Power of Place
Welcome to a 360-degree view of one of the few remaining true small boarding schools in the United States. Set amid the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains, Asheville School is proud to share what’s happening on our beautiful 300-acre campus.

If you have comments, letters to the editor, story ideas, and/or updated class notes, please contact us at marketing@ashevilleschool.org
LETTER FROM ALUMNI DIRECTOR

Greetings!

Finding one’s place, making new friends, and calling a place “home” takes time. Finding our place “amid rugged mountains,” and beyond continues to be a part of our mission. We strive to find what that is, that spark that sets so much in motion that will “baptize us with fire.”

It has become more apparent to me over the past two years that this place has instilled some aspirational feeling or calling. In the lyrics that Howard Bement penned, and generations of young people have sung since, we are at this place which is “set with hills to which our eyes aspire.” We are searching for something that is constant and can provide an anchor in the midst of any storm.

Place. A place to call home. A place that, for a short stay, enables a young person the ability to feel like a big fish in a small pond. A place to feel known and heard and valued.

I believe that we all have a place or two that we can think back to as our space. That space either helped to define us or it gave refuge and solitude in time of need or it gave us a sense of belonging and identity. For me, those places include: The Blue and White room in Lawrence Hall; my dorm room on Third Anderson (319); a pew in Boyd Chapel; the gym laundry room (as a manager of teams); Ambler Pool, the azalea-lined patio of the dining hall where I would sit after a seated dinner in May of 1986 and watch the sun set behind Boyd Chapel.

This campus continues to provide that space that helps to ground, nurture, and center students. Alumni and parents of alumni find themselves in Asheville, at the intersection of interstates 40 or 26, and are pulled down Patton Avenue to take that hard right turn and up the driveway, to reconnect, perhaps to catch a glimpse of that space that was, at one time, center, or as one alumnus told me, his “true north star.”

I do feel that we continue to be a place, by our location and the buildings, to inspire young people to develop a sense of worth that enables each of us “to take our strong stand” wherever we may go.

Stop by the Bement House and say hello sometime. We hope you will plan to join us for Alumni Weekend in 2022. Mark your calendars for April 22nd - 23rd — we look forward to welcoming you home.

A grateful alumnus,
Burt Gordon, ’86

Go Blues!
During initial discussions of the theme of this alumni magazine, I was immediately swept along by a wave of memories. “Power of Place” certainly captures the special energy of this campus. After a career in boarding schools, it has been the pleasure of my life to return to Asheville School—a true haven in an often frantic and fractious world.

It is a wonderful thing to return as an adult to a place that left an indelible mark on your adolescence; to walk those same paths, sing the same songs, and lift your voice in prayer at the same altar. You find that the buildings and places that inspired you as a teenager still hold the same magic; the steps of Mitchell where I gathered with my friends to cut loose now make up my daily path to work. The football field where I spent many happy afternoons cheering my friends to victory was where I first had a keen sense that I was a member of a special community. When I attend a game now, I look around at the faces of our students—their comradery, inclusivity, and unbridled spirit tells me we have a new generation who feels the same way.

Despite the difficulties of the past year, this place has a tangible steadiness to it that sustains and nourishes our students. The power of our campus lies in our people: our tireless faculty and staff; our devoted parents; our engaged alumni; and most especially our curious and inspiring students. I hope you enjoy hearing about the people who are living, working, and learning in your footsteps. The continuum of this place includes you and your story. We hope you will enjoy reminiscing as you peruse these pages, and we especially hope you will make plans to join us on campus when you are able.

Sincerely,
Dr. Anthony H. Sgro, ’84
Compared to the billion-year-old mountains that surround our campus, Asheville School is but a blip on the timeline of an ancient landscape. But for the people who have called this campus home for the past 121 years, the sense of familiarity in the land, the buildings, the trees, and the views are a constant comfort. A resting place.

The theme of this magazine, "Power of Place," seeks to honor the stories inspired by Asheville School. How does the landscape shape our reality? How does it inspire our learning? How does it encourage our faculty? What does it mean to call this campus home? We hope these pages jog your own memories, and we hope these words and pictures move you as much as they have moved us. We hope that you, too, will come back, for you are a part of the many memories, and how many futures were born from these three hundred acres in the Blue Ridge Mountains.
Five Ways to Create a Sense of Place

Your assignment from science teacher Christine Jones

“This campus is a wonderful place to teach environmental science,” says Christine Jones. “For one thing, it allows students to visualize a large swath of our country’s history in one location. And it is very rare to find three hundred acres of land in an urban setting.” Even if you’re long out of school, you can still take a few notes from the teacher’s syllabus for connecting to nature wherever you may roam.

1. Take a Walk.
   The simplest way to feel like a part of nature: Let your feet take you there and then you can notice something new. Jones has students try to determine the age of trees. “A lot of students don’t realize that there are actually more trees on the East Coast than there were two hundred years ago,” Jones says. “Fields, woods, and water are all present on campus, which fosters biodiversity. There are some white oaks by the big chair, overlooking the old Lake Ashnoca, that I believe are at least two hundred years old. A big red oak recently fell on the entry road, adjacent to the cemetery. I counted its rings and got to 185, so it predates the construction of our campus.”
4. Observe and write.

“We take our field notebooks out and sketch trees, focusing not just on their leaves, flowers or seeds, but also on their architecture,” Jones says. “In other words, what does the tree’s shape look like? Is it a low-sweeping form reminiscent of Japanese art, like the dogwood, or is it tall and straight as an arrow, with few lower branches, like the tulip poplar?”

2. Watch the birds.

Even if you don’t know their names, it’s a joy to watch birds in flight. “We have a wonderful rush of spring migrants,” Jones says. “The magnolia warbler is always a treat to see. For the last few years, we have had a nest of red-shouldered hawks in an old white oak next to Anderson. It has been fun for my classes to watch the fledglings emerge from the nest and to hear the adult birds calling above. One reason we are a hot spot for migratory birds is because our campus represents an island of protected land in an ever-growing sea of development.”

3. Plant a tree.

If you’ve got room at home, consider establishing new roots, like many students at Asheville School have. “An example for how we have used the campus as a living laboratory is in the planting of American chestnut trees,” Jones says. “In 2015, Brad Stanback, the father of a former student, gave me five American chestnut tree saplings. These were back-crosses between the American chestnut tree and the Chinese chestnut tree. We make frequent checks on these tree species, which were planted by students in the class of 2016.”

5. Or watch a show.

“A little screen time is okay, too—over the course of the pandemic, Jones enjoyed watching a remake of the show All Creatures Great and Small. I remembered first watching that on PBS in the eighties,” she says. “It is a series based on James Herriott’s books about serving as a country vet in the North of England.” Another idea: set up a trail camera to observe the wildlife nightlife, as Jones has on campus. “We often get wonderful surprises on these cameras. For example, last year, we saw a barred owl land right in front of the camera. When we checked the time stamp, we discovered that this event occurred right around midnight on Halloween! It is fun for the students to discover that our woods are so alive.”
The humanities teacher and outdoors lover Christopher Arbor—yes, that’s his quite fitting last name—knows the trees and creeks on campus as well as just about anyone. With help from other faculty and student volunteers, he’s dedicated much of the last six years to organizing a forest management program that ensures future generations will be able to enjoy Asheville School’s grounds. Just one of the group’s initiatives: removing invasive vines and shrubs that threaten native trees. “Our campus is ever more a green oasis, a waystation for migratory birds, a heat sink for climate change, a refuge for wildlife, and a sanctuary for the soul,” he says. “We are increasingly fortunate to have this beautiful space as our backyard.” Here, Arbor shares a little more about his classes, his favorite spots on campus, and how to help people connect to nature. Hint: Move out of the way.

You live on campus with your family—what places on campus are meaningful to you?

I love every inch of this beautiful place—especially the two-hundred acres of woods. I’m particularly captivated by the relics out in our woods: a coal shed, the foundation of a dairy, a giant

Arbor for the Trees

Meet the teacher who so inspires a love of nature that he even got students excited about chopping wood
What lesson is your favorite to teach each year?
I'm teaching freshmen for the first time, and tackling *The Odyssey* with them has been quite rewarding. The broken man who goes on a harrowing journey and passes up on immortality for the sake of coming home to his artist wife? It resonates with me for some reason. [Perhaps because he's married to Asheville School Visual Art Instructor Casey Arbor.]

What are some of the questions your students have been wrestling with lately in the classroom?
Everything from "How do we shape stories and how do stories shape us?" to "Where do I put commas?" The real stumper for many of my students: "What do cows drink?" Think about it for a minute.

Thinking back on your first year of teaching, how have you changed?
My hair is grayer and my smile lines are deeper. I attribute both to my students.

What are you reading lately?
I've returned to *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier. It's my favorite novel, and it's even more meaningful to me now after reading *The Odyssey*.

What's the health status of the Asheville School's forest?
To be honest? It's bad but getting better. We currently have too many invasive plants wreaking havoc on our native species. To make matters worse, we still have an abundance of deer that don't eat the invasives; they only eat the natives, and they're over-grazing. It's a negative feedback loop. The good news is that we're making progress. At this point, we've treated about half of our forest. Once we get through the other half, we can move into a maintenance stage. Our biggest success was the planting of two-thousand trees in two years. Faculty, students, and neighbors have all had a hand in it.

Three favorite trees on campus?
This ironwood on the outer loop captures my attention every time I pass it, and that big beautiful willow down in the grasslands makes me smile, but my absolute favorite tree on our campus is a tiny oak that's only about three years old. A faculty crew went out on our spring break: Karen Cianciufi, the Plaehns, Molly Grotski, Scott Miller, James Pharr, and our beloved Larry Kollath. I don't know which of them planted that particular tree, but it's growing beautifully and will still be young when my daughters are old.

Where do you like to take a walk on campus?
Nature Trail Three, which runs down by Ragsdale Creek.

What are some of the ways your interest in the outdoors comes into the classroom?
We're currently facing a crisis cascade: A global pandemic, climate change, dehumanizing technology, and growing mental health issues—especially in our young people—to name just a few. A step in the right direction for all of those issues? Spend more time outside.

How do you get young people excited about nature?
I just get out of their way. Nature speaks for itself. A few weeks ago, I spearheaded a work detail of students. They arrived grumbling, and when I told them we were going to be splitting firewood, they were less than ecstatic. A half-hour later, they were working mighty hard, having the time of their lives, and joking that they should get in trouble more often. That's the thing about nature, right? It's natural. The woods are where we belong. It's where we feel the most alive, the most at peace, and the most at home.
I am new to Asheville School,” said Chaplain Nate Sell in one of his first morning services at Asheville School in August, “but it seems to me that…practicing resurrection is what we do. We all have stories of weathering storms in our lives, and then proclaiming afterward that life is indeed a miracle, and speaking yet again.” Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA), Sell graduated from Sewanee and Princeton Theological Seminary. He lives with his family on campus, and here, he explains a bit about his theology and shares an interesting history lesson on the Chapel itself.

Why is it important to have a house of worship on campus? Our mission statement is clear that we desire students at Asheville School to grow not only in mind and body, but in spirit, as well. The founders of the school and leaders throughout its history have recognized that part of developing whole, well-rounded students involves nurturing their spiritual lives. I believe that having a spiritual home—a place set apart for reflection and quiet—is essential to that mission.

Teenagers are primed to ask the big questions of life. Who am I? What is a life well-lived? Is there ultimate truth? What’s my calling? Does God exist? What do I owe others? A physical chapel building and time set apart to ask these questions elevates their importance. Interestingly, more and more research is coming out that supports the idea that having a spiritual life also betters our overall health and well-being.

