1991</td>
<td>+15%</td>
<td>161,156</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Alumni Award</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>CLASS OF 2010</td>
<td>+15%</td>
<td>160,156</td>
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**Parents’ Committee 2018–19**

Katryn and Chris Adams
Henry and David Allen
Alihan and Luke Babcock
Anne and Eric Baumwoller
Ashley and Tom Bradley
Melissa and Michael Bradley
Victoria and Tim Brewer
Lisa and Timothy Broadbent
Amanda Shepard-Brooks ’91
and Phyllis Brooks
Jason Chan and Tracy Thai
Reiko and Milton Cheng
Kim and John Church
Leslie and Kevin Coleman
Marie and James Crough
Lisa and Christopher Dawe ’81
Carrie and Beau DeFalk ‘97
Sara and Robert Savage

Eleanor Wood Dunn and Glenn Dorr
Liz and Ben Durling
Barbara and Howard Erkenstein
Kristine and Joshua Fenton
Margot and Dan Gass
Thomas Gura ‘80 and Veronica Bravo
Alissa and Ben Hendershot
Jane and Chris Hennemann
Andrew and Christopher Ip
Joanna and Jose Jimenez
Ari Keledjian and Patricia Trompeter
Diane and Joseph Kozul
Andrew Li and Jie Zhang
John Lian and Cindy Nie
Diane and Joseph Koziol
Aris Kekedjian and Patricia Trompeter
Joanna and Jose Jimenez
Andrea and Christopher Ip
Jane and Chris Hentemann
Alissa and Ron Henderson
Thomas Gura ‘83 and Veronica Bravo
Margot and Dan Gass
Karen and Rick Shea
Lisa and Henry Segalas
Marni and Bill Schwartz
Sara and Robert Savage

Robert and Sara Savage, Parents’ Fund Chairs

Ronald Mardia
Karen and Jane Odell ’64
Lindsey and John Parcell
Tracey and Michael Ricardis
David Rupert and Sarah Drakake
Sara and Robert Savage
Marie and Bill Schwartz
Lisa and Henry Segalas
Karen and Rick Shea

Hyun Young Shin and Wonsun Lee
Karen and Jane Odell ’64
Lisa and Henry Segalas
Karen and Rick Shea

Young Alumni Challenge 2018–19

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>CLASS OF 1991</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>CLASS OF 2010</td>
<td>+15%</td>
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**Young Alumni Dollars Award 2018-19**

Highest participation from a non-reunion class 50 or fewer years out

**Young Alumni Participation Award 2018-19**

Highest participation from a class 10 or fewer years out
This was Alumni Weekend 2019!

Here’s a look back.

Photography by Robert Falcetti, Anne Kowalski, and James Shannon
1. Dylan McGee ’89 and Claudia Friedman Hoffman ’89 march with classmates in the Alumni Parade.

2. A well-attended Alumni Parade makes its way around campus.

3. Reminiscing over yearbook photos from 1974: from left, a classmate’s guest, Marian Reiff Cheevers ’74, and Sherard Upham Cote ’73 (wife of Dan ’74).

4. Head Monitor Eva Baumrucker ’19 and a young friend hang out with Taft’s Rhino before joining the Parade.

5. Mark Conklin ’79, Greg Coles ’79, and Carrie Francis Cabe at the Headmaster’s Dinner.

6. Guy Hatfield ’65 and George Boggs ’65 before the Old Guard Dinner.


9. Selfie time under the tent at the Headmaster’s Dinner.

10. A special moment as the headmaster greets the oldest attending alumnus, Griff Bedworth ’38, a proud 100 years old, who was accompanied by son Nick ’69 (not pictured).
11. Reunion year signs ready for the Parade.

