



Taft

BULLETIN

WOMEN *of* TAFT

Celebrating 50 Years
of Coeducation

SPRING 2022



A painting by Isabel Yang '24 that was part of Taft's Potter Gallery Student Art Exhibit.
ROBERT FALCETTI

SPRING 2022

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Girls Who Lead

Talking with student leaders at Taft



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How the Red Rhino Fund teaches students about the power of philanthropy

By Julie Reiff



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We'd love to hear what you think about the stories in this *Bulletin*. We may edit your letters for length, clarity, and content, but please write.

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ON THE COVER
Stargazing in the 1970s. Then-student Karen Stevenson '75, this year's Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal recipient, takes a look through a telescope. A fitting recollection for this year of celebrating Taft's 50th anniversary of coeducation.
LESLIE D. MANNING ARCHIVES

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On MAIN HALL

A WORD FROM HEAD
OF SCHOOL WILLY
MACMULLEN '78



Lessons from a Day in February

Historians know that what may seem to be a moment of little consequence can actually teach important lessons. One such moment came this winter, when the Connecticut governor announced that the statewide mask mandate for all schools would be lifted on Monday, February 28. That Monday showed us a lot about Taft.

The change was sudden and complete. We went to sleep Sunday night with masks worn in all buildings, and Monday we awoke to a different world. It was thrilling and discomforting in equal measure. I told the faculty in a meeting the Friday previous, "This is great and welcome news, but it will be complicated given how we have lived here for two years." We cautioned ourselves not to say

things like, "I had no idea you wore braces!" and then put our feet in our mouths with comments exactly like that. We found ourselves saying, "It's been two years, and I have *never* seen your face." There were the expected jokes: "I guess I need to start shaving!" and "It's been a long time since I wore any makeup!" Students shared that it was a real adjustment. One girl said she walked out of Mac House and turned around for her mask before she realized she no longer needed one. A boy told me that when he walked by Assistant Head of School Jeremy LaCasse, our indefatigable COVID czar and Mask Reminder in Chief, his hand went to his face to pull up a mask that was not there.

There were lessons for us, truths uncovered.

There were, especially on that first day, moments of discovery that reminded us that we do not simply want to be seen: *we all want to be recognized*. That this serves as a metaphor of the Taft community, where for all of our differences we all want the same thing—recognition—is obvious. In the Main Hall, I heard, "Good morning. It's nice to see you. No, really. To SEE you!" A lot of students and teachers had never known a Taft without masks. Suddenly, we saw each other: "Oh, that's who So-and-so is!" Taft students were pretty good about mask compliance, but they were far from perfect, and that's because they needed to connect. "Please, see me. And please, let me see you" is the insistent chorus in the song of adolescence. In an era where we hear, with good reason, concerns about screen time and teenage isolation, students celebrated simply being able to see each other. No one wanted another Zoom meeting or masked class. We all just wanted to be recognized.

Every teacher was shown what we all know but perhaps took for granted: *the subtle but critical connection that comes with facial communication*. Teachers shared that after just one day of classes, they realized how much less tired they were at the end of class, how loudly they had been speaking with masks, how much pleasure they got from seeing expressions. "Class felt so much more relaxed," shared one, and another said, "The sudden, intensely intimate feel to the classroom was new—wonderful, but also something that took getting used to." While great teaching was happening with everyone masked, better teaching was now happening, and with less fatigue and more joy. Of course, there was one downside: one experienced history teacher shared, "And now that I could actually *see* a student yawning, I realized how often I was boring!"

"There were, especially on that first day, moments of discovery that reminded us that we do not simply want to be seen: *we all want to be recognized*."

“The urge in Taft students, faculty, and staff to connect, recognize, include, celebrate, and embrace was astonishingly strong.”

With masks not required outside buildings, we realized that perhaps we had taken for granted outside spaces, so beautiful and varied on our campus. Outside *became a destination*. You heard students say, “Do you want to take a walk?” and this even on a cold winter day. On a warm post-dinner evening, the ring of Adirondack chairs in Centennial Quad would be filled as night fell, until students quietly made their way to their dorms, or the Wu Building, lit behind them. I often pulled out of my Guernseystown driveway to see Tafties jogging, in pairs and groups. Advisors tired of talking to advisees masked in offices said, “Let’s sit by the pond and catch up.” A walk to town to buy takeout Thai food or shop at CVS was not just a break from routine: it was a chance to smile at your friend. Several faculty took to walking the edge of campus and cemetery, sharing texts: “The peregrine falcon is on the baseball backstop again!”

And we saw that the communal spirit that is Taft—the stubborn, tenacious, fierce, flawed, innocent love which is who we are and try to be—was *impossible to suppress*. One would think that if anything could erode our communal essence, it would be this mandate that we cover half of our faces. You might be forgiven for thinking, There’s no way you will be Taft under these conditions. But we *were* Taft. The urge in Taft students, faculty, and staff to connect, recognize, include, celebrate, and embrace was astonishingly strong. Teachers still met in conference rooms, talking curriculum, pedagogy, belonging, mental health, dorm life. Students found ways to meet in their clubs, often discussing complicated and charged topics. Assemblies were held, with the normal list of serious and funny announcements. Common rooms had pizza feeds and poker games and binge-watching. Bingham dancers locked arms and bowed to the audience, and players cried in the locker rooms after their final game. We had our struggles and made our share of mistakes, but care for each other was like some trick candle you could not blow out.

I suppose I could be criticized for claiming that I am making too much of things: Hey, it was just a day when the school made masks optional. But I don’t think I am. We wore masks because we had to and because they worked. We did so for a really long time, and we may well have to again someday. But on that Monday when, after some 15 months, masks were optional, we saw some truths that are worth remembering: that teaching depends much on nonverbal communication, that our campus has spaces that create connection, that we all want to be recognized, and that the spirit that is Taft is a very stubborn thing. These lessons we might carry, like coins in our pocket, and taken out when we find ourselves impoverished.

William R. MacMullen '78

“Care for each other was like some trick candle you could not blow out.”

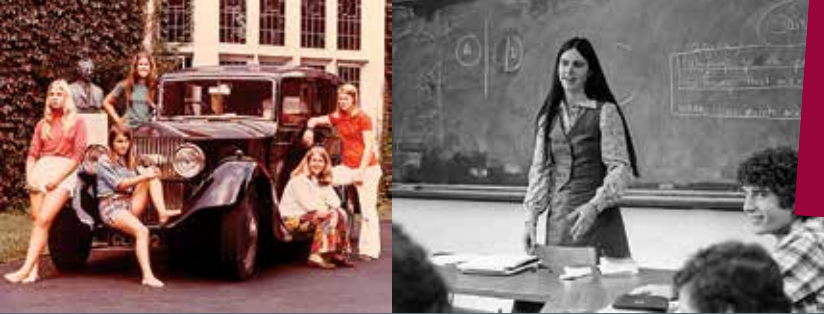
WOMEN OF TAFT

This year we honored Taft women from several decades through events and an exhibit.

50 YEARS
COEDUCATION
Taft

→ Slideshow of Archive Photos

A photo collection of Taft women then and now.



← Taking It Back to the '70s

On International Women’s Day, a few Taft trailblazers joined us for a virtual conversation. Faculty Emeritae Patsy Odden, Linda Saarnijoki, and Gail Wynne and alumnae Leslie Herrlinger Lanahan '73, Sally Childs Walsh '75, Karen Stevenson '75, and Merrill Weyerhaeuser '78 recalled Taft’s first years of coeducation that shaped the school’s next 50 decades.

→ Women of Taft Celebratory Concert

When Taft opened its doors to women 50 years ago, the range of experiences in our community grew exponentially. So did the range of talents. Caroline Hitchcock '75, Alex Forbes '76, Vanessa Holroyd '90, Kate Schutt '93, Bergin O'Malley '95, Mia Borders '05, Meghan Spangenberg '20, and Lila du Pont '21 participated in a virtual concert and wowed everyone with their performances.



← Women of Taft: Celebrating Taft’s 50th Anniversary of Coeducation

An art exhibit in the Mark W. Potter Gallery this spring featured works by Amy Wynne Derry '84, Tamara English '85, Jessica Wynne '90, Margeaux Walter '01, ann haeyoung '04, Arden Klemmer '05, and Faculty Emerita Gail Wynne. The gallery welcomed alumni for a reception on Alumni Day, May 14.

View the timeline, slideshow, and video recordings at www.taftschoool.org/coeducation



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Taft

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A Home Away from Home: Student Alliances

—LEYLA ZHAKSYBEK '23, Staff Writer

Student alliances are a core movement not only to learn about but to embrace different cultures, ethnicities, and demographics at Taft. Alliances are a celebration of Taft's diversity that allow other students to enjoy this unique aspect of life at Taft.



◀ Black Alliance

Black Alliance is a student organization devoted to facilitating conversations about race in a predominantly white institution and creating systemic change. Created after the murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020, the Black Alliance was originally focused on starting conversations, but has since moved toward fostering change through working with administrators and also delivering lessons to students directly through I-Block. They have also recently hosted events on Tuesday nights highlighting Black creators through short films. One of the main focuses of the alliance is speaking out about issues related to Black communities. Unlike affinity groups, Black Alliance is open to everyone. The board reflects this aspect, as it is not only made up of Black students but also white and Hispanic students, reflecting the sentiment that everyone is encouraged to participate whether or not they identify as Black.

ILLUSTRATION BY FRANZI/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

▶ Asian Alliance

Asian Alliance interacts with the greater Taft community and promotes Taft's belief in inclusivity and diversity. With the recent rise of anti-Asian violence due to COVID-19, Asian Alliance is essential not only to raise awareness but also to combat Asian hate by spreading Asian culture and educating other students. In the past, the Asian Alliance has hosted multiple feeds as well as a volleyball tournament earlier this fall. They also hosted an Asian food snack table during Family Weekend, which provided students and parents some exposure to Asian culture.

▼ HONG

HONG is the newest alliance group at Taft! Created this Chinese New Year, HONG is the Chinese student alliance and culture interest group. Taft's population of Chinese students has grown throughout the years, and many Chinese learners have expressed interest in exhibiting their culture and traditions at Taft. HONG has become a space where students can support their peers and immerse themselves in traditional Chinese culture. During the Chinese New Year, HONG hosted multiple events such as dumpling making, a popular Chinese family tradition. Unable to return home



for the holiday, the alliance was able to share the joy of dumpling making with the Taft family and many students, as well as faculty and their children participated.

GSA (Gender and Sexuality Alliance)

GSA is Taft's Gender and Sexuality Alliance. With monthly meetings, GSA is open to both queer and nonqueer students and faculty. The alliance helps raise awareness for

issues surrounding the queer community and creates a safe space for anyone regardless of their identifiers. Many have found that queer issues are often not discussed at Taft but GSA is a way for students and faculty to feel they are not alone, while also encouraging nonqueer students to learn about these issues. In the past, GSA has made posters for National Coming Out Day in October to educate the community about terminology in regards to gender and sexuality. They have also hosted multiple meetings, alumni outreaches, and are planning major events for Pride Month this year.