Can you tell us a brief history of the Chapel? The chapel building was finished in 1928, but from the earliest founding of the school, chapel services existed, first taking place in Mitchell Hall. The founders of the school had always desired for a chapel to be built, but the funds were not available until a gift was given in memory of an Asheville School alumn William Spencer Boyd, after he tragically died during his sophomore year of college from tuberculosis.

The impressive wooden beams that hold the ceiling are made from Louisiana pine, and the granite that makes the chapel walls comes from a quarry near Salisbury, North Carolina. George Arthur, a teacher who taught manual labor at the school in the 1920s,
It is essential to me that students have their spiritual needs met regardless of their spiritual backgrounds and that they are respected in their individuality.
Put Me In, Coach!

How a dad-and-daughter duo rallied for one another on the volleyball court

The first time I touched a volleyball was when I was five, in our front yard with a Volley-Lite my dad bought me. Now, volleyball has been my biggest source of joy for almost nine years,” says Martha Plaehn (’22), whose father Tim Plaehn is both a Humanities teacher and head volleyball coach (coach Plaehn has also coached his daughter as part of the Biltmore Volleyball Academy’s U15 National Team). Here, the two reminisce on their memories at Carter Gymnasium, as well as the ways they’ve led one another to define success on their own terms.

What was it like having your dad as a coach or your daughter as a player?

M: Initially I was worried we wouldn’t get along or it would harm our father-daughter relationship, but that wasn’t the case at all. I actually end up calling him Coach instead of Dad at school or home sometimes. He inspires me to be the best I can be, on and off the court.

T: I mean, the only hiccup was in the last match of this season where I felt the second ref was going after my daughter and I lost my cool with him—definitely functioning as more of a father than a coach in that moment. Other than that, it’s been the most incredible privilege. I have been allowed to play a central role in a part of my child’s life that is so important to her, a part of her life where she’s been able to bring out her best self. It’s been an absolute joy, and I’m so excited I’ll be able to do it with Flannery, Martha’s little sister, when she begins Asheville School next fall.

What’s something you learned about each other during your volleyball years together?

T: She’s a lot tougher than I thought. She’s absolutely not afraid of hard work. And she values being a part of something bigger than herself probably more than anything else.

M: We’re not good losers. We both get very upset whenever we lose a match. I’m normally emotional or teary and he needs a distraction. After our loss against Providence, he went to mow the lawn.
Can you each share a memory from Carter Gymnasium?

T: My most vivid memory was when Martha dove for a ball and landed on her face, causing a bloody mess. That ain’t a favorite though. I guess I want to go with some of the diving plays, long rallies, smart dumps, big kills—and she’s really great at recognizing big plays from her teammates and celebrating them as her own. I’m smiling right now thinking about a hit that Jenkins [Cowan] had this year that caused Martha to slam the floor with both her hands in celebration. She literally hurt herself she was so excited with her outside hitter!

M: Senior night was a really special experience. It was a big win against the Trailblazers, and it was a meaningful way to commemorate four years of hard work, but also half a lifetime of playing. Coach said that he was “lucky I chose volleyball,” but really, I never had a choice, because I always wanted to grow up to be just like my dad, and volleyball was the way I could achieve that.

Who are your role models?

T: I’ve got my wife for her incredible work ethic, my oldest daughter for her enthusiasm, my oldest son for his humor, my youngest daughter for her creativity, and my youngest son for his positivity. Beyond those five, and I’m thinking specifically for coaching, I’ll name Karch Kiraly, the head coach of the women’s national team. He’s demanding, encouraging, and so confident in the abilities of the women on that team.

M: Coach would definitely want me to say Karch Kiraly, his favorite volleyball player. My dad made me number 15 when I was nine because of how much he loves Karch Kiraly, but if I’m being honest, I don’t know if I’ve ever seen Karch Kiraly play. My role model would probably have to be John Lewis; some of my favorite advice of his is “make good trouble.”

What’s one piece of advice you would give one another?

M: I think I would tell him to try to learn what each player needs individually. Some people need to be yelled at, but others need lots of encouragement.

T: It’s a long way to the top if you wanna rock n roll, so do the work and then trust and love.
Meet New Faculty & Staff

1 Jack Mathieson, Math (Quant 1 and Geometry Honors)
What is your favorite place on campus? Kehaya Lawn. Because of all the good times playing ultimate frisbee with the Mountaineering crew.

2 Taina Delly, European History
Where did you grow up? I was born and raised in Haiti and spent my formative years in Brooklyn.
What is your favorite place on campus? The porch of Anderson Hall has a great view of the mountains and when I really need a place to think and get away from it all, I often find myself there, sitting in a rocking chair and mentally reviewing my day.

3 Daniel Asad, Fourth Form Humanities (History & Religion)
Where did you grow up? Paraguay, Brazil, and Germany.
What is your favorite place on campus? The open areas next to the Chapel, looking toward the fields and mountains. They bring peace and a sense of tranquility, coupled with the context that I am so small, and that my problems are small as well.

4 Radar Jones Onguetou Essiene (Radar Onguetou), American History
What’s one part of your curriculum that you look forward to teaching all year?: The Civil Rights Movement

5 Daniel Mull, Precalculus Honors and AP Calculus AB
Where you went to school: Virginia Tech for undergrad, Ave Maria for grad school.
What’s one part of your curriculum that you look forward to teaching all year?: Early year: Power Rule. The greatest math moment of my life was learning the Power Rule. Late year: solids of revolution.
What is your favorite place on campus? The disc golf course. It’s a great place to have fun, get exercise, and get to know people.

6 Mohamud Isaq, Ancient Studies-History
Hometown: Saint Paul, Minnesota
Favorite lessons: I love teaching about Sparta and Athens and watching my students wrestle with the question, What does it mean to lead a good life? Something else: I’m loving being a dad and seeing my son doing something new every day. Yesterday he smiled, today he is making funny noises, tomorrow he will outrun me.

7 Matt Stark, Director of the Learning Center
Hometown: Boulder, CO and Katonah, NY
What is your favorite place on campus? The front porch of Mitchell. An amazing place to see the campus and talk with students & faculty alike.

8 Chris O’Steen, World Studies English
What’s one part of your curriculum that you look forward to teaching all year? Shakespeare! Chaucer! Dante! Do I have to choose just one?

9 Nate Sell, School Chaplain/European Studies-History Teacher
Where you went to school: Sewanee: The University of the South and Princeton Seminary
What’s one of your hobbies outside of the classroom? Tenkara Fly Fishing

10 Lauren Northup ’03, Director of Communications
Where did you go to school? UNC-Chapel Hill and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland
What is your favorite place on campus? Walking down the long hill to the lower soccer field on a beautiful fall day. It brings back wonderful memories of my time at Asheville School.
The Power of People in Creating Place

An Appreciation of John Gregory

By Jay Bonner

John Gregory, though continuing to teach various Humanities classes, retired this summer (2021) as Head of Asheville School’s distinguished (distinction driven by John’s leadership) Humanities Department—a retirement that allows John an opportunity to focus on his teaching and his students, while also giving him time to spend with his family (and aged parents living in Maine). John, as an aside, is core to John’s essence. He and his wife, Dr. Kate Gregory, have provided a home not only to their four children but also to countless students and colleagues over the years, gatherings, dinners, parties, movies, pies. Every Wednesday evening, John and Kate lead a Music House gathering for Alpha, a student group committed to spiritual development and study. Kate’s famous pies are frequently part of the draw for the students.)

John and his family arrived at Asheville School twenty years ago, in the summer of 2001. (He arrived for his interview in a Christ School colored suit. He rarely made that mistake again.) When considering candidates at the time, his resume stood out to me because of his Duke background, and he had earned a graduate degree from Vanderbilt, so he had connections, I reasoned, to the southeast. (Little did I realize before our meeting that John’s interest in Asheville School was driven by his love for the music of Asheville native David Wilcox. Glad we had an opening at Asheville School, but when John caught wind of my application, he wrote to me with such amazement, “He has hired every single one of us and supported and inspired us to teach our students to honor the written word. And, he has sat in on over 1000 Senior Demo orals!”

Our integrated program led Asheville School to apply for an E. E. Ford Foundation matching grant to found Project Connect, a summer institute for prospective teachers to Asheville School. John identified teachers through Project Connect—and as a consequence of his intellectual and social connections to the broader Asheville community. One such connection led to the hire this year of World Studies teacher Chris O’steen, whose family had known the Gregory family for years. Chris taught a couple of John’s children in middle school. As Chris relates, “John never rests on his laurels but always takes on a new project to enhance his teaching, he’s a ‘lifelong learner.’ Simply put, John’s intellectually curious, and he infects us with his enthusiastic curiosity.

My colleagues and I have learned a lot about teaching and student comprehension from John, and, even more importantly, we have been witness to and learned the lessons of graciousness and kindness. John models what is most important in teaching and schools (and rarely performed in a consistent manner): catching our students (and colleagues)—and drawing it to their attention to reinforce it. That gift has made the case to put the person at the heart of this special place. We are better because John’s very being demands we be better. We are as good as we are because of John’s very human goodness.

move to Asheville School and his incredible investment of time getting me ready for the year were such a gift.” And John is a gift-giver in every sense. He and I team taught European Studies in 2009-2010. I had been teaching over twenty years, and thought I knew a thing or two about student learning and about designing class experiences to aid the goals for that class. That year with John proved a period of intense, hands-on, professional development: a master demonstration of structuring class lessons for students to enhance their understandings. I drafted in John’s wake, work made easier, and students more engaged, because of the quality of John’s planning, so that, as Chris observes, “Every minute of class time is made valuable.” It was a year that vastly bettered my teaching for Asheville School’s students.

Every department meeting began with John “sharing the gold” about a teaching practice he had observed in a colleague’s class or a praise-worthy comment someone had written about a student. He would share a paper assignment or project a colleague had prepared for students—always always always, what we were doing well presented as a gift.

That’s the thing with John: he’s always working with his colleagues to aid their efforts to provide better experiences and understandings for our students, always bringing in experts and practitioners to enhance the work we do to develop our students’ writing and reading skills. The beauty is that John recognizes, and and and….), John led the initial overhaul of our Humanities curriculum back in 2003-2004 to create a sequential program (Ancient, World, European [we read Locke and Montesquieu before studying the Declaration and Constitution, examine Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” before studying the deism of America’s founders], and American Studies) of team taught, integrated classes that has earned our Humanities curriculum a distinctive place among boarding schools that has been recognized (and funded) by foundations and envied by multiple schools who frequently send teams to shadow our classes. We are the only boarding secondary school we know of in the country with this four-year, sequential, team taught Humanities program. Every Asheville School graduate since the Class of ’08 has experienced the reading of core works of literature and the studying of key historical events in the emergence of human culture and thought—a shared experience shaped by John’s efforts to shepherd our coherent Humanities curriculum into being.

Academic Dean Helen Plaehn, hired by John as the curriculum was shifting to our current model, praises John’s steady leadership of the department through the years, upholding the vision of the Pope grant, and supporting our interdisciplinary work.” She adds, “John has hired every single one of us and supported and inspired us to teach our students to honor the written word. He’s sharing articles that strike him as important to our creation of a special place for learning, and human development. As Helen Plaehn observes, “John never rests on his laurels but always takes on a summer project to enhance his teaching, he’s a ‘lifelong learner.’ Simply put, John’s intellectually curious, and he infects us with his enthusiastic curiosity.