12. The well-attended dedication of Cobb Court to honor the late Faculty Emeritus Dick Cobb. **Jonathan Seidowitz ’84**

13. Headmaster Emeritus Lance Odden pays special tribute to his former colleague, the late Dick Cobb.

14. 1984 alumni, from left, Reid Curley, Hank Jenkins, Joseph Dillard, and Felicia Washington-Forson, and at far right, Bruce Ewing ’84. **Jonathan Seidowitz ’84**

15. A perfect morning on Alumni Day.

16. Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal honoree Larry Morris ’65 with his wife, Tina, and daughter Alix before the Old Guard Dinner.

17. Multigenerational alumni under the tent at the Headmaster’s Dinner.

18. 1990 classmates at the 20th Reunion Gathering.
Making friends.

The Class of ’69 are welcomed into Mac Quad as the newest members of the Old Guard.

2009 and 2010 friends reunite at the Headmaster’s Dinner.

Taft staff member Chris Snow ’97, with his daughter, Haylee ’19, and Faculty Emerita Linda Saarnijoki.

50th Reunion classmates V. Manuel Rocha ’69, Grant Porter ’69, and Dennis Vitrella ’69 reunite in the Woodworth Faculty Room before their class dinner.

Reading the latest school news, François Berube ’04, with wife Krista Bulow and faculty member Tyler Whitley ’04.

Headmaster Willy MacMullen ’78 welcomes all alumni, families, and guests in Mac Quad.

All smiles from young alums on Saturday evening at the Headmaster’s Dinner.
The Ongoing Work of Inclusion

A Conversation with Andrew Prince, Dean of Multicultural Education

As dean of multicultural education, Andrew Prince is tasked with providing support and programming for the school community on areas related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and class. In this role, he has taken up the work of others before him at Taft, working to make the school an inclusive and welcoming community. The Bulletin recently sat down with Prince to ask about his work and how it connects to the broader mission of the school.

Where did you grow up and go to school?

I was born in Alameda, California, though I spent my formative years in Alexandria and Arlington, Virginia, before my family settled in Oakland, California, which is still “home base.” I graduated from Bishop O’Dowd High School in Oakland before attending Harvard, where I earned my A.B. in political theory and minored in moral and political philosophy. Before coming to Taft, I attended Columbia’s Teachers College, where I completed the Private School Leadership program in the Klingenstein Center and earned my M.A.

“I wanted to be a part of the movement to both make independent schools more accessible and to make them a place where folks of traditionally marginalized groups could thrive socially and emotionally.”
What drew you to education and to Taft? What attracted you to diversity education in particular?

One of the major reasons that I became an educator is because I love learning and had a number of great educators in the course of my time as a student. They taught me essential truths that impact the way I live my daily life and fostered my curiosities in ways that have made me a “lifelong learner,” for which I am forever thankful. Second, I believe that a quality education ought to be a fundamental right of all Americans, as it is part of what we need for a relatively equal opportunity at success in life. Not all schools do the things I described above and not all learning happens in schools, but when I discovered places like Taft—where I could educate in the ways I was educated—I felt like it’s the work I had to be doing. I was drawn to diversity, equity, and inclusion work in particular because historically, students of traditionally marginalized groups haven’t had access to independent schools, and when access was earned, their experiences were transactional. Students of traditionally marginalized groups went to independent schools despite their experiences, knowing that the hardships they would undergo would be worth the opportunities they would have access to. I wanted to be a part of the movement both to make independent schools more accessible and to make them a place where folks of traditionally marginalized groups could thrive socially and emotionally.

What have I come to learn is that everyone being at home and their full selves advantages everyone, including community members of traditionally privileged groups. That is, we learn from difference in ways that improve us and our productivity, but only when difference is fully present. If people do not feel at home and consequently are not fully themselves, then their experiences will be compromised and the broader community will not benefit from the experiences and perspectives they have to share. So, this work is both a moral imperative and practically valuable, which makes it very rewarding.

The instances of hate speech that occurred on campus last year and our broader societal conversations made it clear to us that we needed to define and clarify our positions on diversity, equity, and inclusion work. We wanted all current and future community members to very clearly understand the principles that undergird all of the work that we do at Taft. While I think most people likely could have stated the principles contained in both documents, the clear and public statement of these principles was and is a statement in and of itself. And members of the community continually infuse these principles into the fabric of the work we do.