UCT (United Cultures of Taft)

One of Taft's oldest clubs, created even before the DEI statement, is United Cultures of Taft (UCT). Started in 1982, UCT was one of the landmark alliances created to further educate, as well as embrace, the diverse population at Taft. With the admission of the first Black students at Taft in 1969, clubs like UCT as well as Afro-American Congress (1970) and Latino Student Alliance (1990) were some of the first major clubs designed to embrace Taft's growing diversity. Although there is a strong presence of other newer alliance groups, UCT still works to bring different cultures and groups together to discuss global problems outside the Taft community. ■



2022 Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal

Karen Stevenson '75 Honored

KAREN STEVENSON'S life is a study in firsts. A member of the Class of 1975, she was among the first group of women admitted to Taft, the first Black woman to win a Morehead Scholarship at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and in 1979, the first woman from UNC—and the first Black woman in the nation—to be named a Rhodes Scholar. Later, in the midst of a storied career as a trial lawyer, Stevenson became the first Black woman to serve as a federal magistrate judge in the Central District of California. Now Stevenson becomes the first woman of color to be honored with the Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal, given each year to a person whose life work best reflects the essence of the Taft School motto: *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*; Not to be served but to serve.

"As one of our most distinguished alumni, Karen Stevenson has excelled as an attorney and as a federal magistrate judge in the Central District of California," notes Floyd "Wink" McKinnon '60, outgoing chair of the Horace Dutton Taft Medal committee. "It is an honor to bestow Karen with this well-deserved award."

As a Taft student, Stevenson was engaged academically and as an athlete. After graduating in 1975, her commitment to Taft remained strong: she has served Taft as a class secretary and trustee, was a member of the Board Committee on School Life, and is a member of the Horace Dutton Taft Legacy Society. Stevenson returned to Taft in 2018 as a Morning Meeting speaker.

"My four years at Taft gave me, a kid from a D.C. public school from a single parent home, an exceptional academic experience," says Stevenson. "But more than academics, at Taft I learned that I could thrive in an unfamiliar

land and that it matters to make it easier for those who follow. Being first is not nearly as important to me as making sure that there is a wide-open door for those who come behind."

After graduation, Stevenson made her mark as a Morehead Scholar and Phi Beta Kappa member at UNC Chapel Hill. Rhodes Scholarship in hand, Stevenson went on to earn an M.A. in European history from Magdalen College in Oxford, England. She continued her academic career at Stanford Law School, where she graduated with distinction in 1998. While there, Stevenson and her teammate won the Marian Rice Kirkwood Moot Court Award for Best Team of Advocates.

Stevenson's groundbreaking term as magistrate judge in the Central District of California began in August 2015 and will continue through 2023. The District comprises seven counties and serves approximately 20 million people, nearly half the population of California.

Over the years, Stevenson's work, dedication to excellence in all aspects of her life, and service to the community have garnered recognition and accolades from her peers.

"I have known Karen for years, and there are few Tafties for whom I have as high respect," says Head of School William R. MacMullen '78. "Whether it has been seeing her during alumni travels or hearing her speak on campus to students, I have always found her deeply inspiring. She has embodied our school motto in an extraordinary way—with brilliance, dedication, passion, and principle."

To wit: Stevenson is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, coauthors the *Thomson Reuters Federal Civil Procedure Before Trial Practice Guide*, and was elected

to the American Law Institute in 2020. She was nominated as one of the Top 100 Women Litigators by the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, and in March 2015 was named by *Savoy Magazine* as one of the nation's Most Influential Black Lawyers. She has been a member of the editorial board of the ABA's *Litigation News* and *Litigation Update* since 2008 and served as editor-in-chief in 2014–15. She was named a Super Lawyer (Rising Star) in 2005, 2007, and 2008. She currently serves on the Los Angeles County Bar Association Litigation Section Executive Committee, and frequently speaks on electronic discovery, the admissibility of electronically stored information, cybersecurity, and social media. She has been a featured presenter at the Pincus "Federal Court Boot Camp" continuing legal education programs.

In the broader community, Stevenson has served as a trustee to the Rhodes Trust at Oxford University and the district secretary for Rhodes Scholarship selection committee in Southern California. She is a past president of the Women's Care Cottage, an organization serving young women coming out of emergency shelters, foster care, and probation who need a transitional living program to help them start a new life and live independently with pride and dignity, and has served on the Culver City Chamber of Commerce and on the Board of Directors of the Arts and Sciences Foundation for UNC Chapel Hill.

Now, Stevenson adds the Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal to her list of accolades.

"I am deeply honored to be selected for this award and to join the many exceptional past recipients," she says. ■

—Debra Meyers

The Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal is the school's highest alumni honor and is given each year to a person whose life work best typifies the school motto: Not to be ministered unto but to minister. The recipient's life and actions must demonstrate something humanitarian apart from a vocation or service. He or she must have gone above the ordinary demands of life or occupation. Success in a chosen field does not necessarily qualify a person for the honor. At the same time, it is possible for a person to be eminently successful and go beyond the call of duty to serve others.

An alumni committee meets each January to review names that have been recommended by fellow alums and to determine the recipient. The award is typically bestowed at the Old Guard Dinner on Alumni Weekend.



Left: Karen Stevenson '75, federal magistrate judge in the Central District of California and recipient of the 2022 Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal.



Legacy Project

How Geoffrey Hoguet '68 is fulfilling the charitable spirit of his Rothschild forebears

"There was no reference anywhere on the hospital grounds that gave the remotest hint that it was a Rothschild philanthropic effort that established all of this."

FEW BLOODLINES CAN FILL SO MANY historical volumes, the chapters bridging prosperity, loss, and reclamation.

But it was only recently that Geoffrey Hoguet '68, a descendant of the Austrian branch of the Rothschild family, the venerated European banking dynasty, learned about an all-but-forgotten preamble in the story of his forebears and their philanthropic spirit.

He discovered that his great-grandfather, Albert Freiherr von Rothschild, had established an endowment in 1907 in Vienna to help the mentally ill, along with those suffering from neurological impairments. The foundation was named for Hoguet's late great-uncle, Nathaniel Freiherr von Rothschild, whose wish was to create such an endowment. Its assets totaled the equivalent of 122 million euros.

Yet before the foundation could

unlock its full potential, the Nazis rose to power and World War II broke out. The funds—like so many other assets belonging to prominent Jewish families throughout Europe—were expropriated and transferred to the city of Vienna.

Reminding the world about their existence and purpose has become a cause célèbre for Hoguet, who sued the city of Vienna in 2020 to restore the foundation's independence and carry out its mission.

"This is a real landmark case," says Hoguet, 71, an investor who holds both U.S. and Austrian citizenship. "We're creating the case law."

The vast majority of claims stemming from the Holocaust involve hidden bank accounts, stolen artwork, and other antiquities. The fate of the more than century-old charity constitutes new legal ground, according to Hoguet, who is trying to overcome a recent setback in the case after some early success.

"I accept it if we lose, but I want to make a big, big point here and demonstrate to the Austrian public and to others outside of the Austrian public that all is not well in Vienna in terms of restitution of foundations," he says.

Suddenly, Hoguet became a preservationist for a nonprofit, one that he says still can play a key role in helping others but must overcome the scourge of anti-Semitism.

"That's what drove me forward," he says.

As someone who suffers from Parkinson's disease, Hoguet gravitated to the cause. When his ancestors created the foundation, they set up a board to oversee its work whose members were appointed by the Rothschild family. Over the decades, Vienna officials abandoned that governance structure.

The city systematically sold off key pieces of the foundation's real estate portfolio since World War II, including the sale in 2002 of a mental health clinic back to the city at below-market value, Hoguet says.

"The city of Vienna was self-dealing," he says. "That was used to fund basically other administrative organs of the city of Vienna."

A hospital bearing the Rothschild

name ceased to exist in Vienna, the longtime home of Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis.

"There was no reference anywhere on the hospital grounds that gave the remotest hint that it was a Rothschild philanthropic effort that established all of this," Hoguet says.

While the Rothschilds have been a source of exhaustive research, Hoguet says less study has been devoted to the Austrian branch of the family. He credited a friend with bringing the foundation's existence to his attention in 2018. His relatives who might have known about the charity—his mother and grandmother—passed away decades ago.

"I had no idea about this foundation," he says. "There's been precious little written about the Austrian Rothschilds because precious little survived the war."

This is not the first time that Hoguet has pressed European leaders for a reckoning. Over the past two decades, he pursued restitution from the Czech Republic for artwork that was stolen from the Rothschilds, and was successful in getting two paintings back from the National Gallery Prague. One of them, an oil painting of flowers in a stoneware vase by the Flemish painter Jan Brueghel the Elder, was returned in 2016 to the heirs of Baron Alphonse von Rothschild, Hoguet's grandfather.

After its sale by auction house Sotheby's, the proceeds helped to further fund the family's restitution efforts in the Czech Republic.

"Many have gotten property and movable assets, namely paintings, back from the Czechs, but it is rare to be allowed to move them out of the country," Hoguet says.

The process was an arduous one for Hoguet, who spent years lobbying Czech leaders to make restitution.

"It developed into a passion, much of which was talking and learning about the family's history," he says.

"So it was a huge history lesson." ■

—Neil Vigdor '95

Left: Geoffrey Hoguet '68, a descendant of the Austrian branch of the Rothschild family, in front of a drawing by Annalu Ponti.

Below: Hoguet in front of the Gustav Klimt portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer.



Navigating the Shifting Media Landscape



WHEN BETSY WAGNER '85 graduated from college, she spent the first year of her professional career teaching algebra and trigonometry at Taft and developed a love of communicating difficult subjects in easy-to-digest pieces. And as she looked ahead at her professional future, she realized that journalism is essentially that: communicating sometimes difficult subjects to an audience. So she pivoted and began reporting for *U.S. News & World Report* in 1991, covering such varied topics as education, science, and culture.

Later, as a producer, she wrote news and documentary specials for cable clients including Discovery Channel, A&E, and VH-1. Her role as producer meant she worked closely with ABC and NBC network anchors in the creation of stories and specials. One favorite story was breaking the news of Dolly, the first cloned sheep.

"I produced the first U.S. interview with

Left: Betsy Wagner '85, a longtime journalist and video producer.

Below: Wagner in 2014 while an executive producer on Discovery Channel's "Skyscraper Live With Nik Wallenda," when Wallenda, from the famed Wallenda family of wirewalkers, walked tightropes between three Chicago skyscrapers, and was blindfolded for his walk between the second and third buildings. Wagner was on the roof for the final moments when Wallenda stepped safely onto the roof of the third building.



Left: Wagner interviewed Barbara Bush and George H.W. Bush in Houston for A&E's *Biography* episode on Laura Bush in 2004, ahead of President George W. Bush's reelection.

Below: Wagner produced two interviews with Elmo in 2019 and in 2005, for Yahoo Finance's series *My Three Cents* and the syndicated show *Your Total Health*, respectively.



the scientist who cloned Dolly and got to visit Dolly in her barn in Scotland," she says. "It was so exciting. In fact, the story led the broadcast of *World News Tonight*. I watched the broadcast from the ABC News offices in London. When Peter Jennings said, 'We begin tonight in Scotland,' I burst into tears. I grew up watching him, and to hear him introduce a story that I produced was a thrill I will remember forever."