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Required Reading

The new chairs of the Humanities department share their book recs for both current students and students-for-life

This year, the Humanities department welcomed seven new faculty members and named instructors B Cornog and McNair Johnson as co-chairs. Expect a few changes—"I think most of us agree that our students are being prepared as writers and thinkers, but we must continue exploring how we can continue to present authors, poets, and artists whose perspectives may not have had as much space in years past," Cornog says. And trust that the fundamentals of communication and making connections across disciplines will continue. "The emphasis on writing and the overlap of history and literature are trademarks that distinguish this department and are things you hear us talk a lot about," Johnson says. "Reading instruction, though, is something that has risen in importance in recent years, and our department has this front and center." Study up with these books—and two podcasts—that the new chairs enjoy, both in the classroom and at home.

Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley
"A perennial favorite. I appreciate it so much more now than I did when I was in high school, and the students always impress me with their predictions and interpretations."—B. Cornog

"I’ve been thinking a lot about Jesmyn Ward. We are honored to host her on campus this February for Civil Rights Day. She will be our guest speaker and spend time in a few classes. American Studies students have read her Sing, Unburied, Sing as a summer reading book the last three years, and our Ancient Studies students will read her Salvage the Bones for the first time this spring."—McNair Johnson
The Border Trilogy, by Cormac McCarthy
“When I teach American literature, I enjoy sharing anything by Cormac McCarthy, especially the Border Trilogy, and looking at how punctuation can be a choice, and what it is to communicate intimate details of landscape and human knowledge.”—B.C.

*Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare
“It is always a joy to watch students begin reading the play with trepidation but bravery about the language.”—B.C.

The Odyssey
“This text is central to Ancient Studies and demonstrates how motifs from antiquity still resonate with contemporary audiences. We read Emily Wilson’s translation, and students are really pulled into this journey with Odysseus. It is fun to watch them use this text as a lens for timeless themes found in their own lives.”—M.J.

“As far as podcasts go, I am a big fan of *Marlon and James Read Dead People*, and *In Our Time: Culture* with Melvyn Bragg. Both are about literature and ideas, so I am always getting inspiration for classes.”—B.C.

“I love reading Ross Gay’s work with Third Formers because he is a great storyteller and demonstrates that interesting writing can be about simple, everyday experiences—like walking down the street and finding a fig tree. Poetry is a great way to help students practice with analysis with something relatively short.”—M.J.

The Chronicles of Narnia, by C.S. Lewis
“My son, who is four and a half, had a good stretch this summer when he was interested in C.S. Lewis’ Narnia series, so it has been fun re-experiencing those as a parent.”—B.C.

Animal Dreams, by Barbara Kingsolver
“I have reread it a number of times, which is also quite nice because I first read it for a high school English class.”—B.C.

“One of my favorite poets is Billy Collins. I like introducing him to students who are unfamiliar or resistant to poetry because he can usually win them over! We are excited to have Collins—a former National Poet Laureate—on campus later this spring to kick off National Poetry Month.”—M.J.

Other beloved writers and works: Marilynne Robinson; Rita Dove; Naomi Shihab Nye; Tracy Smith; Ron Rash; *Deacon King Kong*, by James McBride; *The Vanishing Half*, by Brit Bennett; *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, by Haruki Murakami; *Underland*, by Robert Macfarlane.
We move through our daily world, and our body supports whatever field or passion we decide to pursue, so educating the body is critical," says Kathy Leiner, who started Asheville School’s dance program and is the Chair of Fine Arts. "What I love about dance as arts education is how we build skills that support daily life and how dance fosters the development of the mind, body, and spirit."

Under Leiner’s leadership, dance continues to be a part of the Winter and Spring performance calendar. The program has played host to artists for week-long residencies, including Nelson Reyes, a Cuban dancer, and Kelly Bartnik, a New York City artist from the original cast of Sleep No More. Dancers also participate in the winter musical and a spring season original dance production.

"Last year CATS captured my heart because of all the hoops we needed to jump through to make it happen," Leiner says. "Thanks to John Crawley’s vision and the talents of his choral students, we were able to safely produce a musical during COVID. Being an all-dancing musical, with fur, and wigs, and masks, and no real breaks between the dancing, the students did incredible work."

Leiner says one of her favorite dance spaces is a nearly forgotten corner of the school. "We are so fortunate to have such a fantastic theater space, but I especially love the little rehearsal space carved out of the upper loft of the tech shop backstage," she says. "For years it was a storage space, full and inefficiently used, but it has great light from the windows in the back of the building. I recruited our tech and maintenance crew a few years back to help clear it out so we could have a space with mirrors and a marley floor for dance practice. It’s a small space but it feels expansive with the light, the high rafters, and the beautiful old brick wall. Everyone who walks in loves how it feels—it’s an inspiring, quiet retreat to let the creativity flow."

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Dancers perform across stages large and small

Space to Move

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When teachers Tim and Helen Plaehn moved to Asheville School in 2006, they discovered a tucked-away meditative spot on campus—the Sulphur Springs Cemetery. Located atop a wooded knoll alongside the entrance to campus, this historic graveyard dates to the eighteenth century and includes a section dedicated to enslaved people. “There are so many stories captured among the graves,” Helen Plaehn says. Those stories inspired the Plaehns, to create a lesson plan that takes classes on a visit to the cemetery as students study the Civil War and while they are reading *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. It is one thing to discuss the Civil War, but quite another to visit a physical location where you can observe the lasting effects of divisive conflict. Today, Humanities instructors, including Maggie Ruch Frelinghuysen ’08, incorporate the graveyard visit into meaningful lessons.

“We have the students stand between an almost entirely white family cemetery and a slave cemetery—stand on a literal divide—and we ask them to contemplate what it meant for this nation to be on the brink of war,” Frelinghuysen says. “What it meant for brother to take arms against brother. What it meant to fight for the freedom of an entire population of people.” Study materials include original preserved documents. “We have the journals of a woman who owned the Sulphur Springs Hotel during the nineteenth century,” Plaehn says, “and these journals reference the people who lived and died on this land under slavery.”

Students reflect on the power of this visit once they return to the classroom in the form of a personal essay. One student, Bella Ostlund ’18, said the walk was a turning point in her own understanding of racial strife in the United States. “Stepping over stones and unmarked graves, I crept through the darkness surrounding me,” she wrote in her reflection piece. “For me, seeing the clear line between where the white people are buried versus the black, the unmarked graves, and just the sharp difference between the two races shocked me. This evidence exists in our backyards.”

The lesson gives students the chance to speak plainly together about history, change, and the current political climate. Ostlund ended her piece on a thoughtful note: “As Audre Lorde so eloquently puts it, ‘It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences. No one can go their life hiding behind this whitewash of society that has been painted on after the Civil War until the present day and still feel scared to discuss race. Going into high school, I began to understand this need to not feel uncomfortable around the topic but to recognize it, which brings acceptance and the absence of racism.’
Meet the Archivist
Diana Sanderson

Asheville School’s archivist is in many ways the official keeper of the school’s memories. “I’ve been in this profession long enough to see it move from a paper and physical item environment to a digital one,” says Diana Sanderson, who catalogs and maintains more than a century of Asheville School materials. “The largest collection is photographs—from 1900 to the present. Those photos range from prints and slides to digital files.”

Among the collections, some of her favorite items include twenty-six scrapbooks created by students from 1903 to 1925, and a trove of letters from James and Willie Lee Hollandsworth during World War II. “My favorite rare item is the original 1906 musical score of ‘The Courier,’ an operetta composed by Mary Close Robinson, the music teacher at the school from 1905-08,” she says. “The photos from the play are priceless.”

Students, faculty, staff, and alumni are welcome to see for themselves. “As long as I’m here in the archives, everyone is welcome to visit,” she says. “It’s good to contact me first with a description of what you’re interested in researching. That gives me time to find relevant materials so that you can maximize your research time. And you can drop in any time if that doesn’t matter. I can pull materials pretty quickly.”
Sixth Former Henry Ley ’22, a Manhattan native and avid adventurer, gave his senior talk earlier this year focused on what his time exploring the mountains has meant to him. Read more about his recent trail accomplishment below.

William Blake: “Great things are done when men and mountains meet; this is not done by jostling in the street.”

In late July of this past summer, Andrew Holland ’22 and I found ourselves standing on a grassy overlook in the middle of the Rocky Mountain high country getting soaked by the rain. We had been mountain biking and backcountry camping for fifteen days along the Colorado Trail, but this day was the most dramatic. After summiting the 13,000-foot highpoint and experiencing a hairy encounter with some nearby lightning, we had pushed our bikes up a muddy valley in pouring rain. Andrew and I had intended to pitch camp at the first flat spot we could find over the saddle. But it wasn’t until after we found that beautiful flat overlook that we realized we did not have all of our tent parts, and that we would have to wait for Andrew ‘Tashie’ Tashie ’22 and Simon Martin ’22 to catch up to us. For the next thirty minutes, all there was to do was look out on the distant mountains, the soaring cliffs, and the pristine alpine lake below—and just take the beating from the wind and the rain.

For most people, this would have been a low point, but somehow in that moment I was having the time of my life. Through the wet and the cold, this was the most memorable moment of the trip for me. And although I think Andrew would have strangled me if I had said it then, I was having fun.

Later that night when I was shivering in my damp sleeping bag, I began to question what was wrong with me. Why was I so drawn to the mountains that I could enjoy a moment like this? Now, I could tell you all some feel-good lies about how the mountains fill my spirit with hope or how they align my chakras. But the reality is that I am drawn to the mountains because they give me an opportunity to find unique experiences that few others are willing to find. I am motivated to complete harder climbs and to finish longer trails because I get to experience something special that fewer people are able or willing to experience.

Still, why do I subject myself to such extreme discomfort in order to find unique experiences? I thought perhaps the answer came from growing up in a big city, because I felt as though the only way to stand out or to find an identity of my own amongst all those people, amongst all those other kids, was to search the mountains for a place no one else was crazy enough to go. Or, perhaps instead, it was having a brother only one year older than me. Sharing a room, a school, and a routine taught me to crave being unique not only from him but from everyone. Or perhaps I was just raised in a family that not only supported but encouraged me to find my own path. After all, my parents are the ones who took my family on a hike to the bottom of the Grand Canyon for Christmas dinner, and they are the ones who have supported all of my adventures and passions, for which I will be forever grateful.

I believe that it is likely due to a combination of these reasons that mountains have had such a strong effect on my life. As for my decision to come to the Asheville School, I told my parents it was for the rigorous academics—and somehow they believed me. But looking back on it now, I know the mountains must have subconsciously persuaded me because truthfully, how could I have gone to a school in New York City when I could come here to a
school that was unheard of by my friends at home, to find a high school experience that is truly unique, especially from the New York City perspective, a school where every day I could walk to class under the shadow of Mount Pisgah. In the first quote, William Blake argues that great things can happen in the mountains that cannot in the streets, and throughout my experiences in both Asheville and New York, this has certainly held true.

Nevertheless, it wasn’t until I stood on that overlook in the rain with Andrew Holland that I realized that the mountains have given me much more than what I was looking for. They have given me not only unique experiences, but also a much stronger connection with the people I have been lucky enough to share them with. On that overlook, it felt as though Andrew and I had joined an exclusive club in which only the two of us were members.

Although that experience can be characterized by wind, by rain, and by insufferable cold, the only people who really understand what that moment felt like are me and Andrew. Only I can really understand what he felt, just as only I can really understand how strong Andrew,

The boys biked roughly 480 miles and climbed over 72,000 ft. The trail averaged an altitude of over 10,000 feet with the high point being 13,271 feet.