For example, we have put the DEI statement into practice by physically posting the statement and the revised Portrait of a Graduate in hallways and classrooms. French classes have translated the document while discussing the language contained within. Science classes have considered “who is a scientist,” with the idea of breaking down preconceptions of who can and cannot take up scientific inquiry.

The ongoing work of inclusion

“What I have come to learn is that everyone being at home and their full selves advantages everyone, including community members of traditionally privileged groups. That is, we learn from difference in ways that improve us and our productivity, but only when difference is fully present.”

Left: Several faculty workshops have focused on deep listening skills and anti-bias training. Prince has led workshops on several topics, including stereotype threat and productive interventions.

Last year, two committees worked on developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) statement and on revising the Portrait of a Graduate. What prompted that work, and how have the DEI statement and revised POG been incorporated into the work of academic departments and other offices?

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The Ongoing Work of Inclusion

You have worked with other faculty members and students to develop a number of affinity groups for students. What types of groups currently exist, and how do they help further diversity, equity, and inclusion work at Taft?

We currently have affinity groups based on race, gender, and sexual orientation, and I am hoping we will expand those offerings to include class, family structures, and ability. These groups offer a space for folks of a similar identity to come together and have frank and honest discussions while also enjoying each other’s company. For groups that focus on a traditionally marginalized identity, it allows members of these groups to talk with each other openly and without fear of skepticism or misunderstanding by people who are not of that identity. And for community members who are a numerical minority in the Taft community, it offers an opportunity to see each other more than they might otherwise. For community members of traditionally privileged groups, it provides an opportunity to talk through some of the privileges we have, how we feel about those privileges, and to work to help traditionally marginalized people. As a man, for example, I need to work to understand the privileges of my gender and help more men do the same in order to work effectively to support women in the work that they do to overcome the systemic oppression they face.

What special speakers or programming has Taft taken on in the past couple of years to address issues of inclusion and multicultural education? How is the faculty supported in this work?

We’ve increased the number of affinity groups and the frequency with which they meet, increased the number of conferences that all community members have access to and attend, connected students to alumni of similar identities with more frequency, and ensured that students of traditionally marginalized groups are supported in all ways that we can imagine—anything from celebrating relevant holidays to ensuring access to familiar foods. One of the things that we have done specifically for faculty is the creation of a DEI book club where faculty are invited to read a book and discuss it in groups with the hopes of raising our awareness and competencies. So far, we have read Debby Irving’s Waking Up White, Kevin Jennings’ One Teacher in Ten – LGBT Educators Share Their Stories, and Anne Fadiman’s The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down. All of this is with the hopes of both supporting community members of traditionally marginalized groups and educating all community members around DEI.

I’m going to give you two answers. First, I love that Taft allows and requires me to educate students in a number of different ways and places in school life. While teaching in the classroom is important, I believe that it is just one of the many ways that we can educate students. We are teaching in the hallways, the weight room, the athletic fields, common rooms, the dorm, and beyond, and there are any number of different lessons that we can teach. Whether it’s how to negotiate a conflict with a peer in a class, how to understand our differences in the dorm, or how to deal with failure in an athletic setting, at Taft we get to teach all the time, and I thoroughly enjoy it.

Regarding DEI work, I really appreciate the opportunities I have to collaborate with thoughtful and engaged community members. When I arrived on campus to interview, it was clear to me that Taft was serious about the school’s commitment to ensure that all people, no matter their background, feel at home. I was taken with the idea that I would be able to collaborate with any number of different folks—students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees—and that is certainly the way that things have turned out. I had the privilege of both working with colleagues on long-standing projects like our work on MLK Day, and collaborating with others on new undertakings like our students who took up various projects after attending the national Student Diversity Leadership Conference this past year. All of this to say, I get to fit into a tradition of working to ensure that everyone feels at home at Taft with a number of caring and capable community members.