Wagner spent 16 years at NBC, writing and producing a wide variety of cable and broadcast stories. She was the first to interview George W. Bush's twin daughters and had not one but two absolutely delightful interviews with Elmo, the Sesame Street puppet.

"I felt like if nothing else happens in my life, now I can die happy! Elmo was a guest of Hoda Kotb [to promote] a new initiative for healthy eating. Puppeteer Kevin Clash laid down behind the chairs and as soon as Elmo popped up you forgot the puppeteer was there," Wagner says.

Producing a new or feature segment for television is tough, Wagner says. Every minute, every second, of content takes hours to prepare. Still, there are plenty of perks.

"My favorite thing about the field is the fact that I get to dip into other

people's lives, and I get access to things I wouldn't otherwise," she says. She met "scientists studying tropical frogs for diseases. I went behind the scenes at the Baltimore Aquarium, then behind the scenes at the Harvard Brain Bank, which is a repository of human brains. There was a guy carrying around a pager to be notified of a donation. I went to the lab and he was receiving this brain, and I watched him dissect it."

In recent years, Wagner has been producing for *Yahoo Finance*, launching a social justice program centering on the intersection of diversity and inclusion and finance. Abruptly in March, Wagner's program was eliminated after Yahoo Finance was bought out, and she found herself out of a job. She's philosophical about the turmoil in the media industry.

"I think there was such mission drift in the field for so long. I got into TV with the Discovery Channel. We were very earnest and focused on information and science, and then fast forward 10 years and I'm doing reunion shows for reality shows," she says. "It's gone full circle, and documentaries are having a heyday."

Wagner has an understandably nuanced view of the whole world

of documentary journalism.

"I talk to a lot of college students and recent graduates who want to go into television or documentary filmmaking. The older I get, the more I talk to them about the importance of being adaptable. This business is always shifting and changing, and you have to be nimble. And, as with so many industries, you just can't expect a lot of job security. That's a big change compared to when I first started," she says.

"On the upside, there's a lot of work out there—and a lot of high-quality work—so that's exciting. And I think some of the barriers to entry have fallen now that everyone has a camera and editing software right on their phones. I love that more people can come into the tent now." ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84



Manufacturing leaders of The Siemon Company show president and CEO Henry Siemon '03 (center) design changes made during prototyping.

Reinventing a Company

HENRY SIEMON '03 assumed the role of president and CEO of The Siemon Company in January 2021, becoming the fifth family member in as many generations to hold the position since his great-great-grandfather founded the company in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1903.

Taking over the company during the middle of the pandemic was not an easy task to begin with, but the fact that a family member tested positive for COVID-19 on his first day in the office compounded the challenge because it required him to isolate for 10 days.

"That was quite an interesting curveball from day one," Siemon says, especially

because as a manufacturing company, the company was deemed essential and many had jobs that could not be done remotely.

While Siemon couldn't be in the office for his first days on the job, it's a role the fifth-generation leader was preparing for his whole life, even if he did not recognize it until the time came for him to take it on.

The path to where the company is now began 119 years ago with a focus on plastics. Carl F. Siemon was a chemist who invented a plastic material that had a chemical composition stronger than others available at the time, and he used it to manufacture items like poker chips, rotary phone handles, and kitchenware. In 1923,

the company started making phonograph records, and by the 1930s, nearly all the records produced for Decca Records east of the Mississippi River were made by Siemon.

In the 1960s, Henry's grandfather decided to focus on telecommunications, a pivot that proved advantageous. Today, the company has manufacturing plants in Mexico and China, distribution centers in the Netherlands, Brazil, and India, and employees in 42 countries around the world. It produces telecommunications cabling and connectivity systems for data centers and local area networks in hospitals, schools, office buildings, and other campus environments.

Around the same time, his grandfather purchased three acres in New Hampshire that the company has since grown to over 3,000 acres put in a land trust to prohibit future development—an early commitment to environmental conservation that continues today.

The pandemic presented challenges for the company, but Siemon says it emerged stronger than ever before. "We had a downturn in revenue and had to navigate a lot of very difficult decisions while maintaining the balance of doing what was best for our employees and customers," he says. Siemon ultimately made a number of decisions that had generated long-term benefits for employees, like creating a work-from-home policy and arranging for transportation across the border for the company's workers in Tijuana, which allowed them to receive COVID-19 vaccines before the vaccines were available in Mexico.

The pandemic also shifted the focus of the company's business. "A lot of our core

business is supporting the infrastructure in newly constructed office buildings, universities, and hospitals," Siemon says. "With many of the construction projects across the globe put on hold or canceled, we saw a decrease in project-based activity from that type of construction." There was, however, a rapid increase in the demand for data centers and the health care industry—so much so that in March, April, and May 2020, the company could not keep up with demand.

"It was an inspiring time," Siemon says. "In manufacturing, it's easy for people to lose sight of the bigger picture of what we're building. Someone working at a sheet metal press or a plastic injection molding machine is making a small component, and it's easy to forget that the component is going into a finished good that will enable the internet or a network to function."

In the early months of the pandemic, the company supported the humanitarian crisis by rising to the challenge of expediting orders and shipping them to customers

like Yale-New Haven Hospital as hospital beds were added and needed to be connected—in some cases even on the same day the orders were placed. In another example, the engineering team was able to rapid prototype a component used for face shields that the company produced for donation to Connecticut hospitals when they couldn't be procured elsewhere.

While Siemon says he never planned to take over the family business, his background positioned him perfectly to fill the role of leading the company through a supply chain crisis.

After graduating from Taft and the University of Richmond, Siemon began his career at consulting firms in Washington, D.C., for about five years before enrolling at MIT Sloan School of Management.

"MIT has a very strong operations and supply chain program, and I unexpectedly fell in love with that subject matter," Siemon says. During the summer between his two years of business school, he interned with Apple. Siemon returned to Apple after earning his M.B.A. and moved to Austin, Texas, to work on the global supply chain team. Siemon's role included regular travel to China, where he spent time on the manufacturing floor at Apple's assembly locations and developed methods to optimize the supply chain for the North and South America regions.

At the same time, The Siemon Company was having issues moving products from one part of the world to the other—a problem that Siemon had learned to solve during his time in business school and at Apple.

"It hit me that the work I had been doing over the years was directly applicable—and potentially a great opportunity for me to add value to the family company," he says.

In 2017, Siemon, his wife, Ashley, and two sons left Austin to move back to Connecticut so he could begin overseeing the global supply chain and operations teams for Siemon. He and his wife now have three sons at home in Woodbury, and the commute to his office takes him past the Taft campus every day. ■

—Sam Dangremont '05



Siemon and Manufacturing Manager Brian Wheelock watch a newly installed punch laser machine in operation.

Philanthropy in Action

Thanks to generous donations from a group of alumni and parents, the lower soccer field was rebuilt this past year, replacing the grass field (which had significant drainage problems that frequently made it unplayable) with a turf field. The new field will be used in two seasons—by the boys' soccer team in the fall and girls' lacrosse in the spring—offering better playing surfaces and more equity in our athletic program. And with an expanded footprint, the new field is large enough for multiple teams to use at once as a training facility. A new set of terraced benches along the hillside will offer seating for spectators. Installation of lights, final landscaping, and paving will be completed this summer.



Head of School

Willy MacMullen '78

to Retire in June 2023

HEAD OF SCHOOL Willy MacMullen '78 has announced that he and his wife, Pam, will retire at the end of the 2022–23 academic year. Willy, only Taft's fifth head of school, has served in that capacity since 2001. Pam is an English teacher at Taft.

"I am sure that everyone in the school community who has had the privilege of interacting with this couple will have a deeply emotional response to this announcement," Board Chair Grant Porter '69 wrote in an email to the Taft community. "Together they have served a school they love, [becoming] one of the most admired head of school couples in the country."

The MacMullens have served Taft for a combined and remarkable 65 years.



"Together they have served a school they love, [becoming] one of the most admired head of school couples in the country."

—Grant Porter '69, Board Chair

After graduating from Taft in 1978, Willy received a bachelor's degree from Yale University and a master's degree from Middlebury College. He returned to Taft in 1983 to teach English and coach soccer. Willy, known as "Mr. Mac" to decades of Taft students, has also served as class dean, codirector of the Senior Seminar, college counselor, director of teaching fellowships, dean of faculty, dean of academic affairs, and coordinator of the NEASC Accreditation Self-Study. Pam, who taught at a public high school before arriving at Taft in 1990, has joined Willy in years of caring for Taft students in the classroom and as a dean, aerobics instructor, and advisor.

As Porter outlined in his letter, Taft has grown in a myriad of ways under Willy's leadership—from the depth of its academic, arts, and athletics programs, to the strength of its faculty and global diversity of its student body.

"Believing it to be vital for the development of the skills for citizenship and leadership," Porter wrote, "[Willy] has articulated a vision of a deeply diverse and global student body and the financial aid needed to create it, such that today Taft has students from 52 countries and 33 states, a unique statement of composition that no school our size can make."

Willy has also stewarded the growth, improvement, and maintenance of Taft's physical campus. Every major component of the physical campus has been renovated—and countless other facilities added—during his tenure. So, too, has he strengthened the school's financial architecture, helping lead the historic Ever Taft Even Stronger capital campaign (which raised more than \$185 million) and growing the endowment from \$100 million in 2000 to more than \$330 million today.

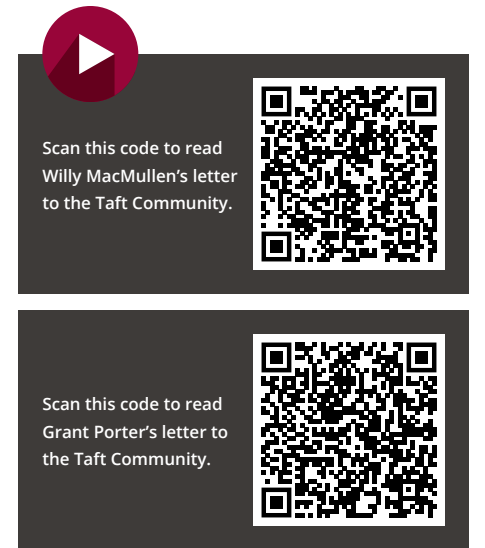
"Today, Taft is in an extraordinary position," Willy wrote in an email to the community. "We have an amazing Board of Trustees, men and women who serve with vision and wisdom. We attract a talented and diverse student body from around the nation and world. Our faculty and staff are singularly passionate, committed, and caring, and more diverse than ever. The academic program is broad and deep, marked by rigor and challenge. The campus, a combination of historic, renovated and new spaces, is beautiful. The generosity of alumni, parents, and friends combined with our fiscal discipline means our financial architecture is sound. The culture on campus rests on core values: service, honor, respect, belonging, kindness, excellence, and perseverance."