Henry Ley, Simon Martin, Andrew Holland, and Andrew Tashie on the Colorado Trail in the summer of 2021.
Conquering the Pisgah Challenge

In 1918, at the height of the Spanish Flu epidemic, an intrepid group of Asheville School students created the “Pisgah Challenge” as a way to challenge themselves during difficult times. When the Flu arrived on campus, classes were cancelled, and the boys were encouraged to disperse into the wilderness around Asheville to limit their exposure. A group of friends set off from campus “on a marathon of sorts” with the summit of Mount Pisgah as their goal. The boys summited the mountain and returned to campus in one day, as noted in a 1918 edition of the Ashnoca. No Asheville School student had attempted this extreme feat (that we could find in the archives!) since 1918—until seniors Henry Ley and Connor Smith achieved this extraordinary feat this year.

“I heard about the Pisgah Challenge when I was a kid,” Smith says. “My mom completed half of the challenge with a group of faculty members in 2009, led by our former Mountaineering Director, Ed Maggart. As a six-year-old, I watched my mom depart on her voyage toward Pisgah, which left a lasting impact on my impressionable brain. As time passed, I aspired to match her feat.”

In November, the two decided to take on the challenge together. Ley prepared himself with a nod to his predecessors. “I remember reading somewhere that in the 1910s, students would eat shredded wheat from the dining hall before attempting the challenge,” he says. “So, I made sure to enjoy a bowl of blueberry mini wheats cereal for breakfast.”

The duo set out from the yellow post at the ATS exit from Asheville School on Smokey Park Highway. “Despite how difficult it was, we were both very committed to finishing and breaking the record, and we fed off each other’s motivation from start to finish,” Ley says. They reached the summit in four hours and thirty-two minutes. “Once there, we tried to look for the Asheville School water tower, which was just behind Little Pisgah’s ridge and out of sight,” Smith says. “After that Henry pulled out a pack of Swedish Fish, which he affectionately calls Summit Fish. As we shared the pack, he explained that he always carries Summit Fish on mountaineering trips for when he reaches the top.”

Their downhill journey called. “We suffered a lot on the way down,” Ley says. “But I don’t think stopping ever crossed my mind.” They finished with an astonishing total time of eight hours, forty-two minutes, and twenty-two seconds across just over forty-two miles. “I hope that other students in the future will find the strength and motivation to take the record and continue the tradition,” Ley says. “It could take 103 years and another pandemic, but hopefully it doesn’t. As for myself, I am already in search of a new challenge to push my limits. If the next school I end up at doesn’t have a long-standing record to take, I might just have to start my own.”

Simon, and Tashie had to be to cross the Colorado Trail finish line. Only we, in this room, can really understand the unique experiences of Asheville School that we all share. When I’m on campus and I see Mount Pisgah and the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance, they remind me of how grateful I am for the time I have spent at this school, and they have caused me to realize that the reason I have loved this school as much as I have is because my experiences at Asheville School have so closely resembled my experiences in the mountains. Not because of its challenges, but because of how those challenges have brought our community together. Whether it has been studying for a test with a friend, taking down Christ School in baseball, or simply getting enough sleep, the challenges I have shared with you all have brought us together in the same way that the mountains of Colorado brought my friends and me together this summer.

So the next time you walk down to McNaughton field for a Friday night football game, I want you to look up at Mount Pisgah silhouetted against the sunset with its red blinking tower. I don’t want you to see a distant peak merely adding detail to the horizon. I want you to see it as a reminder, or maybe even as a symbol, of the challenges you have faced and will face through your adventure at Asheville School. But more importantly, the people with whom you have shared them.

Above: Henry Ley ’22 and Connor Smith ’22, both seniors, with Pisgah in the background. Left: A collection of archival materials documenting the 1915 Pisgah challenge from the Asheville School archives.
Guide to Western North Carolina

Favorite views

When the sun is setting and the overlooks of the Blue Ridge Mountains look like watercolors. Before I moved here, I was told this was a thing, but I didn’t fully get it until I was here. —Emily Knapp

From a rocking chair on the back porch of the Pisgah Inn on top of Mount Pisgah. —Ana Ogle

I love the view when you come down the big hill in Fairview on 74 A. From Black Balsam Knob—you can see the whole world! —McNair Johnson

Bearwallow Mountain. Great views in all directions, and, as my daughter says, “COWSIES!” —Daniel Mull

Out the Fall House living room window. —Faulkner Sgro

Anywhere on the Blue Ridge Parkway, John’s Rock, Looking Glass, and for non-hikers, the Montford Rooftop Bar or the Grove Park Inn. —Megan Grant
Dinner spots where we’d love to take an alum

Nine Mile. – Emily Knapp

Cúrate all day every day. If we can get reservations! – Ana Ogle

Rendezvous—which I like to call ‘Bouchon East’ because it is the same menu as Bouchon downtown, but you can actually park and get a table! – Karen Canclufi

Smoky Park Supper Club and sit by the river. – McNair Johnson

828 Pizza or Pizza Mind with a visit to Archetype Brewery. – Ilana Sanderson

Downtown spots get all the glory, but I love Fig and Corner Kitchen in the Village. – Faulkner Sgro

Adventurous bike rides

The grounds of the Biltmore. – Faulkner Sgro

The Turkey Pen Gap Trail. I love all the wooden bridges. – Joy Solimo

Hidden gems

The South Asheville Tupelo Honey. Same food and atmosphere as the one downtown, but way less crowded. – Ana Ogle

Whisk bakery for their amazing cinnamon rolls. You have to get there early in the day or they may run out. – Derry Babaoff

I had never seen a mayapple before moving to Asheville, and I had no idea something so Seussian would appear. – Ilana Sanderson

The food truck at Oskar Blues in Brevard. Best veggie burger with bacon ever. – John T Smith III

Dobra Tea has the best selection of tea, and they are pet friendly. – Ana Ogle

Hidden gems

Asheville Gem Mine is one of my son’s favorite places. You can sift through buckets to get gems, and the amount you get for the money compares favorably to the other gem mines we’ve tried. – Diana Sanderson

Rye Knot in North Asheville. It is tucked back behind an unassuming little strip mall on Merrimon Avenue. They make their own beer and spirits. The English Mild is my absolute fave. The chef is a genius and everything I have tried on the menu is outrageously delicious. All the art on the walls is done by local artists and is for sale and they have live music every Friday. – Christine Murphy

Worthy walks and hikes

Looking Glass or Roan Mountain. – Emily Knapp

Black Balsam Knob, because almost the entire hike has breathtaking views. – Derry Babaoff

From brewery to brewery on the South Slope downtown. – Ana Ogle

Pogah because it is close and short and you get a great view from the top. – Karen Canclufi

For a waterfall hike, I love the Rainbow Falls hike. For a view, my go-to is Black Balsam, though if I have more time my favorite is Roan Mountain. – Laura Lawrence

Around Beaver Lake. There is a bird sanctuary on one end of the lake that is full of the most beautiful sounds in the spring. As summer days get longer, the sounds change from chirping to song. As the fall air gets crisper, the sounds are fewer and farther between. Only a few brave souls remain… It’s wonderful. – Christine Murphy

East Ridge Loop in the Montreat Wilderness. The start is a fairly short steep slog up, but then you come out on the old railway bed that encircles half of the valley. – Ilana Sanderson

The Art Loeb Trail, and hiking it north to south is my favorite. It is full of the most beautiful sounds in the spring. As summer days get longer, the sounds change from chirping to song. As the fall air gets crisper, the sounds are fewer and farther between. Only a few brave souls remain… It’s wonderful. – Christine Murphy

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Thank you to our local experts:

Emily Knapp, Assistant Director of Athletics
McNair Johnson, Humanities, Department Co-Chair
Derry Babaoff, Senior Associate Director of Admission and Director of Financial Aid
Ana Ogle, Sixth Form Dean and Spanish Instructor
B Cornog, Humanities Co-Chair
John T Smith III, Director of Admission
Iker Sedeno, Spanish Instructor
Diana Sanderson, Archivist and Librarian
Megan Grant, Math Instructor
Daniel Mull, Math Instructor
Karen Canclufi, Fourth Form Dean and Science Instructor
Laura Lawrence, Science Instructor
Faulkner Sgro, Director of Special Events
Chris O’Steen, Humanities Instructor
Christine Murphy, Staff Accountant

Left: Buxton Hall BBQ in downtown Asheville hosts the best chicken sandwich in America, according to Bon Appétit.

Appetit Bon

According to
On August 28, 2021, at 8:13 a.m., I reached the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro with my lovely wife, Eva. What an exciting experience to celebrate my sixtieth year! The experience challenged us spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically. The physical challenge was there, however, at a lesser extent, as we began out training for Mt. Kilimanjaro in 2019. The biggest challenge was the Barranco Wall as I am not a fan of heights. The wall is about 800 feet of foot and handholds. It takes about an hour and a half to two hours to traverse. Again, this challenged my psyche and my trust in God. If anyone has the opportunity to do the climb, they should. Then, decompress with a four-day safari and a few days at Zanzibar. Peace to all.

Mr. John G. Crabtree 1982

John and his wife, Christine, had a baby boy, Tripp, in May 2020. They enjoy splitting time between Key Biscayne, Florida, and Highlands, North Carolina, with all their (five!) children.

Bruce Stewart 1983

Bruce writes, “We had a great family vacation to the Asheville area this summer, driving and hiking in the Great Smoky Mountains, staying in a log cabin at Lake Lure, and of course showing my boys Asheville School, which they had heard about yet never seen. The last time we visited was in 2008 for the 25th reunion of my AS class of ’83, when our son, Philip (now fourteen) was only six months old. Both of our boys, Philip and Christian (now twelve) along with my wife Ingrid, really liked the school and enjoyed touring the campus with Headmaster Sgro. It was a special visit with my family and especially for me to see two fellow Asheville alums from my school years, who are now in leadership positions:

1971

Mr. Laurance D. Pless 1971 and Ms. Dana H. Halberg

On the 41st anniversary of taking the oath to practice law, Larry Pless retired. He writes: “I retired from my Atlanta business transactions/M & A law practice as of July 21, 2021, the 41st anniversary of being sworn in as a lawyer in my home county of Newton, Georgia. In 2019, I stepped down from Asheville School’s Board of Trustees, having served as the Chair from 2014 to 2017. For the past three months, I have been in Osterville on the Cape with my wife, Dana, who retired as Chair of BNY Mellon in Atlanta in 2019 after a 39-year career in the investment management business.

Our two oldest children continue to live nearby in Atlanta after stints of living out west and in Brooklyn: Anna, a college counselor at The New School in Atlanta; and Brett, as a software engineer for Xander in Manhattan. He has two adorable daughters with whom we enjoy a lot of time.

We all look forward to Thanksgiving at the old family Kibbin on Mackey Creek down in the holler of the Greenlee section of Old Fort. And David’99 and I, and perhaps other family members, hope to make some part of the 41st annual Doc Lindsley and Pop memorial hike to the summit of Mt. Leconte in the Great Smoky Mountains during the last weekend in January.

Longer term, I look forward to a wide-ranging reading and running program, more hiking in the North Georgia and Western North Carolina mountains, exploring the Maine coast; fishing, swimming and boating at Lake Rabun; some involvement with a service program like Big Brothers; improving my backhand to the point where I can once and for all trump wily Woods Shoemaker ’71 on the court, maybe some writing, and most importantly, many more adventures with our grandchildren.

I continue to look back on my years at the school as vivid, indelible, challenging, and transformative; and to be deeply grateful to faculty members Pop Hollandsworth, Franklin Butler, Shy and Donna Lewis, Jack Tyrer, Ron Moffat, Barret Toan, Paul Bates, and so many others. Not to mention the lifelong friendships made.