Taft’s Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Taft is an intentionally diverse institution whose members work to acknowledge, respect, and empathize with people of all different identifiers, such as race, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, education, age, ability, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, language, nationality, and religion. We foster these habits and dispositions in accordance with Taft’s mission to educate the whole student, thus preparing individuals morally and pragmatically for global citizenship. As such, community members commit to participate in and support ongoing equity and inclusion programming through curricular and co-curricular offerings, professional development, residential life, and local and global partnerships. Moreover, members of the Taft community strive to understand and combat the symptoms and causes of systematic oppression—ranging from implicit biases to microaggressions to discriminatory policies, practices, and traditions—that benefit privileged groups and disadvantage marginalized groups.

WHO We are Taft... a community of learners. We believe that every student has unique experiences in life that contribute to their growth and development. We are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students to thrive.

HCM A school where personal growth and academic achievement are validated and celebrated. Taft emphasizes the importance of character, community, and responsibility in the lives of its students.

ISO A school of choice that provides a strong academic foundation and challenges students to think critically, communicate effectively, and develop global awareness.

As such, community members commit to participate in and support ongoing equity and inclusion programming through curricular and co-curricular offerings, professional development, residential life, and local and global partnerships. Moreover, members of the Taft community strive to understand and combat the symptoms and causes of systematic oppression—ranging from implicit biases to microaggressions to discriminatory policies, practices, and traditions—that benefit privileged groups and disadvantage marginalized groups.

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Research shows that participating in equity and inclusion programming can help students develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and a global perspective. Such programming can also help to reduce biases and promote understanding and respect for diverse cultures and identities. As a result, it is essential that we continue to support and expand equity and inclusion programming at Taft in order to create a truly inclusive and supportive community for all students.

To learn more about Taft’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, please visit our website at: www.taftschool.org/about/commitment-to-diversity-equity-and-inclusion

Read more about Taft’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion at: www.taftschool.org/about/commitment-to-diversity-equity-and-inclusion

Taft Bulletin / SUMMER 2019

What do you enjoy most at Taft?

I'm going to give you two answers. First, I love that Taft allows and requires me to educate students in a number of different ways and places in school life. While teaching in the classroom is important, I believe that it is just one of the many ways that we can educate students. We are teaching in the hallways, the weight room, the athletic fields, common rooms, the dorm, and beyond, and there are any number of different lessons that we can teach. Whether it’s how to negotiate a conflict with a peer in a class, how to understand our differences in the dorm, or how to deal with failure in an athletic setting, at Taft we get to teach all the time, and I thoroughly enjoy it.

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I wasn’t much older than those of you gradu-
ating when I joined the Waterbury Police
Department in 1980. The city of Waterbury
is one of the most diverse cities in New
England. In the 1800s, people immigrated to
Waterbury from all over the world to work
in the brass factories which operated 24
hours a day, seven days a week for decades.
Working the streets of Waterbury, I
learned more than the geography of the
city’s neighborhoods. I learned about
the families who lived in those neighbor-
hoods and the people who worked in those
neighborhoods. I saw the unique character
of those neighborhoods, many of them
enriched with a strong, hard-working, blue-
collar culture; others unfortunately stained
with crime and generational poverty. I wit-
nessed firsthand the disparity of resources
which led to the lack of opportunities and,
in some cases, prompted poor choices
that resulted in lifetime consequences.
I spent the first 20 years of my career
working major crimes. In carrying out
my job and investigating those crimes, I
focused on making sure that the victims
and their families would be afforded justice.
It was small consolation in some cases.
After we would carry out investigations
and gather enough evidence, we would make
an arrest. Although we always tried to arrest
outside the presence of children, some-
times that wasn’t possible. I can still vividly
remember the looks on kids’ faces watching
me or other officers put their father or their
grandfather or their neighbor in handcuffs as
we took them away in police custody. Those
kids were scared and they were confused and
most of all, they were sad. Some of those who
were taken away in handcuffs would not see
their children or family members for years.
For some of those kids, there were
This May, as we watched the groups of alumni stroll down the path from the athletic center to main campus, my friend turned to me and said something which summed up my feelings exactly: Alumni Day feels like a reminder that ‘we are just a blip in Taft’s history.’ Although I agree with her—and this perspective certainly changes how you think about things that were seemingly world-ending in your time at Taft—I think we are more than just a blip. Never again will Taft have a grade exactly like us. Our collection of people is special and unique, impossible to replicate.”