For their part, the MacMullens have loved the day-to-day life of the

school—greetings on Main Hall, time spent with advisees, spectating at games, and applauding performances. Now they are ready for all that lies ahead.

"The opportunity to spend time with our families and parents, and also for travel and adventure, will be welcome," wrote Willy. "And to be clear, there is much I hope to do in my last 15 months!" ■

Taft's Board of Trustees has begun a search for a new head of school. This process includes the efforts of a Head of School Search Committee, consulting services, and a comprehensive interview process to select the next head of school to begin their tenure in July 2023.



Harmony In Vivo



PEARL YOUNG '18 has been dancing since she was three. Dance is, she has said, her deepest and longest-held passion. As a Taft student, Young formally studied dance for four years and was a four-year member of the Dance Ensemble. As a senior, she also participated in two unique projects. Young and her fellow *Advanced Dance* students worked with professional dancer Nathan Trice and his New York-based dance company on their *Recognizing Women* project. She also completed an independent tutorial in dance exploring the life and work of civil rights pioneer Pearl Primus. A dancer, choreographer, and anthropologist, Primus used dance to resist civil injustice and advocate for change in the 1960s. As part of her independent tutorial, Young choreographed her own protest piece.

It seemed only natural, then, that Dance Teacher Sarah Surber should think of Young, now a senior at Tufts University, for a new initiative at Taft.

"I had the idea to bring back an alum of the dance program to set a dance on the current students," explains Surber. "I am always so proud to hear that many of my former

students continue dancing in college and beyond, and thought it would be a wonderful experience for current students to work with alums who were in their shoes a short time prior. Pearl was a leader at Taft and has continued as a leader at Tufts, as well. And now she is setting one of the dances she originally made at Tufts on Taft dancers."

A biopsychology major with a double minor in dance and child studies and human development, Young joined ENVY, Tufts' premier women's step team, shortly after she arrived on campus. In

her sophomore year, she founded Harlem Grooves, a growth-oriented dance company dedicated to Black American styles. She recently completed her dance minor capstone by choreographing the Tufts fall production of *Almanac*, the first student-written show produced by Tufts and the school's first show with a predominantly Black cast in recent history.

"The piece I reset for the Taft dance ensemble, *Harmony In Vivo*, is a modern piece originally created for an arts festival Harlem Grooves participated in last year," notes Young. "The movement in this piece is the embodiment of the instruments and the vocals in the song."

Young traveled to Taft to work with ensemble members in person during a school break; she continued coaching the ensemble virtually once her classes resumed. They performed the piece during Taft's Dance Ensemble Winter Concert.

"I am so excited to be sharing this project with the phenomenal dancers in the ensemble," says Young.

Surber shares her excitement, noting that the collaboration was a fantastic experience for her students.

"Moving forward, I would love to bring a young alum back to Taft every year to work with the Dance Ensemble students. It shows them that there are many opportunities for them to continue dancing beyond Taft." ■



Be Like Dr. King

"**THERE ARE MOMENTS** on this campus which have a disproportionate impact in shaping our community culture," noted Head of School Willy MacMullen '78 in opening Taft's MLK Day celebration. "They are events that can be brief but have a ripple effect, like a stone dropped in the pond. They touch us all. This day is one of them: rich, potent, a moment that has gathered us here. It is an extension of who we are, an affirmation of all of our aspirations, and a challenge to join in the shared labor of making Taft—of making us."

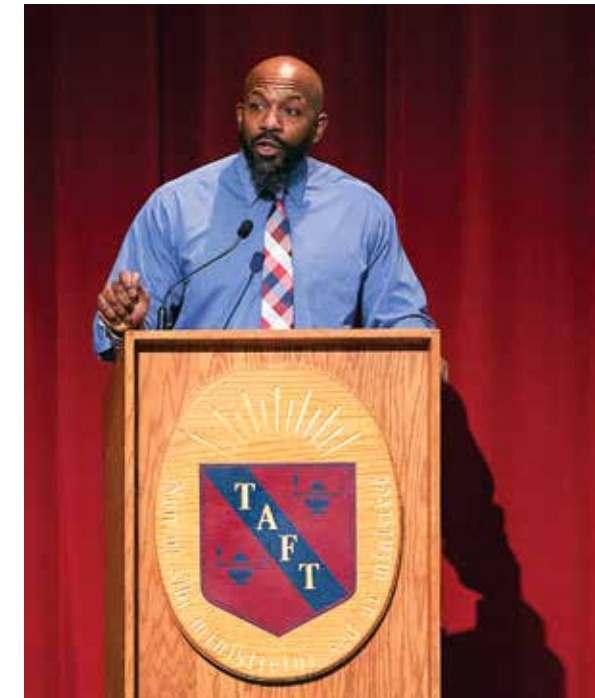
The morning kickoff included several speakers, as well as a short film about Dr. King's life and work, and a student film produced by Ethan Costanzo '22. Costanzo's film featured scenes of daily life at Taft interspersed with footage from Dr. King's 1967 "Blueprint" speech at a junior high school.

The focus of the day's academic work was anchored in the six-chapter Netflix series *Amend: The Fight for America*. Faculty members facilitated small-group sessions exploring individual series chapters, each leading toward a more complete understanding of the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution.

"Amend by definition means change," explained Dean of Community, Justice, and Belonging Thomas Allen in kicking off

the day of learning. "Changes in American history come from amendments. They are very rare. The 14th Amendment speaks to due process, equal protection under the law. That single amendment has changed our history. As we prepare to explore some difficult times in our country's history, I challenge you: Lean into the discomfort. Embrace it. Acknowledge it. Here at Taft, we believe in the potential of everybody."

And while the day concluded with



opportunities for connection and reflection, first around Potter's Pond and later in advisory groups, the charge, issued by Allen extends well beyond the day.

"Be like Dr. King," said Allen. "Be kind. Be like Dr. King. Be bold. Be like Dr. King. Be courageous. Be like Dr. King. Be transformative. Be like Dr. King." ■



Community Time: Making Connections



WINTER TERM WAS A TIME OF DEEP LEARNING ON MANY FRONTS. A SERIES OF EXCEPTIONAL SPEAKERS WOVE TOGETHER THE CONNECTIVE THREADS OF MLK DAY AND BLACK HISTORY MONTH, STRENGTHENED THE FOUNDATION OF COMMUNITY LEARNING AROUND A RANGE OF GLOBAL ISSUES, AND DREW TO A CLOSE WITH WOMEN—AND WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH—AT THE FOREFRONT.



1
Shanieque Garcia
*Director of Multicultural Recruitment at Taft
MLK Day Speaker*

“Marching for the MLK Day holiday [when I was a boarding school student] made me realize that belonging is waiting for someone else to acknowledge you and make you feel welcome. But sometimes you have to take back that power and make yourself belong. Carve out that space that you want for yourself. I now understand that my journey to belonging was really a journey of self-acceptance. And now every space is mine.”

2
Monsignor Joseph Donnelly of The Three Amigos
MLK Day Speaker

“I think what awaits us on the other side [of the pandemic] has something to do with the disruption this has held in our lives. And that disruption, I believe, has made us take a second look—step back and say, ‘What’s it all about? What does all this mean? What does this pandemic mean?’ I would see religion taking the lead in helping people to reflect upon this experience.”

3
Jada Dawkins ’22
*Mosaic Affinity Group Co-Leader
Black History Month Speaker*

“I’d like you to take a second to look around at each other—at everyone in this room. Acknowledge each other. Please know that the history we are going to be talking about impacts every single person in this room because Black history is—and will forever be—part of American history.”

4
Rydell Harrison
Black History Month Speaker

“Welcome is being allowed to enter the room. Inclusion is being allowed to enter the room and have a seat at the table. But belonging is about entering the room, sitting at the table, having your voice be heard, seen, included, and accepted.”

5
Dr. Jacqui Lewis
Black History Month Speaker

“I want you to join the movement of love and justice that is at work around the country. I want you to believe that love is the most powerful force in the universe and it is the only thing—the only force—that is stronger than hate. It is stronger than bigotry. It is stronger than sexism. It is stronger than racism and xenophobia. It is stronger than anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic sentiment. Love is stronger than war. Love is the only thing that will heal our nation and our globe.”

6
Kahlil Greene
*Gen-Z Historian
Black History Month Speaker*

“Stand up for marginalized individuals when you can. Educate when you can. What’s done in the name of bravery will better the community as a whole.”



7
Alison Wright
*Author, National Geographic Photographer
Women’s History Month Speaker*

“According to the UN, on average, women make up just over 40 percent of the global agricultural labor force, yet they own less than 20 percent of the land. Increasing women’s access to land and livestock would boost production, lifting 100 to 150 million people out of hunger. Across the globe, I see women who are learning the power of working together, working in co-ops, growing together, selling together.”

Shortly after her March visit to Taft, Alison Wright lost her life while doing what she loved most, traveling to exotic locations around the world. Alison was a frequent and beloved Morning Meeting speaker. Her loss will be felt deeply by the Taft community.

8
Rosa Clemente
*Organizer, Journalist, Political Commentator, Scholar-Activist, 2008 United States Vice Presidential Candidate
Women’s History Month Speaker*

“I always tell young people, if you’re not part of a movement, join one. If you’re already in an organization, make it stronger and come up with the solutions we need at the intersections of all of our identities.”



On Stage



The Joy of Movement

THE WINTER DANCE ENSEMBLE CONCERT WAS A MÉLANGE OF COLORFUL COSTUMES AND METICULOUS MOVEMENT. THERE WERE PIECES THAT WERE PURE CELEBRATIONS OF JOY, AND PIECES STEEPED IN MEANING—EACH A TRIBUTE TO THE BREATHTAKING DEPTH OF TALENT AMONG TAFT'S DANCERS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS.



A Midsummer Night's Dream

"HOW SHALL WE BEGUILE THE LAZY TIME, IF NOT WITH SOME DELIGHT?"
TAFT'S WINTER PLAY, *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, WAS INDEED A DELIGHT. THE COMEDY IS ONE OF SHAKESPEARE'S MOST POPULAR AND WIDELY PERFORMED WORKS. IN TAFT'S WOODWARD BLACK BOX THEATER, IT RECEIVED A BIT OF A MODERN TREATMENT WHILE RETAINING ALL OF THE ORIGINAL, AS CODIRECTOR AND TECHNICAL THEATER TEACHER DAVID KIEVIT NOTES, "MAGIC, MYSTERY, INTRIGUE, AND DELIGHT."





New Year Celebrations

Tafties were recently introduced to HONG, a new Chinese alliance and interest club. HONG was established with the goal of creating an inclusive space where aspiring students and Chinese learners at Taft can immerse themselves in traditional Chinese culture. HONG invited community members to celebrate the Lunar New Year by learning to make traditional Chinese dumplings “with love and a family recipe.”



What’s Done Cannot Be Undone

Mr. Mac often refers to it as “the greatest night of the year,” and this year was no exception. Lower mid Macbeth recitations brought all the fun and fire and fantastic moments to March that Tafties have known and loved for years.