1980

Stirling Young 1980

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Anthony Sgro ’84 as Headmaster, and Burt Gordon ’86 as Director of Alumni Relations. I was very impressed with the numerous building/classroom renovations and various capital projects which the school has undertaken since my last visit, and of course since my school days in the early 1980s.

Since graduating from AS and then Tulane’s School of Architecture, I worked in Los Angeles for seven years before returning to my hometown of Nassau, Bahamas, where I have had my own architectural practice since 1997. Ingrid and I have been married for fifteen years and enjoy our family travels to Toronto (where Ingrid is from) along with vacations to the USA and Europe.

1986

Mr. Dana C. McLendon III 1986

After twenty-four years as an Alderman in Franklin, Tennessee, Dana is retiring form public service. One Alderman said that Dana “has done a tremendous amount for [the] community, and he’s been a champion for children, for youth athletics.” Dana’s advice to those looking to become more engaged with their community is to watch a city meeting. He said, “If you want to be involved in your local community…turn on your local access cable, and read your local newspaper. You might be surprised what’s happening if you pay attention.”

1988

Mrs. Danis Cheek Smith 1988

Danis married Craig Smith on December 31, 2020.

Mrs. Molly Steinfield Cromer 1988

Molly started a new job as VP of Clinical Nutrition Programs at Continuum Rx (Specialty Infusion Services), and she lives in Birmingham, Alabama.

1991

Mr. J. Daniel Mottern 1991

The Motterns are entering a new chapter and making a move. Dan writes, “It is definitely bittersweet as Cindy Mottern and I have spent almost twenty years in Atlanta. We met here, have raised our amazing girls here and developed long lasting friendships here, but the coast has been calling us for quite some time. We are excited for new adventures, reconnecting with old friends and being closer to family in Charleston, South Carolina. There will be plenty of room so definitely come visit!”

1993

Ms. Miya R. Gray 1993

Miya joined Asheville School’s Board of Trustees in July 2021. She has another new title and new responsibilities, as she is now the Vice President of Customer Experience and Engagement at Pfizer. Current Asheville School students are fortunate to have Miya as a mentor through her work on the Black Alumni Council. In September, Miya came to campus to meet with many of the members of the Black Student Union.

Dr. Brooke Lawrence Hata 1991

An article titled, “Cardinal Kids Attend An Event Sponsored By A Kid Again” was published in the Observer News Enterprise on August 5, 2021. Dr. Brooke Hata, Cardinal Kids Vice President of Pediatric Physician Services, was featured in the article.

Brooke served as a general pediatrician for nearly eighteen years before joining forces with the team at Carolina Caring to develop a new pediatric palliative care and hospice program in her region. Cardinal Kids Palliative Care and Hospice was born out of an understanding of the need to provide more support to families and their children who have life-limiting diseases and complex medical care needs. Brooke currently serves as the Medical Director of the program and works with a team of nurse practitioners, nurses, a social worker, and a chaplain to care for children in twelve counties in North Carolina.

Cardinal Kids has partnered with several unique programs in the region that focus on providing support and resources to families with children with complex medical needs. A Kid Again is one such program that provides adventures for patients and their families to have a day of fun together.
Class Notes

2000

Ms. Mandy K. Helton 2000

Mandy Helton, her husband Kris, and big brother Ronan rang in 2021 by bringing home their newest family member, Malcolm Helton Johnson. Mandy earned a Master’s of Nonprofit Management from the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame. She led a state-wide women’s political organization before returning to independent schools as the Assistant Director of Advancement for Louisville Collegiate School. Mandy was grateful to share the complicated experience of navigating a pandemic pregnancy with several other Asheville School friends and delighted to discover Malcolm shares his December 29 birthday with former faculty member Tish Anderson!

2001

Mr. Moritz Schmitt 2001

Moritz founded a new law firm, Rothorn Legal. He represents German and international clients in complex cross-border disputes. He specializes in commercial arbitration and corporate litigation. Moritz has been consistently recognized in Who’s Who Legal as a Future Leader in Arbitration since 2019. Moritz is a co-chair of DIS40—the young professional’s organization of the German Arbitration Institute (Deutsche Institution für Schiedsgerichtsbarkeit, DIS) with more than 1,800 members. He previously acted as a regional representative of the Young International Arbitration Group (YIA), the young professional’s organization of the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA). Moritz co-teaches a course on international commercial arbitration as a visiting professor in the master’s program of the Université Catholique de Lille. And he frequently speaks and publishes on contemporary questions of international arbitration.

2002

Mrs. Courtney Sinsky Gaiman 2002

Courtney is the founder, owner, and “chief gift curator” of Bow and Bestow, a gift concierge company based in Marin County, California.

Ms. Julia G. Steinfield Bagnell 2002

Julia married Andy Bagnell on April 10, 2021, and they spent some time in Asheville in October. They are in the process of relocating back to Virginia, and Julia brought Andy by campus in October to show him where she went to high school.

Mr. Jeremy R. Andersson 2002


Mr. Christopher J. T. Boehner 2002

Chris and his wife, Angela, were on campus in May. “Hey friends! For those of you that don’t know, I’ve been studying gemology for the last few years and just graduated from the Gemological Institute of America (GIA). If you’ve ever bought a diamond before, there’s a good chance that a GIA grad was the one who graded it! Now I’m in the process of getting my private jeweler business up and running. In a nutshell, I’ll be traveling the world sourcing rare and unique gems and working with people to create one-of-a-kind jewelry. If you’d like to follow along to see some of the eye candy that comes across my desk everyday, you can follow me on Instagram @chrisjamesgems. Life is good! I’m still living in Nashville with my fantastic wife and dog. We love being back in the South. Hope each of you are doing great as well.”

Ms. Elizabeth D. Mayes 2002

Elisa and Matt welcomed their daughter, Annie Augusta Golden, into the world on June 22, 2021. They live in Burlington Vermont, but they still love to visit Asheville.

Mr. Graham P. Little 2002

Graham is now Vice President with Colliers Landlord Services Group in Atlanta.

Mrs. Lindsay Humleker Cromartie 2002

Lindsay and her husband, Mike, welcomed their third child, Ivy Antoinette Cromartie. She has two older sons, Mason and Liam. When you are in Hendersonville, North Carolina, take some time to visit her business creation, Gateaux Cakes and Patries. You will not be disappointed!
Erik Olsson 2002

Erik Olsson recently moved from Ashland, Oregon, back to Asheville along with his wife and two sons. Erik is a spine surgeon with a focus on disorders of the cervical spine and is practicing at Pardee/UNC Hospital in Hendersonville. Erik says, “We are happy to be back in the area closer to family and friends and look forward to reconnecting with the Asheville School community.”

2003

Mr. Noah R. Francis 2005

Noah has recently joined the board of directors at Center Theater Group which is “one of the nation’s most influential nonprofit theatre companies. Center Theatre Group is a place where artists, audiences, community members, and students and educators connect through the power of storytelling. The programs support artists at all points in their careers, engage audiences before and after the show, encourage our community to make theatre a part of their everyday lives, and inspire the next generation of theatregoers, artists, and artisans.”

Noah writes, “After being closed since March 2020, we are excited to reopen the iconic Ahmanson Theatre in downtown Los Angeles on December 1, 2021, with a performance of A Christmas Carol, winner of five Tony Awards and the most awarded play of the season. While the upcoming slate of shows includes highly anticipated favorites such as Dear Evan Hansen and Hadestown, I am particularly proud of the incredible upcoming plays featuring diverse cast members, themes and writers, including Slave Play by Jeremy Harris (the most Tony Award-nominated play in history), Blues for an Alabama Sky by Pearl Cleage and directed by Phylicia Rashad, and King James by Rajiv Joseph, which chronicles the friendship of two Clevelanders as they bond over the rise of the greatest player in Cavaliers’ history. I look forward to seeing my fellow AS alums at the theatre this season.”

Ms. Lauren J. Northup 2005

In June, Lauren returned to her alma mater as the Director of Communications. She and husband, Scott, and their two children moved home to Asheville, and she is thrilled to be back in the mountains of Western North Carolina!

2004

Ms. Janet M. Smith 2004

Janet and husband, Karim, welcomed their twins, Mackenzie and Nico, on May 18, 2021.

Ms. M. Carlisle Rankin Harper 2004

Carlisle had a baby girl. The little one, Sydney “Faye” Harper, arrived on September 1, 2021.

Ms. Shavontia K. Cochran 2004

In September, Shavontia was on campus as a member of the Black Alumni Council. The council has been meeting via Zoom for several months, and they used this weekend to kick-off their work with current students who are members of the Black Student Union.

2005

Mrs. Morgan Mischer W arth 2005

Morgan and her husband, Lucas, welcomed baby number two into their family on January 14, 2021. We are sure that Tate is going to be a wonderful big brother to his new sister, Weston!

Ms. Savannah S. Engel 2005

After years in the fashion industry in New York City, Savannah created her own company, Savannah Engel PR, and was recently highlighted in The Daily Front Row. The article shed light on what those who knew her at Asheville School already know—Savannah is “known for her warm and fun personality as much as her results-driven strategy.” The article went on to state that Savannah, “the Mississippi native is writing a new rule book for modern-day...”
fashion and lifestyle PR," Savannah said. "My best friend was starting a clothing line around the same time that I was thinking about starting my own company, and I asked if I would help her with PR. She's now a household name—Markarian. The day I launched Markarian was the day I launched my own company."
The inauguration gown of First Lady Dr. Jill Biden was a Markarian design, a client of Savannah Engel PR.

**Dr. Jane Beebe Jones Kehaya 2005**
Jane Beebe and husband, James Kehaya, welcomed their first child, a boy. James was born on January 27, 2021. They live in Wilmington, North Carolina, where Jane practices medicine.

**Mr. Shane Kim 2005**
In May, worlds collided! Shane had just landed at the Asheville airport when he ran into Burt Gordon '86 who was flying out of town. Shane returned to the Blue Ridge Mountains before graduating from the Sloan School of Management at MIT. Shane writes, "I am doing well! After graduating from Sloan, I came back to Korea in June, got married in July, and recently started to work on my own startup."

**Mr. Daryl A. Brown, Jr. 2005**
Daryl Brown and his wife, Jasmin, welcomed their second child, Serena Jade Brown, on April 26. Fun fact: Daryl and Serena have the same birthday! Jasmin, Daryl, and their two children live in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

**Sarah Gehring 2005**
Sarah Gehring got engaged, but she says that she "will always have a spot in her heart for high school sweetheart and celeb Patrick!" Sarah met Matt in New York City, and they moved out to Connecticut during the pandemic. They had only been on four dates before the pandemic hit. Then they spent 320 days together during the pandemic, seeing barely anyone else. Sarah says that "if you can hang out with only one person day-in and day-out for that long—well, that might just be your person!" Sarah and Matt are getting married in the Summer of 2022. Sarah adds, "Ladies, let this be a lesson—never give up—you never know when prince charming will walk in the door!"

**Ms. Natsayi Z. Mawere 2005**
Nats is an associate at Reed Smith LLP.

**Mr. Erik Cunningham 2005**
Erik works for ALDI, UK, as the Buying Director.

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### 2006

**Ms. Margaret P. Harris 2006**
In February, Meg and her husband, Michael Rozier, welcomed their first child, Walker Aaron Tinder Rozier.

**Mr. Robert L. Weir, Jr. 2006**
Bobby and wife, Elizabeth, had a baby boy on May 21, 2021. The baby’s name is Robert Lee Weir III.

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### 2007

**Mr. Paul E. Szurek, Jr. 2007**
Paul married Larisa Hodzic on Saturday night, June 19, 2021, in Asheville at the Biltmore Estate. Attending the wedding festivities were Ben Szurek ’15, Walker Szurek ’11, Deion Walker ’08, Emmanuel Chimere ’08, and Zeke Jordan ’06. To get his due credit, Zeke Jordan ’06 wants everyone to know that it was he who introduced Paul and Larisa in NYC!