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Head Monitors Eva Baurmeister ’19 and Rex Riefler ’19 place the 2019 class stone in a wall on Centennial Quadrangle. Eva and Rex were also awarded the 1908 Medal as seniors “whose influence has done most for the school.”

Annie Gilland ’19 received the Aurelian Award, the David Kenyon Webster Prize for Excellence in Writing, and was named Salutatorian.

Francesca Nyakara ’16 next to her brother, Austin Omala ’21, and their family; she also received a Global Studies and Service diploma.

generations of their family in prison, and it was a cycle that could easily repeat itself. There were many years that I struggled with that, often thinking about how the Waterbury Police Department could help those kids in a meaningful, life-changing way. When I became chief of police in 2002, I began researching Police Activity Leagues (PALs) across the country. [Waterbury’s program] fell by the wayside in the ‘60s due to fiscal constraints. The goal of PAL organizations is to bring together at-risk youth and local police departments through various community programs and activities, in order to foster relationships between the two by providing educational, athletic, and life skill opportunities to local kids. I learned as much as I could about the PAL organizations that existed at that time, and after doing so, I knew with certainty that Waterbury needed to start its own Police Activity League. The community needed it and the Waterbury police officers who served the community needed it.

Later that year, Waterbury PAL became a reality. Although it started small, serving just about 100 kids, Waterbury PAL now provides educational, athletic, and community programs and initiatives to more than 4,000 kids in Waterbury each year. Waterbury PAL is amongst the largest in the country now and has been recognized as a national model. Our community partners helped to build out a dedicated PAL facility, including a school, sports fieldhouse, five-acre park that was once a brownfield, greenhouses, and community gardens. All of this has advanced the PAL mission by offering more opportunities to local at-risk kids, by forging relationships between the Waterbury Police Officers and the community. Over the past 16 years, I have watched Waterbury kids thrive in PAL’s programs and within our community as a direct result of the opportunities PAL has been able to provide them. The Taft School has come to be one of PAL’s most important community partners.
Margot Odden ‘19

“Class speaker

What has defined the past three years for me has been growing alongside each of you...even the smallest of interactions with many of you have irreversibly influenced me in my time here. Thank you for sharing your talents. Thank you for sharing your hearts with the people that comprise our class and wider community. Thank you for inspiring awe and laughter often. Thank you for giving me an unforgettable and deeply changing three years.”

In 2006, as chief of police, I went to visit Mr. MacMullen to talk about The Taft School and the city working together. What has happened since has been amazing. Working together in close collaboration, here are examples of some of the programs:

Starting in 2009, The Taft School six-week overnight summer school program, which includes two Waterbury PAL rising eighth-grade students each year. In 2011, The Taft School/Waterbury Police Activity League summer enrichment academy for rising eighth-graders. This is an annual six-week day program which mentors, tutors, and prepares up to 85 city students for high school.

In 2013, after-school programs began in which Taft students go to city schools to teach and mentor third-grade students in reading and writing. Also in 2013, The Taft School started the Global Leadership Institute. This is an amazing two-year program in which 12 sophomores’ Taft students partner up with 12 sophomores’ city high school students who then work together on national and global topics, followed by presentations in their second year as juniors.

Of course, the success of the PAL programs also hinges on finding philanthropic donors as well. One of our most significant supporters is Mr. Burt Albert and the Albert family. In addition to being loyal supporters of Waterbury PAL, the Albert family has an intimate connection with The Taft School: Burt and Sylvia’s three children, Eric, Debbie, and Jonathan, as well as their five grandchildren, are Taft School alumni.