In Action

Nearly 50 members of Taft’s faculty hosted workshops in February exploring environment issues. Sponsored and conceptualized by Taft’s EcoMons, Environmental Action Day allowed the full school community to engage in programming and activities around environmental action and sustainable initiatives. The workshops covered a broad range of topics, from the declining bird population and the relationship between climate change and infectious diseases to sustainable investing, sustainable diets, and environmental justice and racism. There were also hands-on programs, including a tour of Taft’s eco-friendly Hillman House, an eco-poetry writing session, and a recycling initiative dedicated to collecting, debinding, and recycling outdated textbooks across campus.



In Alliance

In the wake of racist hate speech found on campus, the Taft community came together to denounce racism. School monitors joined school leaders in condemning the act and its racist roots during a special school meeting. A few days later, student leaders held a rally on campus to stand in alliance and build solidarity in the name of positive action, while affirming that every student has a place—that every student truly belongs—at Taft.

Photo by Shanique Garcia

Black History Month Concert

Taft’s Black Alliance Club and Fleeting Thoughts Arts collective hosted an evening of art and music in honor of Black History Month. Students and faculty engaged their audience with song, spoken word, instrumental pieces, and more.



Academic Life

Baba Frew’s AP Human Geography class participated in a Main Hall “gallery walk,” featuring student-generated infographics depicting gender practices from individual countries around the world.

“This is part of our study of what development looks like,” explained Ms. Frew. “Students learned about the UN’s Human Development Index, but they also look at inequalities within each country—socioeconomic, regional, gender-based inequalities, for example. They looked at everything from the maternal mortality rate and years of schooling to the role of women in legislatures and as CEOs/CFOs of companies.”



Strength, Solemnity, Solidarity

The invasion of Ukraine was a call to action for the Taft community. Students came together to support not only members of our own community, but those impacted by the tragic events across the globe. They hosted events and gatherings, fundraising activities, and educational sessions. Some even traveled to Connecticut’s state capitol to stand in solidarity with those opposing the invasion. Amid the passionate energy and activity were solemn moments of strength and solidarity, including a powerful candlelight vigil.



Art Is Life

The winter show in Potter Gallery featured a stunning and diverse collection of student art in a variety of mediums, including this piece by Sijie Yan ’23.

Celebrating the Cultures of Taft

Taft’s Multicultural Arts Celebration has traditionally been the culminating event of our MLK Day programming. Though the full community was not able to gather in Bingham in January, members of the Arts Department and student directors Ania Josczyk ’23 and Susannah Brown ’22 would not be deterred. The celebration took place in March instead, and featured dance, spoken word, and musical performances, as well as what has traditionally been known as “Legacy Pairs,” community members honoring their differences while celebrating their connections to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In photo, Legacy Pair Jada Dawkins ’22 and English Teacher Alex Werrell.





Puck Drop

For a precious few days each year, the stars align, placing students on campus when the temperatures have been consistently cold enough to allow for skating on Potter's Pond. This year the boys' varsity hockey team took advantage of those fleeting moments, holding a fun afternoon practice on the pond.

Meta Visualization

A fun visual capturing students in Ginger O'Shea's Sports Psychology course participating in a weeklong free-throw experiment based on the principles of visualization.



Non ut Sibi

For more than 20 years, Candice's Sickle Cell Fund Inc. has been working to raise awareness and improve services for patients facing a diagnosis of sickle cell disease. This year, Taft students joined the fight: members of Taft's Mosaic affinity group raised nearly \$700 for Candice's Sickle Cell Fund. Mosaic members (from left) Angie Montambault '23, Jada Dawkins '23, Ana Coyanda-Parkzes '23, and Jasmine Pun '25 accepted a certificate of gratitude from Candice's Sickle Cell Fund for their work.

Photo by Shanique Garcia

Pay It Forward

Taft's Red Rhino Fund is a philanthropic, student-run organization dedicated to providing financial support to local non-profits, with a focus on youth services. Every winter, after a lengthy application and review process, the Red Rhino Fund awards grants to community organizations. This year, they awarded a total of \$10,000 to the Police Activity League of Waterbury, Arts for Learning Connecticut, Waterbury Youth Services, and the United Way of Greater Waterbury. Read more about the Red Rhino Fund in the feature article on page 48 of this issue. ■



Winter SPORTS wrap-up

BY STEVE PALMER
Photography by Robert Falcetti



Ashley Wright '23 fires a shot on net during the NEPSAC Large School Quarterfinals against Governor's Academy on March 2.

Girls' Hockey 11-9-2 NEPSAC QUARTERFINALISTS, LARGE SCHOOL TOURNAMENT

The team finished the regular season ranked 14th in NEPSAC. Fifteen of their 21 games were one-goal games, with six of those going into overtime. This made for an incredibly exciting season, which included highlight victories over Loomis Chaffee, Westminster, and Hotchkiss, and earning a home playoff game in the Large School Tournament bracket. Notable accomplishments include goalies Truus Van Wees '24 and Jenna Guglielmi '22 earning a 94 percent and a 95.5 percent save average, respectively, and a team penalty kill success rate of 92 percent, killing 60 of 65 penalties throughout the entire season. Founders All-League players are Callia Ferraris '22 and Jenna Guglielmi, and All-NEPSAC First Team, Large School is Jenna Guglielmi. The Patsy K. Odden Hockey Award winners are the three outstanding senior captains, Callia Ferraris, Jenna Guglielmi, and Eva Witkowski '22.



Ben Phillips '22 lays a hit on a Berkshire player in their 5-3 D'Arco Cup win over the Bears on December 4.

Silverman Steps Down as Girls' Varsity Head Coach

Gretchen Silverman has stepped down as the girls' varsity head coach after leading the team for the past nine seasons. In her time at the helm, Silverman has led the girls' varsity hockey team to a Founders League Tri-Championship in 2018, New England quarterfinal appearances in 2018 and 2022, and an overall record of 71-91-17.

"Gretchen extends and embodies the tradition of great coaching at Taft," said Head of School Willy MacMullen '78. "That she brought an amazing understanding of hockey is obvious: how many schools have a team coached by an Olympic medalist?"

But what made Gretchen special was her deep understanding of our mission of the education of the whole student. The hockey rink for her was a place to challenge and inspire her players and a classroom where important lessons of perseverance and teamwork were taught." For a more in depth look at Silverman's coaching, hockey, and teaching career, visit the News or Athletics section of the Taft School website.



Boys' Hockey 9-13-2

Four-year seniors Mikey Roberts '22 (Dartmouth, hockey) and Thomas Ricciardelli '22 (Notre Dame, lacrosse) along with Ben Phillips '22 captained the team through a complete season after the COVID-canceled '20-21 campaign. Highlights of the year included victories over Berkshire in Odden Arena to reclaim the D'Arco Cup, a three-game season sweep against Loomis, and a 3-1 home victory against Gunn—all three opponents earning postseason play. PG forward Mason Whitney '22 and Ricciardelli lead the team in scoring, averaging nearly 1.0 PPG, and Roberts played over 700 minutes between the pipes with a .945 save percentage, ranking him in the top 10 in NEPSIHA for starting goalies. Zave Greene '23, J.J. Lemieux '23, Nick Lancaster '23, and Jackson Holl '23 will lead the way for the Rhinos next season after outstanding upper mid seasons.



Beck Milner '22 competes at Ski Sundown during a race on February 9.

Skiing

The girls' and boys' ski teams had a solid season, finishing strongly in both the Brigham Ski League and the New England Prep School Athletic Conference. The Rhinos finished second for girls' teams and sixth overall, while the boys placed fourth overall in the BSL. The girls placed second of 13 and the boys sixth of 14 in the NEPSAC Class B Championships. Esmee Clew-Bachrach '24 earned All-New England honors in both giant slalom (ninth of 38) and slalom (fourth of 38), and Bella Dane '24 earned All-New England honors in giant slalom (eighth). In the BSL championships, Clew-Bachrach and Dane finished third and fourth in the slalom. Beck Milner '22 had a great day, placing fourth in slalom and sixth

in giant slalom. Other notable contributions for the girls' team came from Reiley Pascale '25, Sydney Grogean '24, Maxine Maag '24, and captain Chloe Meuse '22. On the boys' side, Theo Allen '23, captain William Roberts '22, Julian Prentice '24, Jack Moucha '24, and Owen Wyman '23 helped the team to a successful season. We are looking forward to next year!

Girls' Basketball 9-10

Led by senior tri-captains Eliza Ford '22, Lauren Villanueva '22, and Elise Moreira '22, the girls' varsity basketball team nearly achieved a .500 record for the first time since their lower mid years against competition that has grown dramatically more

talented over that span. Season highlights included back-to-back home February wins against Hotchkiss and Williston—the former coming before a packed, partisan, Cobb Court crowd; the latter coinciding with Senior Day. For the season, Ford, a Class A New England All-Star, averaged almost eight points a game and over eight rebounds per contest while being forced to play against taller opponents every outing after a season-ending injury to 6-foot-1-inch Hungarian newcomer Petra Kuncz '23 in late December. Defensive specialists Villanueva and Moreira typically combined to limit the opposition's primary ball-handlers, while new upper midcs Mya Hicks '23 and Skye Shepherd '23 provided scoring punch and returner Annie Woodward '23 did a little of everything. The team's three leading scorers—Kuncz (15.3 points and over 14 rebounds per in the four games she played), Hicks (10.5 PPG), and dynamic middler Faith Graziano '24 (8.9 PPG)—return for 2022–23.

Below: Lauren Villanueva '22 looks to drive to the basket against Williston Northampton on February 16.



R.J. Bennett '24 battles for a rebound against Brunswick on December 4.

Boys' Basketball 8-16

Taft finished with a respectable eight wins during a year in which they had just one practice with a complete roster. The team was led by Middlebury-bound guard Evan Flaks '22 (12.7 PPG), who controlled the pace of play for the Rhinos. Team defense was a bright spot as Taft held their opponents to under 41 percent field goal percentage on the season. This defensive effort was led by seniors Demi Adeyeye '22, who snatched 29 steals on the season, and Nick Liebich '22, who led the team in rebounds (5.6 RPG). The future looks promising for the Rhinos as the team's second leading scorer, Vule Sukovic '23, returns along with the team's top perimeter defender, R.J. Bennett '24.



Wrestling 5-5

The greatest victory of Taft's 2022 wrestling season was simply having a season in the least COVID-friendly sport there is. With a very young team, Taft managed a 5–5 record, with victories over Salisbury, Wilbraham Monson, Hamden Hall, Forman, and New York Military Academy. While we were able to have a wrestler in all 14 weight classes, often as many as 10 of those wrestlers were first-year competitors. While the team was young and lost our only senior captain, Ethan Costanzo '22, to a season-ending injury in mid-January, the team displayed remarkable grit and spirit throughout the abbreviated season. At the Western New England tournament, Taft had the following place winners: Jefferson Kao '24 (fifth at 106 lb.); cocaptain Anishka Perera '23 (third at 113); Serafym Rybachkivskyi '23 (sixth at 138), Ben Bazarian '25 (sixth at 170), and cocaptain Lachlan Hawes '23 (second at 182). Hawes went on to place sixth in New England's and finish in the top 25 at Prep Nationals.