**Mr. Matthew C. Hutcherson 2007**
Matt and his wife, Leah, have a baby girl, Savannah. Matt writes, "Besides our daughter, who got all her good looks from me (!), my company (Terminix) recently won the Innovate IT 2021 Award for Memphis for cutting edge work in conjunction with Amazon Web Services to revamp cloud networking and security architecture. I continue to teach STEM activities (web design, mobile apps, game development, drones) to students of all ages as part of a local nonprofit CodeCrew. I am finishing my Masters in Information Systems in December of next year. Back in February, I joined the Tennessee Air National Guard as a Cyber Warfare/Ops Officer. I actually leave for OTS next week and will commission in December."

**Mr. G. Alexander Bumgardner 2007**
Alex “George” married Amy Sachiko on July 11, 2021.

**Mr. Tae Joong Yoon 2007**
Tae is still living in California, and he has a new job as an investor at Atos Ventures.
2008

Dr. Erik Davies 2008

Erik writes, “I graduated from UNC School of Medicine in December 2020. With some time on my hands before residency, I got to fulfill my lifelong dream of teaching at Asheville School. I taught calculus and statistics to some of the strongest students I’ve ever met. A few of my scholars are pictured here! Fortunately, I matched into radiation oncology residency at The Cleveland Clinic and am masquerading as a general doctor in Charlotte until starting in July 2022. Radiation oncology is a small physics-based field where you get to zap cancer with ionizing radiation. Shoutout to Ms. Gianculli for her unparalleled mastery of physics (and Scrabble)!”

Ms. Maggie Frelinghuysen 2008

Maggie and Russell Frelinghuysen welcomed their first child, a baby boy. McCoy Elliott Frelinghuysen was born on Saturday, January 16, 2021. McCoy is named after his maternal great grandmothers: Alice McCoy Knotts and Faith Elliott Evans.

Mr. Robby Archer 2008

Robby recently graduated from the College of Engineering and Technology at Western Carolina University with a Masters of Science in Technology. Since then, he has been promoted to a middle management position working with a federal contractor. He and wife, Emma, welcomed their first child, James, on April 19, 2021. The proud new dad says that James is a happy baby boy who loves rocketships, bath time, and going outside with the dogs. As if that was not enough to make 2020 a busy year, they bought a house amidst the rugged mountains of Western North Carolina. They look forward to all the joys and challenges that this chapter of their lives is currently throwing at them. Life has not been without its challenges and sadness and Robby reports the passing of his grandmother, Barbara Guess. She was a supporter of the School’s mission and she is greatly missed. Robby adds that he “looks forward to being back on campus in the coming years as the leaves change colors and the brisk autumn nights settle in. I hope to see more of you, my fellow alumni, in the near future.”

Mr. Isaac Barron 2008

He and fiancé, Rebecca McKee ‘10, have closed on a house in Gainesville, Florida. Rebecca is in a PhD program at the University of Florida, and Isaac now works for Lockheed Martin in Orlando. They are getting married over Labor Day Weekend in September 2022.

2009

Mr. Matt Patton 2008

Matt and his wife, Elizabeth, welcomed their second child, a boy, Ryan Virgil Patton, on April 26.

Ms. V. Breece Bryan Dorschel 2008

Breece married Ben Dorschel. They welcome their second child, Arlo, on July 31.

Mr. Trent Einstein 2009

After a stint in the US Army, Trent is now living in Nashville, Tennessee, where he works for Ecolab as an Area Sales Manager. He was in Asheville recently to show his girlfriend the town and his high school campus, and they even enjoyed a football game under the lights at McNaughton Stadium—a Blues win!

Mr. George Boston 2009

George was a presenter (via Zoom) at this past year’s Civil Rights Day. He was a police officer in Greensboro, but he is now a Secret Service Agent.

Mr. Zachary N. DeBernardi 2009

For the second year in a row, Zach was selected as one of the best brokers in Dallas-Fort Worth by fellow area real estate agents in @d_magazine. His brokerage has grown to over 45 agents with more than $400 million in sales. Zach recently completed a back country hiking trip in Denali, Alaska, along with fellow alumus Dennis Kuzmich 2010.

Mr. Jake Kane 2009

Jake and his wife, Gabby, have settled into their home in Houston, Texas, and are looking forward to the winter temperatures. Jake has built on his Large EPC project management experience and accepted a new internal consulting role with his company, Wood. Gabby, a dietitian, left her position at a prominent children’s hospital to open her own private nutrition counseling practice where she helps individuals and athletes get the most out of their lives. They both enjoy playing competitive golf and traveling, and just returned from an amazing trip to Greece. If you find yourself in the Houston area, please reach out as they enjoy connecting and reconnecting with Asheville grads.
**Class Notes**

**David Pless 2009**

David has ended his Olympic quest in shot put and is a blossoming bicyclist. He and Chirsoy (married in Old Salem, Massachusetts, two years ago), sold their company, Digitus Solutions (digital promotions for regulated categories), to Inmar Intelligence in Winston-Salem. They continue to work hard for Inmar. They are devoted to their dog, Wallace, a charismatric Bernedoodle.

**Ms. Allison T. Blackwelder Wengert 2010**

Alli married Ben Wengert on Saturday, May 8, 2021, in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

**Mr. George Connors 2010**

Since graduating from Centre College, George has lived in Louisville, Kentucky, and he now works for Burns Insurance Company.

**Mr. Jeffrey S. Warren 2010**

Jeff married Kristin Corey on October 2, 2021. They have moved to Chapel Hill, and he started a new job as an attorney with Ellis and Winters LLP.

**Ms. Hallie Boyd 2010**

Hallie married Ryan Dillon on September 26, in Asheville.

**2010**

**2011**

**Mr. Charles W. Chesson 2011**

Charlie and his wife, Melinda, welcomed their first child, Addie, on December 9.

**Mr. Spencer M. Ayscue 2011**

Spencer married Megan Petrus on December 12, 2020, in Montreat, North Carolina. In attendance were classmates Will Patton ’11, Thomas Carr ’11, Bryan Becker ’11, and Chase Garrish ’11. Spencer’s music career is flourishing with his band, Migrant Birds.

**Ms. Carly M. Gillespie 2011**

Carly moved to a new law firm, the Hardin Law Firm.

**Mr. Min Ki Kim 2011**

Min Ki has moved to California. He and his wife arrived there but await their furniture. He took a job as Associate with Sixth Street Partners in San Francisco.

**Mr. Parker White 2011**

Parker and his wife, Emily, welcomed their first, Ronin Oliver White, on April 23, 2021.

Parker writes, “I went to Wingate University from 2011 to 2013 and figured out that college just was not for me. I wanted to join the Navy and expand my horizons and get some real-world experience under my belt. I walked into a Recruiter office, enjoyed boot camp at Great Lakes, Ill, in 2015, and since then, I have been working in the nuclear field in the Navy. I went through the arduous task of completing Nuclear Field A-school, Power School, and Prototype as an MMN (Machinist Mate, Nuclear, or simply a mechanic) then to the fleet in late 2016. Just six months prior to completion of Prototype, my wife, Emily, and I were married on July 23, 2016. From 2017-2021, I served on the nuclear-powered fast attack submarine, USS Montpelier SSN 765. Since February of this year, I have been stationed at NPTU Charleston as an instructor. Our son, Ronin, has been nothing but a joy in our lives. He is on the verge of crawling and now recognizes his name! He loves to smile and laugh, and he gets very excited to see me when I get home from work. His lower front teeth are starting to come in and he has just recently begun to sleep through the night.”

**Ms. Sami-Jo Wood-Greer Deddo 2011**

Sami-Jo and her husband, Michael, welcomed their first baby, Eleanor “Elle” Kathryn Deddo, on July 12.
Mr. Champ Somboonpanyakul 2011

Taweewat “Champ” graduated with a PhD in Astrophysics from M.I.T. after six years in the program. His thesis was on discovering new galaxy clusters hiding in plain sight. In September, he moved to California and began a postdoctoral research position at Stanford University as a Kavli Fellow. This is a fellowship program for young scientists to work on their own research interests in astrophysics and cosmology. He hopes to work in California for the next two to three years before moving back to Thailand.

Ms. Terria L. Boston 2011

Terria has a new job; she is now a Fifth Grade ELA teacher at Explore Schools.

Ms. Grace M. Raynor 2011

In August, Grace was awarded the Edward Aschoff Rising Star Award by the Football Writers Association of America. She is the second recipient of this award which was established in honor and memory of ESPN reporter Ed Aschoff, who died in January 2020 of Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. Grace is in her third year covering the Clemson Tigers for The Athletic.

Hyechang Rhim 2011

Well on his way to finishing a medical degree in Massachusetts, Hyechang took a quick break from his residency program to run in the Boston Marathon on October 11, 2021.

2012

Mrs. Claire Coward Wilkins 2012

Claire writes, “My husband Eric and I (married June 2018) welcomed our son David “Davey” Knox Wilkins on August 19. We are now living in Anderson, South Carolina, where Eric works as an engineer.”

Ms. Whitney A. Foster 2012

Whitney has begun working for Luxe Property Group in Cayman. Specializing in property management and real estate, Luxe Property Group is a real estate and property management firm in the Cayman Islands. Additionally, she’s begun managing marketing initiatives for several companies and non-profit organizations. You can find Whitney managing Lacovia property during the week, volunteering on the weekends, and laying on the beach in between. Born and raised in Cayman, Whitney has returned home from the U.S. where she worked in fashion, hospitality, design, and sales.

Mr. C. Taylor Smith 2012

Taylor writes that he is “excited to announce that Francesca Frere and I are headed to Baltimore, where I’ll be doing a preliminary year of general surgery at Medstar Baltimore.”

Mr. Jeremy DeJournett 2012

Jeremy and his father, a doctor in Asheville, have collaborated their research in order to create an artificial pancreas. They received FDA approval to start patient trials. This has been a fourteen-year process and has been patented in the U.S. and Europe for six years. It has been a breakthrough medical device that has had a significant impact in preventing Covid deaths in ICU patients.

Mr. Christophe Agricola 2012

Christophe married Lexi Rossow on May 1, 2021 in Oviedo, Florida. They are now happy home owners and live on Amelia Island.

Mr. Patrick J. Eckerd 2012

PJ recently graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

Ms. Twenewaa A. Adu-Oppong 2012

Twenewaa graduated in May after she earned a Masters degree from Harvard University.

Mr. Dessa Raymond 2012

Dessa is the co-founder of Mini City, Inc. The organization was selected as a finalist for Cisco’s Global Problem Solver Challenge with up to $1 million in funding. Mini City works to create “smart tech solutions for the homeless and the homeless care providers.” Mini City’s mission: “We seek to eradicate homelessness, not just in Metro Atlanta but across our nation.”

Ms. Tobi L. Shannon 2012

Tobi has had a transformative 2021. She graduated from Presidio Graduate School (Oakland, California) in May 2021 with an MBA and MPA in Sustainability. While spending her free time at the beach in her new home of Los Angeles, she has also been working with the Dreams Foundation at American Family Insurance as a Community Social Impact Specialist. Tobi is also heavily involved
Ms. Laura D. Gibbs 2012

Laura married Garrett Hennig in Beaufort, North Carolina, on Sept 18, 2021. Last year, they bought an old stone house (c. 1878) in Warrenton, Virginia, where they live with their cat, Moka. Laura works as a lead engineer for Aurora Flight Sciences. Her current project is designing a more efficient engine for commercial aircrafts.