In fact, Jonathan has been a Taft School trustee for the past 20 years and is also a member of the PAL board of directors. During a visit with Mr. Albert 10 years ago, Burt explained that he wanted to provide opportunities to enrich the educational experiences of PAL kids and to afford those kids the privilege of a Taft education. I am proud to tell you that as of this year, 11 PAL kids to date have attended The Taft School, changing their lives forever.

Burt Albert and his family embody the...
“At Taft we lose many of the traditional support structures that once comforted us, and therefore, we turn to our roommates for joy, we turn to faculty in times of need, we turn to each other for everything. The people who walk the halls with us are our lives. The byproduct of this codependence is the creation of the ‘Taft Community.’ When I say ‘Taft Community’ I’m describing the wonderful tendency for Tafties to be distinctly present. To give their entirety to the ‘here and now’ and invest within the Taft community.”

values that define the Taft experience and the school’s motto, Not to be served but to serve. As a very proud Taft parent for the past four years, I have had the honor of meeting and observing a team of the most talented and dedicated faculty imaginable. [And so,] graduating Class of 2019, I can tell you that my involvement with the Waterbury Police Activity League remains one of the most important and meaningful experiences of my life. There is no greater personal satisfaction or reward than to provide a child an opportunity for a better life. In that regard, The Taft School has prepared you well, and I encourage each of you to take this exciting next step in your life committed to the principles instilled in you here. Be good citizens and remain devoted to serving your local communities. They need your innovation, your compassion and your energy. Regardless of the path you pave, pursue it with purpose and integrity. Don’t be afraid to stumble…to fall… and even to fail—from those experiences you will learn humility and perseverance, and those are invaluable qualities. Thirty years from now, you may not remember what score you got on your SATs or what your graduating GPA was at the end of high school. You will, however, remember the experiences that helped shape your values and the people who left indelible imprints on your character, many of whom are here with you today.

Neil O’Leary has served as mayor of Waterbury, Connecticut, since 2011. In 1980, he joined the Waterbury Police Department and rose through the ranks, becoming chief of police in 2002. He retired from that position in 2009 and was later hired by the town of Wolcott to modernize its department. Admired by many for his optimistic and resilient can-do attitude, he has written an extraordinary record in community collaboration and growth. Sadly, Burton Albert, mentioned in these remarks, passed away on May 31.

Cho Dechen ’19, who received the Global Studies and Service Prize, with her parents, His Eminence Shyalpa Tenzin Rigpoche and Tenzin Choeden, and other family members.

Shannon Bucci ’19 after receiving her diploma.

The tradition of chalk drawings to celebrate graduation.

Nicholas Winciki ’19 after the ceremonies; he also received the P.T. Young Music Prize.
The Music of TAFT

Music about Taft runs the gamut from sideline chants to choir music. You may have heard Collegium Musicum perform “Non Ut Sibi” this spring and at Commencement. Did you know there were also two pieces named “Alma Mater”? (Actually, three versions of the song, if you consider they changed one word when we became coed.) Or that two faculty members Eric Drake and Gerry LeTendre wrote “The Taft Motto Song”? (It was dedicated to Taft Oricos and Faculty Emeritus John Noyes.)

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

Join the other 235 members of the Taft Legacy Society…who will provide estate gifts that support scholarships, theater and music programs, science, sports, environmental initiatives, and other multifaceted endeavors at the school.

By simply including The Taft School in your will or other plans that include beneficiary provisions, you can make an impactful difference.

Our beloved Dick Cobb, an official member of the Horace Dutton Taft Legacy Society, remembered the school by establishing a generous and inspired philanthropic example for all to follow!

—Holcombe T. Green III ’87 Taft Trustee

For more information, please contact Paul Parvis, Director of Planned Giving, at 860-945-7751 or paulparvis@taftschool.org | taftschool.giftplans.org