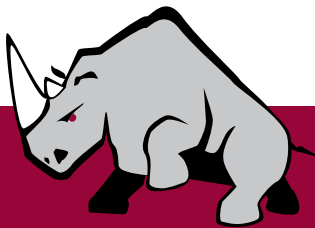
Below: Lachlan Hawes '23 set to take on his opponent from Trinity-Pawling in a match on February 2.



Cece Salvatore '24 during a match against Westover on February 2.

Girls' Squash 6-4

Led this year by tri-captains Julissa Mota '22, Annabel Pick '22, and Lily Spencer '22, all of whom will play collegiate squash next year, the team was further comprised of Cece Salvatore '24, Whitney Bartol '22, Bridget Brockelman '23, Maddie Schall '24, Ella Connolly '23, and Jane Walsh '24. After a year of not competing, both returning and new members needed time to sharpen their competition skills. Taft built the 6-4 record with hard-fought wins over Loomis, Kent, and Westover while dropping matches to Hotchkiss, Choate, and Deerfield. The team made consistent improvement as the year progressed, culminating in strong tournament performances. At the New England B tournament, the Rhinos placed fourth, with Annabel Pick and Bridget Brockelman each placing second in the fourth and sixth flights respectively. The team went on to place sixth in Division II of the High School Nationals, where Taft had tight wins over McDonough School and Bronxville, and losses to second-place finisher Choate and fifth-place finisher Penn Charter. While the team will lose four seniors next year, the talented returners look to continue to compete at a high level in a competitive schedule.



WINTER 2021-22 ATHLETIC AWARDS

Girls' Hockey

Patsy K. Odden Award—Callia Ferraris '22, Jenna Guglielmi '22, Eva Witkowski '22
Founders League All-League—Callia Ferraris '22, Jenna Guglielmi '22
All-NEPSAC First Team, Large School—Jenna Guglielmi '22

Boys' Hockey

Coaches Hockey Award—Michael Roberts '22
Angier Hockey Trophy—Thomas Ricciardelli '22
Founders League All-League—Mason Whitney '22, Justin Fernet '22

Skiing

Boys' Ski Racing Award—Will Roberts '22
Girls' Ski Racing Award—Esmee Clew-Bachrach '24
All-New England—Bella Dane '24, Esmee Clew-Bachrach '24

Girls' Basketball

1978 Girls' Basketball Award—Elise Moreira '22, Eliza Ford '22, Lauren Villanueva '22
Founders League All-League—Mya Hicks '23, Faith Graziano '24
Class A New England All-Star—Eliza Ford '22

Boys' Basketball

James Paynter Logan Memorial Basketball Trophy—Evan Flaks '22
Founders League All-League—Demi Adeyeye '22, Nicholas Liebich '22

Wrestling

Harry F. Hitch Award—Lachlan Hawes '23
Wynne Award—Ethan Costanzo '22
Founders League All-League—Anishka Perera '23, Serafym Rybachkivskiy '23

Girls' Squash

1986 Girls' Squash Award—Julissa Mota '22, Annabel Pick '22
Founders League All-League—Lily Spencer '22, Whitney Bartol '22

Boys' Squash

Boys' Squash Award—Connor Walsh '22, Jesse Brew '22
Founders League All-League—Bo Page '23, Jesse Brew '22



Jesse Brew '22 during a match against Deerfield on February 16.

Boys' Squash 7-3

A strong season for the Rhinos finished with a regular-season record of 7-3 and strong wins over Avon, Choate, and Loomis. The depth of the ladder helped bring success this season, as well as strong leadership

from three seniors, No. 2 Jesse Brew '22, No. 8 Connor Walsh '22, and No. 10 Rafe Van Wagenen '22. Filling out the remainder of our ladder were No. 1 Bo Page '23, No. 3 Thomas Sheumack '25, No. 4 Ike Edmands '25, No. 5 Harry Revenaugh '24, No. 6 Lachlan Abbott '24, No. 7 Aman

Dhiman '25, and No. 9 Evan Chu '24. The Rhinos performed well at the New England Class A championships, finishing seventh overall, as well as placing 13th nationally at the Division I High School National Championship with strong wins over Belmont Hill and Rye Country Day School. ■

Winter Signing Ceremony



Twenty-two senior student-athletes participated in Taft Athletics' Winter Signing Ceremony on campus February 2 in Bingham Auditorium. The ceremony celebrates those students making commitments to continue their academic and athletic careers at the college or university level. Coaches, families, teammates and the full Taft School community were invited to the event. *Congratulations to:*

Field Hockey

Brooke Marx, *Hamilton College*

Football

Billy Daal, *Yale University*
James Maloney, *The United States Military Academy at West Point*
Max McCormick, *Georgetown University*
Joe Nash, *Yale University*
Dominic Rulli, *Penn State*
Nico Schwikal, *Dartmouth College*

Men's Soccer

Zobran Elias, *Trinity College*
Sebastián Mañón, *Dartmouth College*
Matthew Quiros-Newton, *Connecticut College*

Men's Basketball

Evan Flaks, *Middlebury College*

Men's Squash

Jesse Brew, *Amherst College*

Women's Squash

Julissa Mota, *Wesleyan University*
Lily Spencer, *Hamilton College*

Baseball

Jon Chatfield, *Keene State College*

Crew

Eliza Ford, *Northeastern University*

Men's Lacrosse

Sam Duffy, *Oberlin College*
Matt Sheinberg, *Amherst College*
Luke Smith, *Colorado College*

Women's Lacrosse

Grace Denious, *Trinity College*
Abby D'Ercole, *Claremont McKenna College*
Caroline Messer, *Middlebury College*

Girls Who Lead

MEETING TAFT STUDENT LEADERS

What does leadership by female students at Taft look like in 2022? Read what several student leaders say about what it means to participate in a dynamic community beyond the classroom. As part of recognizing Taft's 50th anniversary of coeducation, we celebrate these and all young women at our school.



OATAMA / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Theresa Isadora Alves De Oliveira '24

WARACAJU, BRAZIL

Why did you decide to be part of the specific groups or activities you're involved in?

I like to be connected to political activism in a multitude of ways. When I came to the U.S., that motivated me to replicate [here at Taft] past successful projects from my home country. For arts and sports, Taft has been allowing me to explore interests I never knew I had. In Brazil, we're not usually given many opportunities to discover new talents in high school, so what I've been doing at Taft is attempting to find these undiscovered pursuits.

What do you enjoy most about being a leader at Taft?

Students and faculty are generally willing to help in any way they can, and it's really motivating for young people who are trying to create positive change to know that they are not alone in their mission.

What's it like to be a female leader at Taft?

Although there are certainly barriers at Taft yet to be removed for women to enjoy equal rights to men, just like in any segment of modern society, being a female leader at Taft shows me that as long as there are people willing to fight for equality, there is hope for a better future. At Taft, I can, as a female leader, enjoy my hope for a future with more equity.

Activities

Girl Up, Interact Club, Model United Nations co-head, Community Service Board, Debate Club, Amnesty International Club, Somos Taft, Political Awareness Club, Democrats Club, theater, yoga





Activities

Taft Financial Society vice president; Amnesty International Club treasurer; Yearbook senior section editor; Girls' Math Team head; Varsity Squash; Girls' Golf team two-year captain

Whitney Bartol '22 FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Why did you decide to be part of the specific groups or activities you're involved in?

I found myself drawn to roles where I could employ my passion for business, organization, and collaboration. I have loved being a part of the Taft Financial Society, as it has continuously pushed me but always been exciting and intellectually stimulating. I learn so much from my own work, the passionate board members, and our amazing faculty advisors. From playing on sports teams to working on the yearbook staff, my favorite activities have been the ones where I get to work with both students and faculty. Working in a collaborative group is what pushes me to become most involved, hardworking, and passionate to make a difference at our school.

What do you enjoy most about being a leader at Taft?

Joining the Varsity Golf team last spring and being voted on as captain, I [was] dedicated to making the team more cohesive, motivated, and most importantly, fun. With a team so small, I worked to bond our players, and we became extremely supportive of one another.

What's it like to be a female leader at Taft?

Being a female leader has been an experience of extremely hard work but even larger reward. I remember being a freshman at Taft and seeing that many of the student clubs and organizations we all look up to consistently had a male head, making it hard for me to imagine I could obtain such a significant position one day. After exploring different opportunities, I have found myself to be in multiple leadership positions that I feel lucky to have. I have been granted the opportunities to not only develop my own intellectual mind and life skills, but have also been able to work alongside so many other amazing leaders in our community. I feel honored that I am in a position to truly make a difference at the school I love so much, and to be able to develop organizations and activities that I know will have a lasting impact on future Tafties. Overall, although I have had my challenges in the past four years, I am proud to say that I am a female leader at Taft and that I can be someone that girls can look at and know that it is very possible for them to pursue their own passions at Taft, and to make the mark that they want to.

Elise Taylor '24 WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT

What's it like to be a female leader at Taft?

Being a female leader at Taft in 2022 is redefining everything. Redefining philanthropy. Redefining feminism and who is [a feminist]. Redefining how we conduct political conversations. Redefining Taft to make a more inclusive place for all. But most importantly, to hold true to our motto and encourage others to implement it into their daily lives.

Why did you decide to be part of the specific groups or activities you're involved in?

With my dad as the executive director of a nonprofit and my mother the chair of a community foundation that awards millions of dollars in grants to nonprofits, my life has consisted of philanthropy—both its importance and its impact. As I applied for the the Red Rhino Fund during the final months of my freshman year, I hoped to explore what philanthropy meant to me, and I learned it is to embody the motto of Taft—*Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*—but also to redefine how both myself and other members of the community view philanthropy. To view philanthropists not exclusive to Bill Gates and Mackenzie Scott, but rather [any of us] as we are all capable of becoming philanthropists right now. Both my background and identifiers of being a young Black woman have influenced much of my life. Arriving on campus in fall of 2021 (after being remote for a year), I realized the work of equality was largely focused on race and such disparities. The social change from the summer of 2020 was not exclusive to race, but rather a time for us to examine equality. Girl Up [helped] create our own social change within the Taft community by defining feminism—what it is and why we should all be feminists. I became vice president of Girl Up because I am a young woman and thus a feminist, and am willing to work toward upholding the ideas of feminism for a more perfect Taft.

Activities

Co-chair Grants Committee and Diversity Committee, Red Rhino Fund; Taft Ethics Club founder and co-head; Taft Girl Up vice president; Global Leadership Institute (GLI) cohort member; Mosaics affinity group; Black Alliance Club; Girls' Third Squash; Girls' Thirds Tennis





Claire Roberts '23

WATERTOWN, CONNECTICUT

What do you enjoy most about being a leader at Taft?

Characteristic of the Taft experience but highlighted by the COVID pandemic, we sometimes feel as though we're at Taft for a short time before being thrust into leadership positions that we aren't yet experts in. Thanks to Taft's trust and support in offering me leadership opportunities, I have found that being a leader is not a mark of being a complete expert, but rather the ultimate learning experience. Being plunged into this unknown forces me to continue to grow while becoming the representation that I look for in my community.