Ms. Elizabeth McKee 2012

Liz married Max Lemaigre on Spring Island, South Carolina. They currently live in Savannah, Georgia.

2013

Mr. Robert Cook 2013

Rob Cook married Memory on May 19, 2021. They celebrated their wedding with family and friends in Colorado, Memory’s home state. Rob and Memory decided to start their life together in the Aloha State, and he is currently stationed in Hawaii. While in Hawaii, Army Captain Rob Cook will have the privilege of serving as the Company Commander for the only Engineer Dive Detachment in the Pacific Theater.

Mr. Matthew C. Gilliland 2013

Matthew has been working at North Cross School in Roanoke, Virginia, and in July, he was promoted to Director of Admission and Financial Aid.

Deane Pless 2015

Deane is in her fifth year of living in the Big Apple, which she loves. After teaching third grade math in Brownsville, New York, and working for a Danish internet-based marketing company, she is now in her second year in the NYU MSW program. And, thanks to her 4.0 GPA, she was recently inducted into the national MSW academic honor society. Most importantly, she has found her true calling.

Mr. John Volquez 2015

As a member of the Black Alumni Council, John joined the initial workshop with current students via Zoom. Also Zooming in was Daryl Brown ’05. Three members were on campus in person: Miya Gray ’99, Shavontia Cochran ’04, and Raven Walters ’08. They held a workshop with current students in the Black Student Union. John recently moved to Columbus, Ohio, to join Drive Capital (a VC fund) as an investment partner. He continues to write, and he has finished his first script and is still working through his book.

2014

Ms. Katherine Koon 2014

Katherine was living in New York City up until March 2020 when Covid hit. She then moved back to Asheville to wait out the pandemic, and three weeks quickly turned into a year and a half. After quite a career change, she is now in her first year at George Mason’s Antonin Scalia Law School. While in Asheville, she and her mom were at Soma Pharmacy on Fairview Road when they saw three AS vehicles with students who were there to get the Covid vaccine. It was a fun and unexpected opportunity to catch up with former teachers and faculty!

Mr. Dylan Bilski 2014

Dylan was in Asheville on May 28 and again on June 3. He was hiking a portion of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail with a classmate from Bates College. At the time of this adventure, Dylan was living in Brooklyn, but due to Covid, he wanted some time out of the city. Dylan is now pursuing a Masters in Finance at the Imperial College Business School in London, after which, he hopes to work in either investment banking or consulting.

2015

Ms. Hannah Rutty 2015

Hannah started a new job as a Project Engineer at Pacheco Koch Consulting Engineers, Inc.

Ms. Emma Caves 2015

Emma writes: “I am proud to finally announce that I have
accepted a position as the Security Coordinator for Major League Soccer’s new team, Austin FC in Austin, Texas. I am so thrilled about this opportunity and could not be more excited to get this season started!”

Mr. Ben Szurek 2015

Ben writes, “After attending Asheville School, I graduated from Columbia University in 2019 with a bachelor’s degree in English Literature and Mathematics. Upon graduating, I joined Teach for America to teach high school math in Creedmoor, North Carolina. Now, I work as a legal assistant at a civil rights law firm in Austin (Edwards Law Group) while I prepare to apply to law school. I would never have been able to succeed at Columbia without the preparation Asheville School gave me. Every Humanities class at Asheville school drilled in me the need to read closely and build arguments based on specific evidence from a given text. Those skills carried me through my English major courses. I still use them every day, as I prepare legal documents and correspondence for the lawyers I assist. Similarly, the math and science courses I took at Asheville School gave me a huge leg up in my first year of college. My AP Calculus credit allowed me to jump directly to multivariable calculus (Calculus III). More importantly, the skills I developed in Ms. Cianciulli’s AP Physics classes made multivariable calculus one of the easiest classes I took in college, by far.”

Mr. Erik Ligai 2015

Erik is studying computer science (Masters Degree program) at the University of Alberta in Canada. Starting in May of 2021, he has been in a software engineering internship with Amazon Web services in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Mr. Eli Abernethy 2015

Eli is in his first year of medical school at Duke University.

Ms. Audrey Davis 2015

On Saturday, September 18, Audrey married Hank Estep in Boyd Memorial Chapel on Asheville School’s campus. Following the ceremony, the reception was held at the Biltmore Country Club. Audrey’s bridesmaids included Toddy Collett 2015 and Hannah Frisch 2015. Avery Kelly 2015, too, attended this life event of her classmate.
Mr. Conor Fenn 2016

Conor was on campus in October. He graduated from Davidson College and is now working for a transportation company in Alpharetta, Georgia.

2017

Mr. Gannon Rutty 2017

Gannon graduated from Elon University, and for two terms was listed on the Dean’s List.

Ms. Eleanor Clifton 2017

Eleanor writes that she is now an Account Executive at SMOAK Public Relations.

Ms. Elise Huff 2017

Elise writes, “My transition from Asheville School to SMU was incredibly easy as Asheville School prepared me for the academics and discipline of managing my schoolwork. I will always be extremely grateful for how dedicated the faculty were at AS and forming relationships with my professors at SMU was something I prioritized because of this.

During my 3.5 years at SMU, I interned for Dallas Art Fair as well as Site 131, a contemporary art gallery. It was beneficial to gain both art fair and gallery experience, and I was able to connect with the individuals who work in the Dallas art industry while still being a student at SMU. While I was interning, I also wrote contemporary art articles for the SMU student-run newspaper called SMU Daily Campus and was invited to write the feature artist essay for an exhibition opening at the gallery.

Through SMU, I also was awarded a research fellowship, the Engaged Learning Fellowship, where I independently conducted research for one year on non-verbal (visual and plastic) and verbal (language) modes of communication on cultural integration of first and second generation Mexicans and Germans in the U.S., with a focus on Dallas. I also became a Curatorial Minds Lab Fellow. During my time at SMU, I spent two summers studying abroad at Oxford University (University College) through the international studies honors program, and then I spent six months in London studying as a history affiliate at UCL. I loved my time in England so much that I am going to be moving back to London in September. I will be earning my master’s of art history from The Courtauld Institute of Art (2021-2022).

This past summer, I was an intern in the 20th Century and Contemporary Art Department at Phillips Auction House in NYC. It has been such an interesting and rewarding experience to undergo before my MA begins.

My goals after earning my MA are to pursue a career in private sales or to work at an auction house most likely, as I enjoy working in a field where business and contemporary art overlap. I also find art law to be extremely fascinating, and I recently completed a twelve-week course from Harvard’s Online Learning Initiative called CopyrightX, which has been very helpful with my research. I also do love supporting emerging artists, so I hope I will be able to work with them in any capacity possible in a future job.”

Ms. Kechelle Robinson 2017

Kechelle writes, “I have done some traveling since my time at Asheville. I’ve been to Australia and Egypt during my time in college. I graduated Magna Cum Laude from Barry University in Miami, Florida, and am now working as a Child Protection Specialist for The Department of Children and Families in Salina, Kansas. We do preventative and protective services for kids who are suspected of being abused or neglected. Other than that, I’m either at a coffee shop or at home reading, and I just reached my reading goal of fifty books for the year the other day!”

Ms. Ally Barbier 2017

Ally has been promoted to Project Analyst-EDA Advanced Nuclear Technologies Grant at E4 Carolinas.

Mr. Will Arcara 2017

Will moved to New York City this summer for a full-time job with Citibank. He had an internship with the same firm last summer. While at Asheville School, in addition to soccer, Will was a huge paddler, and he credits that to his success at Emory and to getting a job.

Ms. Christina Pyfrom 2017

Christina and boyfriend, Elijah, welcomed their first child, Austin, on August 12, 2021.
2018

Miss Peyton Campbell 2018
Peyton graduated from Florida State University, and she is now at Duke University for a Masters in Coastal Environmental Management.

Miss Mary Mac Johnson 2018
Mary Mac writes: "I am working remotely for a not-for-profit called The Great Reset which is based out of Nashville, Tennessee. Its mission is to bring people together through conversation, so they host monthly conversations on polarizing topics. I work mostly with social media and community outreach. Additionally, I am happy to share that I will be working full-time with Teach For America as a Corps Member in the Chicago area upon graduation from Denison University. I am excited to do meaningful work with Teach For America and to help create equal opportunities in education for all students. My Denison experience has been great! Specifically, I am majoring in religion with a concentration in ethics/social responsibility, and it has been one of the most impactful parts of my education. I have learned so much about systemic problems, hate, and so much more. My studies and the professors with whom I have worked have greatly impacted my decisions to apply and accept a job with Teach for America. Although I am so sad about graduating, I am looking forward to moving to Chicago. Chicago is the second most popular place for Denison grads to move, so I know I will be in good company."

Miss Raven Walters 2018
Raven is a student at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, and she returned to campus in September as a member of the Black Alumni Council to work with our students in the Black Student Union.

2019

Mr. Jake Drum 2019
Jake attends the University of North Carolina–Greensboro, and he has been very involved in student government and Greek life since his arrival there in the fall of 2019. He was recently elected Chapter President of Pi Kappa Phi fraternity.

Ms. Rachel Kuehn 2019
Three-time state champion golfer Rachel Kuehn was named 2020 Women’s Player of the Year by The Carolinas Golf Association.

Mr. Justin Merriwether 2019
Justin attends the University of Tennessee–Knoxville, and he has been elected to Secretary in the National Society of Black Engineers–UTK chapter.

Miss Alex Park 2019
Upon graduating from Asheville School, Alex moved to Atlanta to attend Georgia Tech. After one year, she transferred to the University of Pennsylvania where she is double majoring in Computer Science and Women’s Studies.
THE POWER of GENEROSITY

At the Threshold Campaign - Final Report

2020-2021 Annual Report
Letter from Leigh Ruhl, Associate Head of School for Advancement

This morning, I was reminded of the power of generosity by a student giving his Senior Chapel Talk in front of the entire school community in Graham Theater. He shared his experiences as a cashier at his local Food Lion and how he learned the importance of small acts of kindness. He noted how lonely it felt when a customer wouldn’t look him in the eye or respond to a question. He asked his peers to recognize the value of every person on our campus. He encouraged his classmates to greet and thank the dining hall, maintenance, and cleaning staff.

Creating a sense of belonging is precisely what makes Asheville School special. Visitors to campus universally note that they feel welcomed. New students arriving from around the world find friends eager to meet them and faculty prepared to support them. Alumni fondly recall the strong connections they made during their time at Asheville School.

In my role, I have witnessed the power of generosity time and time again as I meet with donors who choose to invest in our students, faculty, and beautiful buildings and grounds. These individuals believe in the benefit of an Asheville School education and deeply care about sustaining the caring community that defines the institution.

I hope that you will join me in thanking Marshall Bassett ’72, Campaign Chair, for his steadfast leadership in securing over $22 million for student scholarships, faculty support, arts and technology, and a new athletic stadium! As a Former Trustee, Marshall has been incredibly generous with his time, talent, and financial resources. He is gracious, kind, incredibly bright, and thoughtful. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with Marshall for the benefit of Asheville School’s young scholars.

Do you believe in the power of generosity? I most certainly do.

Go Blues!

Leigh W. Ruhl

At the Threshold Campaign
2016-2021

Thanks to you, our At the Threshold Campaign contributed $22,477,373 to fund the people, programs, and places that make the educational experience at Asheville School top notch.

Our campaign generated a number of historically significant gifts. William P. Hypes, 42, made the largest bequest in the school’s history to fund need-based scholarships for students and professional development opportunities for faculty.

We know that with this $2.8 million gift, we can continue to attract dedicated students and committed faculty to our premier boarding school in the South.