Activities

Co-head Masque and Dagger; Gender and Sexuality Alliance co-head; *Papyrus* staff writer; Alliance Coalition representative; Boys' Crew team coxswain; I-Block teacher and assistant curriculum designer; theater program



Activities

Co-Head Monitor; dormitory monitor; Community Service Board co-head; peer mentor co-head; student mentor; I-Block student teacher; Global Leadership Institute; Somos Taft co-head; UNICEF Club, Spanish Speaking Club, STEP Team; Dance IV; Girls' JV Volleyball captain; Girls' JV Basketball captain; Girls' JV Lacrosse

Nicole Balbuena '22

COLLEGE POINT, NEW YORK

Why did you decide to be part of the specific groups or activities you're involved in?

Because I love it. Every group or sport that I am involved in is a reflection of something I love or value in my life, and being able to share my experiences and my endeavors through all these roles in a community that I love is extremely important to me and rewarding at the same time!

What do you enjoy most about being a leader at Taft?

The best part about being involved is getting to know my peers and those in my community at a more personal level. Six hundred students doesn't seem like a lot, but when you think about how many times you interact with each person, you realize you don't know them the way you think you do. Through my extracurriculars, I have had the opportunity to get to know students that I would rarely cross paths with and earned a friendship along the way!

What's it like to be a female leader at Taft?

It is exciting! It comes with a lot of responsibility and dedication but it inevitably is a lot of fun, and there is always a lot of support from those around you!



Sadie Kargman '22

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Why did you decide to be part of the specific groups or activities you're involved in?

I have always had the two passions of writing and giving back. In each of my roles on campus, I am able to explore my interests, while simultaneously serving my greater community.

What do you enjoy most about being a leader at Taft?

I have been a coxswain on the Boys' Crew team for the past three years. In this position, I worked with many male peers I did not previously know but who have become close teammates and great friends.

What's it like to be a female leader at Taft?

I love being a female leader at Taft. In my four years on campus, the definition of a female leader has definitely changed, becoming more powerful, recognized, and inclusive, allowing me and the community to grow for the better in many ways.

Activities

School Monitor, Senior Class Committee/Overall Student Government (school monitorship), Vogelstein dorm monitor; *Papyrus* editor-in-chief; Red Rhino Fund vice president; Taft's Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Program co-president; Boys' Crew team coxswain



Activities

Mosaic affinity group leader; Admissions Council and Taft tour guide; I-Block teacher; lower-school dorm monitor; Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey team manager

Jada Dawkins '22

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

What do you enjoy most about being a leader at Taft?

All of the activities I do on campus allow me to reach out to others and learn more about people I usually would not interact with outside of my own friends group.

What's it like to be a female leader at Taft?

Being a female leader at Taft is sometimes challenging when your male counterparts do not see your efforts in the same light that you do, but I know that I am helping to make Taft a better place. I know a lot of girl power is needed to make this campus run smoothly, and I am happy to be a part of it.

Eliza Ford '22

MIDDLEBURY,
CONNECTICUT

Why did you decide to be part of the specific groups or activities you're involved in?

I have always been excited to be a part of a team each semester [as well as being a captain for two sports]. The teams that I have played and worked with every season have always been a motivator to keep working hard in each sport.

Collegium and Hydrox have been two of my favorite groups. For Day Student Council, I wanted to be able to represent the people that I was always a part of.

What's it like to be a female leader at Taft?

Being a female leader at Taft can be a difficult job because you are looking to lead or make a change to standards that have been in place for a long time and emphasize a different perspective of life at Taft. In athletics, one of my main goals has been to grow the support of female athletes and teams in our community. Since freshman year I have always spoken out about the differing support levels between male and female athletics, and over the past four years the community has changed and the support for all teams and sports has experienced so much growth.

Being a female leader at Taft is an amazing opportunity to show your commitment to whatever you feel is important and what to dedicate yourself to. If I had attended another school I would not have had the opportunity to advocate for myself and others in the ways that I have learned to do through experience. Taft does an excellent job of creating ample opportunities to become involved in something and find your purpose, and maybe grow to be a leader for it.



Activities

Tri-varsity athlete (soccer, basketball, and crew); Basketball team tri-captain; Crew cocaptain; Collegium Musicum (alto section leader and head chorister); Hydrox tri-head; Day Student Council co-president; Political Awareness Club co-head; Congdon adjunct day student dormitory monitor; EcoMon (media team, social media and online presence)

Mina Xiao '23

BEIJING, CHINA

Why did you decide to be part of the specific groups or activities you're involved in?

At such a prestigious and long-standing institution, being able to create an enduring impact is powerful in itself, illuminating the spirit of *Non ut sibi*. The idea that inspires and pushes me is that instead of waiting for others to enhance my experience, maybe I can be the one to influence change.

What do you enjoy most about being a leader at Taft?

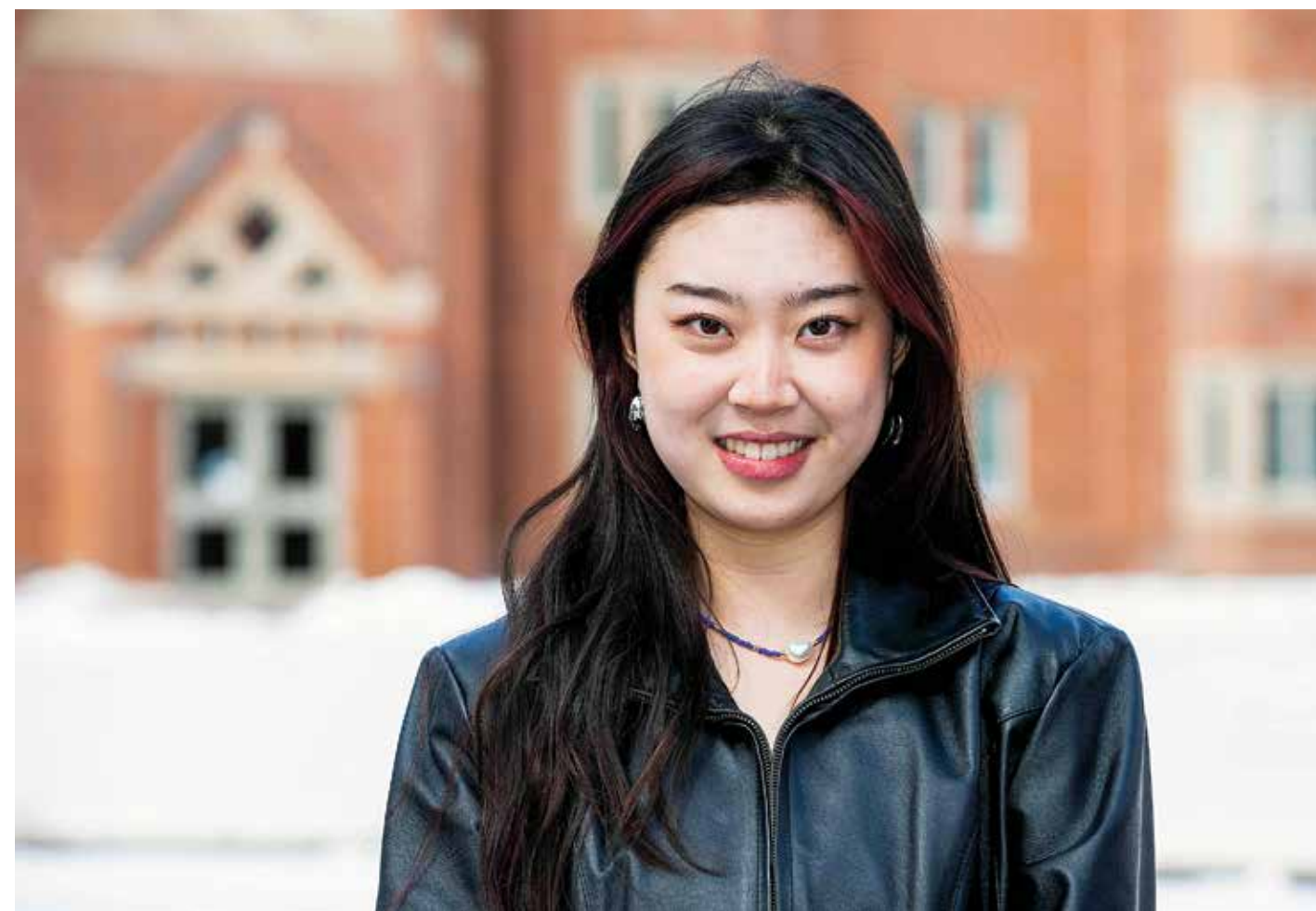
It's hard to contain the pride as I recount the events I have participated in to make Taft a more inclusive and collaborative place. Celebrating Chinese New Year with dumpling making night at HONG, seeing people dance to the music, and hearing the enthusiastic discussions on Environmental Action Day flood out classroom doors—it's the best reward I could ask for. It is a crucial part of my feeling of belonging and integrating into the community. I think it is in attending these activities where we fall in love with the Taft community together, little by little.

What's it like to be a female leader at Taft?

It is exhilarating, thrilling, fulfilling, yet truly full of obstacles every day. However, this problem-solving enriches my global perspective. Being a female leader at Taft has allowed me to identify myself in the context of the global society and articulate my voice upon an elevated platform. It helps me comprehend the marked power of my voice as a Chinese woman and to interlock my identity among all the diversity here. ■

Activities

EcoMon; GLI scholar; HONG Chinese alliance co-head; lead of the musical; head of Red Ink; Pan-Asian Affinity Group secretary





Granted

How the Red Rhino Fund
teaches students about

the POWER
of Philanthropy

by Julie Reiff



Red Rhino Fund OFFICERS/TRUSTEES 2021-22

Above: The Red Rhino Fund is an endowed, charitable fund run by a nine-member student board. In its work, Taft students gain solid perspectives on the importance of philanthropic work, and develop fundamental knowledge, understanding, and skills to continue philanthropic, nonprofit work later in life. From left, Figo '23, Finn '24, Elise '24, Steve '22, Maheen '23, Max '22, Sadie '22, Mackenzie '23, and Townsend '23. Also see board list at right.

President: Steve Mayer '22
Vice President/Secretary: Sadie Kargman '22
Treasurer: Townsend Vogt '23

Grants Committee Chair: Maheen Ahmad '23
Grants Committee Co-Chair: Elise Taylor '24
Marketing Committee Chair: Finn Gateley '24
Marketing Committee Co-Chair: Mackenzie Kloss '23
Special Events Committee Chair: Max Keller '22
Special Events Committee Co-Chair: Figo Wang '23
Diversity Committee Chair: Figo Wang '23
Diversity Committee Co-Chair: Elise Taylor '24
Nominating and Governance Chair: Mackenzie Kloss '23
Advisors: Mr. Danaher, Mrs. Pulawski

Sergeant Andrea D'Agostino turns her laptop around and walks the group of Taft students on Zoom through a virtual tour of the Police Activity League (PAL) program at Walsh Elementary School in Waterbury. This is her 18th year with the police department; she has been involved with PAL since 2007.

There are 30 kids in the after-school program, where they get healthy snacks, find homework help with Waterbury school teachers and tutors, do some organized games, and get a little energy out before they go home.

"As a nonprofit, we rely on grants and donations to run everything we run here," she explains to the Red Rhino Fund group. "PAL is little different from what other schools offer, and we can offer it longer, which helps kids and families."

PAL was one of six applicants for a grant from the Red Rhino Fund this year, and is a recipient this year. The Red Rhino Fund has supported PAL before, and Taft's connection with PAL goes back many years, explains faculty advisor Kevin Danaher.

When Taft students go on site visits like this (on Zoom for now), they get to see where the money goes, what it supports, and how it will make an impact.

"It's inspiring to see students lead the charge in this work, thoughtfully and with passion, while still balancing their other commitments on campus," says Amanda Pulawski, who advises the group along with Danaher. "We had a second site visit, which was equally impressive. The Red Rhino Fund's work is the embodiment of Taft's motto: these students are actively serving their community by awarding grants and educating their peers on local organizations. And at the same time, they are gaining firsthand knowledge of what being a part of a functioning board means."



Service has long been an integral component of a Taft education—whether that meant running a summer camp for underprivileged youth in the 1920s, participating in a community service project with the team at season's end, tutoring at a local elementary school through the Volunteer Program, or one of the myriad other ways the Taft community has created to support its neighbors in the greater Waterbury area.

But in an age when service has become an expected and conventional component of the college résumé, what unique skills and experiences can Taft offer students? Not every graduate will choose a nonprofit career, but getting involved in philanthropy can be a way to still pay it forward.

A large number of Taft alums have chosen careers that allow them to serve, to give back in direct and meaningful ways. But they and many others besides also give their time to nonprofit groups. Wouldn't it be useful then, for students to better understand the grant process—whether they find themselves applying for them or working with foundations to distribute them?

"Nonprofits do not work, could not exist," says Head of School Willy MacMullen '78, "without philanthropy, without the generosity of others. The Red Rhino Fund embodies all that we believe in, and that is the notion of giving back."

"The board has sparked a genuine interest in philanthropy for me and is a leadership role I would encourage all underclassmen to consider applying for."



Red Rhino Fund

Founded in 2007, the Red Rhino Fund is an endowed, charitable fund run by a nine-member student board with faculty advisors. At its core, the fund's mission is an extension of the school motto, Not to be served, but to serve. The group works to create positive change in the greater Waterbury community for children, by awarding nominal monetary grants and promoting local organizations in support of education, literacy, and the arts. Along the way, Taft students gain solid perspectives on the importance of philanthropic work, and develop fundamental knowledge, understanding, and skills to continue philanthropic, nonprofit work later in life.

The board is charged with learning about not-for-profit trusteeship, growing the endowment through new and innovative fundraising initiatives, creating marketing strategies, and awarding grants to community organizations. Board membership is determined through a competitive application and interview process.

—Hartley Messer '20, past president

"Having hands-on experience and seeing where the grants went definitely encouraged our fundraising efforts and left me with a great feeling."

—Savannah Love '21



Skyler Serenbetz '09, the fund's founder and first president, was always interested in nonprofits. It was something she learned from her grandparents, sitting in on board meetings for the family foundation even as a child and serving on the benevolence committee herself while a student at Taft.

"I admired both of my grandparents a lot," she says. "They had a huge influence on me."

Working with them on the board for the family foundation, she learned the importance of investing money so an endowment can grow and have a greater impact over time. So when she arrived at Taft in 2007, she proposed a new philanthropy club.

"I wanted to teach more people how to do this," Serenbetz says. "It fit the Taft motto so well."

She found other interested students, and they reached out to parents and friends, asking for cash donations to start the endowment, supplemented by student fundraising efforts.

That club quickly formalized into the Red Rhino Foundation, electing officers and adopting a mission statement, bylaws, and articles of incorporation.

Below: One way students learn about the fund's work is through School Meeting presentations when the board awards grants to local organizations' leaders; this year's awards to four recipient organizations were presented in March.



Above: Red Rhino Fund Board Treasurer Townsend Vogt '23 presents a grant to Officer Querino "Q" Maia P'14,'09,'07 from the Waterbury Police Activity League at the March 8 School Meeting.



The group works to create positive change in the greater Waterbury community for children by awarding nominal monetary grants and promoting local organizations in support of education, literacy, and the arts.

"The fund is managed with the rest of Taft's endowment," explains Danaher. "The income from that makes up about half of the funds we distribute each year." When they exceed their planned fundraising goals for the year, he says, any surplus is added back to the endowment. Additionally, the endowed fund still receives direct donations.

One way students learn about the RRF is the annual School Meeting at which grants are awarded to the local nonprofits. In 2020, then president Hartley Messer '20 praised the collaborative nature of the group when she stood at the podium to introduce her fellow board members.

"Serving on this board," Messer says, "has illustrated the impact that diverse perspectives—that engage and listen to each other with interest, respect, and empathy—can have. The board has sparked a genuine interest in philanthropy for me and is a leadership role I would encourage all underclassmen to consider applying for."

In addition to raising money, officers learn nonprofit best practices during meetings, and they document their discussions, actions, and votes. They research and engage with local program leaders to ensure their missions are in line with RRF's.

There are officers who spearhead the marketing and fundraising efforts—finding vendors and designing merchandise to sell and promoting events like denim days, Fall Festival, and a badminton tournament. Pre-pandemic, their largest fundraiser was the Spring Fling at the Watertown Golf Club.

"I would say the most significant challenge has been the transition out of 'COVID Taft,'" says Nominating and Governance Chair Co-Chair Mackenzie Kloss '23. "We've been trying to bring back old traditions like Spring Fling that couldn't exist for the past year or two."

The Fall Festival is the event that Kloss is most proud of. "It was my first real event on the board," she says, "and was when I first started to understand the dynamic and how each member, no matter their position, has a role in each event. I remember the meetings leading up to it were stressful yet exciting. Seeing it all come together and go perfectly was a fantastic feeling."

There have been surprises, too. Red Rhino Fund holiday cards are an annual initiative, but Kloss says the group decided to use the cards as an additional way to educate more people about the RRF and bring in support from constituents who were not previously aware of the fund's work.

Recent grant recipients

Each year the Red Rhino Fund distributes nearly \$10,000 in grants to organizations that serve the greater Waterbury community with a focus on youth, literacy, and the arts.

2022

- Waterbury Youth Services
- Police Activity League of Greater Waterbury
- Arts for Learning CT
- United Way of Greater Waterbury

2021

- Boys & Girls Club of Greater Waterbury
- Committee for a New Waterbury (Waterbury Reads)
- Mattatuck Museum
- Waterbury Symphony (Bravo Waterbury!)
- Children's Community School

2020

- Save Girls On F.Y.E.R. Inc.
- Greater Waterbury YMCA
- Police Activity League of Greater Waterbury
- Reach Out and Read
- United Way of Greater Waterbury

2019

- Boys & Girls Club of Greater Waterbury
- Mattatuck Museum
- Children's Community School
- Waterbury Symphony Orchestra
- Girls Inc. of Greater Waterbury



"We partner with amazing organizations that truly have the community's best interests at heart and strive for change."

—Steve Mayer '22, president

Above: The fund works to create positive change in the greater Waterbury community by awarding grants and in support of education, literacy, and the arts. The "Bucket Band"—part of Bravo Waterbury!, an educational initiative of the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra that has received past grants—performed at a School Meeting.



Savannah Love '21 was always involved in the Community Service Program while at Taft. Often she would choose to volunteer at programs that received grants from the Red Rhino Fund.

"Having hands-on experience and seeing where the grants went definitely encouraged our fundraising efforts and left me with a great feeling," says Love, now at Middlebury College, who was also a school monitor, GLI Scholar, and part of the MOSAIC affinity group.

She says she applied to the Red Rhino Fund because she wanted the opportunity to work with community organizations and have her "foot in the door of the real world."

"One goal of the fund is childhood literacy," she explains, "and for me, that hit close to home. My mother for many years worked in education and even after she left the field she instilled into my brother and me the importance of reading. So to be able to provide grants to organizations that bridged the gap of inequality in access to education was something that I definitely wanted to be a part of."

For day student Steve Mayer '22, joining the RRF was about staying engaged with the community in which he was raised and fitting into his new community at Taft.

"I was not sure where the two communities intersected," says Mayer, who serves as president of the fund this year and also sings with the Oriocos and plays varsity football and baseball.

"To directly see a group of students at the school having such a positive impact on the education of others in the local area was simply awe-inspiring, and I knew I wanted to be a part of the group," he says.

He points to the impact these grants have on the community.

"We partner with amazing organizations that truly have the community's best interests at heart and strive for change," he says. While many recipient groups focus on younger kids, he is particularly excited about Waterbury Youth Services, which offers an after school-program and tutoring for high school students.

"It is my first time on the board that we expanded our outreach to kids similar in age to me," he says, "which is exciting because I feel like I can relate to them. Seeing the Red Rhino Fund's outreach grow and the ability for us to have a greater impact on the community has been such a satisfying experience."

In addition to a site visit, Waterbury Youth Services invited foundation members to an open house (before the pandemic) to learn about their programs, Danaher says. "We left just wowed by the work they do," he says.

"I have had so many blessings in my life," Mayer says. "Any way to give back to the community that I was raised in and love is truly an honor. It's a way for me to express my gratitude. I hope that the people that we help view Taft and the Red Rhino Fund as a community of students, faculty, and staff who care." ■

Julie Reiff P'12 is a freelance writer and editor in Bethel, Maine, and the former editor of this magazine.

Looking
BACK

A Place of Connection



1



2

The Pond, now Potter's Pond, has been a gathering place on the Taft campus for over a century. It has held hockey games, sailboat races, and bonfires. The Pond has been the backdrop for countless classes, concerts, dances, cookouts, and lazy afternoons. Over the years it has been temporarily drained, dredged, and reshaped as the campus grew and nearby buildings have come and gone, such as the 70th Anniversary Science Center.

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



3



4



1. Peering out from the lobby just off Main Hall. This undated photo was taken before the 70th Anniversary Science Center and the Boiler House were constructed.

2. Students gather by the Pond closing out Hotchkiss Day on November 8, 2014.

3. Two students chat beside the Pond outside of HDT. This undated photo was probably taken sometime between 1911 and 1956. The reflection of CPT in the Pond is something that has not been seen since the "new gym" was built in 1956.

4. Students in 1981 relaxing at the Pond.

You are an important part of the equation.



People + Programs + Participation

= a Taft education

It takes people, programs, and your participation to build a global campus community where every Taft student has the opportunity to learn, lead, and succeed. Be part of the equation and show your support today.

Every gift to the Annual Fund makes a difference. Please support the Annual Fund before June 30.

Thank You!
taftschoool.org/give

Taft BULLETIN

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www.taftschool.org/bulletin

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Potter Gallery