Flint McNaughton, ’82, made the largest capital gift commitment in Asheville School’s history with his campaign gift of $1.5 million designated to Athletics. Our beloved McNaughton Stadium represents a valuable campus improvement that will benefit the entire school community. Students, parents, faculty, and alumni gather here to share their Blues pride. Our scholar-athletes can train more often and perform more safely on the all-weather turf field and track.

Alumni added more than $12 million to the endowment fund during the campaign, resulting in a record-high balance of $72 million. These long-term funds ensure the sustainability of Asheville School so that future generations will have the opportunity to benefit from an academic tradition steeped in the core values of perseverance, integrity, respect, and compassion.

When I accepted this role, I certainly could not have foreseen the impact of a global pandemic. While school administrators were focused on rapidly shifting to remote learning, we realized visits to prospective donors would be put on hold as well. The school implemented a safe return to in-person classes, and we all learned new ways to stay connected. While we remain committed to enhancing the Arts program, we made a strategic decision to prioritize physical enhancements to the Arts Center as part of a larger campus improvement plan in the coming years. Despite these significant shifts, our school community chose to prioritize the value of an Asheville School education. And for that, I am immensely grateful.

Marshall Bassett ’72
Campaign Chair
At a surprise gathering in March, the colleagues of John Berteau, ’60, surprised him even further when they announced a generous gift in his name to his beloved alma mater, Asheville School. “It was emotional,” he remembers. “I just stood there, so awestruck and grateful.”

In honor of Mr. Berteau’s two-plus decades of leadership, The Patterson Foundation established the John T. Berteau Opportunity Endowment Fund. This one-time, endowed $1.5 million gift to Asheville School provides a four-year scholarship for students with exceptional academic potential who would otherwise be unable to attend due to demonstrated financial need.

The support John Berteau received as a young man was influential in paving the way for his decades of service to his community. “Asheville School gave me an amazing education that I think of as sort of a snowball thing,” he says. “It starts small, but you gain an education that accumulates, and as that started rolling, I was fortunate enough to have Duke recruit me, and then was accepted at Duke Law. One thing leads to another when you start at Asheville School.”

Berteau became a successful lawyer, and is of counsel to the law firm of Williams Parker in Sarasota. Previously, he served on committees for the American Bar Association and the Florida Bar Association. He has served on the boards of several charitable organizations, including Sarasota Memorial Healthcare Foundation and Southwest Florida Hospice Foundation.

This endowment fund provides the opportunity for students far into the future to create a path toward success for themselves and society through education. It is a lasting, responsible way to leverage The Patterson Foundation’s resources to effect change in our world—the same aspiration behind his lifetime of philanthropic excellence.

“We are incredibly grateful to The Patterson Foundation for establishing an endowed scholarship fund in honor of John Berteau ’60,” said Head of School Dr. Anthony H. Sgro ’84. “John embodies Asheville School’s core values of perseverance, integrity, respect, and compassion and serves as a role model for our young alumni. His dedication to strengthening his community will inspire future recipients of the John T. Berteau Opportunity Endowment Fund.”
The ELK Foundation supports Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As past President of the Parent’s Association, and current Member of the Board of Trustees, Elizabeth Klump understands Asheville School from a few perspectives. As a past parent (Andrew Klump ’20), she witnessed the meaningful relationships that Andrew developed with his teachers and classmates. “We felt a part of the Asheville family the moment we first stepped on campus with our son who thrived there,” she says. So when she approached John Smith, Director of Enrollment and Leigh Ruhl, Associate Head of School for Advancement to discuss her interest in providing a need-based scholarship to a student of color from Atlanta, she hoped to create a legacy that would shape the future of a student, just like Asheville School did for her son.

“Every student desiring the academics and unique experiences that Asheville School offers should have the opportunity to attend,” she says. “Growing the diverse population at Asheville School has been a continuing objective. After meeting an outstanding student of color from Atlanta on campus, the inspiration to offer that opportunity to a candidate from this city, who may otherwise not have the option to attend Asheville School, came to fruition.”

Thanks to a gift from the ELK Foundation, today Zarion Beavers ’25, is experiencing life as a boarding student at Asheville School. He’s already found that Ancient Studies is his favorite subject. “I always enjoy learning about how things operated in the past and how different society was,” he says. His extracurriculars inspire learning as well. He acted in a play called Huntington Place, which was set against the story of New York’s Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911. “I learned how little the bosses cared about their workers’ safety back then, and about how this fire led to change for women’s rights.” Zarion is also improving his butterfly for the Blues swim team and thinking about playing a few more sports.

His family’s goals for him while he is at Asheville School are to gain more independence, have access to a better education, make life-long friends with similar interests, and be immersed in an environment where he feels comfortable to be himself. “We’re so grateful that Zarion has this opportunity to spread his wings and reach his full potential,” says Zarion’s mom, Teresa Beavers. “The scholarship has meant a lot to him, myself, and our family.” She also shared a word of advice to parents thinking about sending their students to board at Asheville School. “Don’t be alarmed if you barely talk to your child the first two weeks of school—they are literally having so much fun they have no time for us,” she says. “They start missing us in week three.”

Richard J. Kelly Family Scholarship

Teresa Beavers. “The scholarship has meant a lot to us. It helped to prepare me for college and life. There are things that I do to this day that I can attribute to Asheville School, such as quiet and focused work time, valuing and learning from my team and broader colleague community, and building connections with people who are very different from me.”

Kelly adds, “She not only made the best of her time at Asheville School, she built an incredible life. And it’s not really about us—it’s about the opportunity that she took and ran with. Miya is a wonderful example of what can happen by starting at Asheville School.”

“Don’t be alarmed if you barely talk to your child the first two weeks of school—they are literally having so much fun they have no time for us.”
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Ms. Janet Smith
Ms. Molly R. Smith
Dr. and Mrs. Donald Sinclair
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Simmons
Mr. Gerry Shields
Ms. Sierra F. Shell 2010
Mr. Dev K. Sethi 1990
Mr. Stewart M. Scott III 1982
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Mr. and Mrs. Jim Schwartzel
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Schmitt
Dr. David H. Schaffer 2010
Ms. Karen Savage
Mr. and Mrs. Justin Sautter
Mr. L. Cary Saurage II
Mr. Corbin I. Sapp 1986
Sand Hill-Venable Elementary
Dr. and Mrs. John Russell
Ms. Leigh W. Ruhl
Mr. R. Bruce Rogers 1969
Mr. Michael Rogers 1990 and Mrs.
Mr. Talmage G. Rogers, Jr. 1956
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rodwell
Mr. Edward Risavich and Mr.
Mr. Clements Ripley
Ms. Emily Reed and Mr. Dave Stott
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ray
Ms. Mary Kate Ratcliffe
Dr. William T. Rankin 1982
Ms. Ashley V. Randall 2005
Mr. Travis G. Price
Dr. and Mrs. Harold E. Plaster, Jr.
Mr. Timothy Plaehn and Ms. Helen
Mr. James W. Pharr 1997
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Pensky
Pen & Plate Club
Mr. and Mrs. Brad Pearsall
Mr. Edwin Page, Jr. and Ms. Beth
Mr. George R. Packard
Ms. Laura A. Ornduff 1986
Ms. Lucy Oliver
Mr. and Mrs. T ed Okolichany
Mr. Jacob O’Brien
Ms. Margaret P. Norvell
CWO-4 USMC Ret Charles Norris
Ms. Elizabeth H. Newman
Dr. and Mrs. Zdenek Mrozkova
Ms. Katherine C. Herasian 1987
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SCORE (Counselors to Americas
Morreall Parker ’00
“but I think the simplest reason is because I am forever grateful for all that Asheville School gave to me. Just like those who are given before me and came away. I want to ensure that Asheville School is always a place where students can be challenged and made to feel safe even in failure, where teenagers can gain confidence that they can achieve even what they thought they couldn’t, and where lifelong friendships are made and thrive long after you leave. I want future students to have the same kind of incredible experience that I had at Asheville School.”
On February 11, 2023, Mr. Stephen A. Jarislowsky CGQ '42 received the Henry G. Heedy, Jr. '33 Service Award. This prestigious award is presented in memory of the student, faculty, and distinguished guest who has distinguished himself or herself by outstanding and unselfish service to the Asheville School. Mr. Jarislowsky was a member of the Asheville School Board of Trustees from 1980-1992. During this period, he graciously hosted meetings for board members and School administrators in Montreal, Canada. “As the founder of Jarislowski, Fraser Ltd, a highly successful investment management firm, he provided wise counsel to the members and School administrators from 1980-1992. During this period, he distinguished himself and unselfish service to the Asheville School personified the highest ideals of an Asheville School education. This prestigious award is presented in memory of Jarislowski CC GOQ ’42 received the Henry G. Heedy, Jr. ’33 Service Award.
Generosity from individuals through gifts to the Blues Fund supports every aspect of the Asheville School experience. Scan the code below to access the online giving form and show your support.

https://www.givecampus.com/3e1lz4
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2021!

Grace Ahern  Gap Year
Charlie Ahn  New York University
James Allen  Denison University
Jaydon Aquino-Gumbs  Riverside City College
John Barwick  University of Vermont
Kate Bauer  Boston University
Gordon Boggan  Texas Tech University
Gabriella Braunicki  Georgetown University
Lucia Bridges  Southern Methodist University
Sam Cashwell  Appalachian State University
Scarlet Cassidy  Wake Forest University
Kristian Castro  Syracuse University
Michael Chang  Northeastern University
Max Chang  Gap Year
Mary Margaret Collett  Belmont University
Grace Copeland  Ursinus College
Cloe Doran  Tulane University of Louisiana
Turner Edgens  Gap Year
Ellie Ethington  The University of Edinburgh
Paige Ettore  University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Emma Euteneuer  Southern Methodist University
James Frein  Marquette University
Kennedi Green  George Washington University
Vivian Gregory  Wolford College
Michael Hall  Georgia State University
Andrew Han  University of Wisconsin-Madison
Alex Harkness  University of North Carolina-Wilmington
Chuck Huttoe  Gap Year
Jenna Jiang  University of California, San Diego
Anne Johnson  Clevely College
Jeehoong Jung  University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Kris Kancharatip  University of Utah
Joan Kang  University of Washington

Charles Kingree  University of North Carolina, Wilmington
Nick Klipstein  Macalester College
Phil Kreola  Professional basketball in Europe
Max LaFlinger  Loyola Marymount University
Leo Liu  Emory University
Ben Longo  The University of Texas at Austin
Ethan Main  Washington and Lee University
Kelley Mann  Harvard University
John McCurry  Gap Year
Satchel McCutchen  University of Miami
Bay McCray  The University of Tampa
Declan Matthew  Gap Year / Soccer in Europe
Helen Miller  Lafayette College
Dries Morill  George Washington University
Emma Nelson  Boston University
Owen Nelson  Northeastern University
Milo Newman-Lombardo  Dickinson College
Korean Olsome  University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Zale Peart  Connecticut College
Charlotte Pollard  Pennsylvania State University
Jose Salazar  Gap Year
Kate Sautler  University of St. Andrews
Eugenie Selsor  Texas Christian University
Nick Shealy  Wentworth Institute of Technology
Melissa Sleater  North Carolina State University
Ela Thomas  Bath Spa University
Crow Thorsen  Emory University
Gabbby Trichon  University of Kentucky
Jorge Tubilla  New York University
Lacy Wattle  University of North Carolina at Asheville
Emma Clay Yorke  Clemson University
Skye Zhang  Bryn Mawr College
Patrick Zhou  University of California-Davis
Alex Zwerner  Washington University in St Louis

College Bound