“What the live creature retains from the past and what it expects from the future operate as directions in the present.”

John Dewey

Diversity / Innovation / Citizenship
Spring 2017
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Principal Daniel B. Frank ’74, Ph.D.
The John G. Levi Chief Advancement Officer Regina Rodriguez
Director of Communications Dominic V. Saracino
Director of Admission and Financial Aid Karen G. Fisher

Editor/Writer Jill Chukerman ’77, JAC Communications
Design Communiqué Graphic Design
Principal Photography Dominic V. Saracino and Nick Robinson

Francis W. Parker School, 330 West Webster Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614
773.353.3000 fwparker.org
An Introduction from Dan Frank

“A fundamental principle of democracy is the responsibility of each for all and all for each.”—Colonel Francis Wayland Parker

“The people of the Francis W. Parker School educate students to connect reflection with action, wisdom with innovation, deeds with consequences, and character with citizenship. In these ways, Parker stands as a progressive school, dedicated to the growth and development of the whole person, on behalf of our democratic society and the wider world.”—Mission and Ethos Statement

It is popular for schools and organizations to have mission statements. It is quite another thing for the people of those institutions to live the mission. At Parker, our educators live the mission by inspiring our students to be responsible citizens and leaders who act with empathy, courage and clarity on behalf of the greater good.

Colonel Parker and Anita McCormick Blaine deliberately founded a school that would stand for essential educational principles to meet the needs of a growing democratic society and its people. They created a school committed to respecting every individual by educating all about their moral responsibility to understand—through their own school experience—how democracy works and what is required from each citizen to ensure that equity, opportunity and justice are available to every citizen.

Colonel Parker said, “The needs of society should determine the work of the school.” Now, more than ever, our society needs critical and creative problem-solving citizen leaders of strong social and emotional character, skilled in collaborative and empathic ways of relating to a diverse array of people as they advance democracy’s capacity to support social progress for all.

Education creates awareness—of what we know and don't know—and guides us toward understanding how to relate to others and ourselves by applying our knowledge and skills to our actions. These democratic actions include asking questions, assessing answers with critical scrutiny, discerning fact from lies, listening and collaborating, taking a stand in difficult moments and persisting with optimism in the face of complex problems.

Stories can inspire and affirm. And this issue of The Live Creature contains stories of our students, faculty, parents and alumni and how they live these commitments through their actions as citizen leaders. Together, these accounts illustrate how Parker nurtures a philosophy of education that leads people to live the mission of our dynamic progressive school.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Parker as it strives to live its mission for all its students, now and in the future.
Social Justice Education at Parker: Integrative and Generative
By Shanti Elliott, Director of Civic Engagement

Democracy...has to be enacted anew in every generation, in every year, in every day, in the living relations of person to person, in all social forms and institutions. —John Dewey

Social Justice

At times when democratic life is frayed, schools are called to lead the way in fostering respectful relationships and social and environmental responsibility. At Parker, education for democratic citizenship takes place day-in, day-out, in myriad ways, and while special projects and programs enable deep dives into social justice praxis, the real emphasis is on its integration in classes and other areas of learning in the school.

Whether students are exploring beliefs that conflict with their own or analyzing oppression, power and privilege in media; whether they are discussing Sanctuary Schools with community activists and school administrators or leading teach-ins on DACA; whether they are marching for science or building relationships with students in other schools, they are engaging authentically with real-world struggles. Parker thrives on the understanding that teaching and learning are not neutral, but matter to personal and political life.

Teachers share their own questions and dilemmas about citizenship and trust students to think for themselves.

By emphasizing discussion of current events and presenting students with many sources of information and opinions about political, social and cultural issues, teachers encourage students to develop their capacity for handling ambiguity and complexity.

The youngest Parker students are learning about challenging oppression and privilege through songs, stories and marching. For example, JK–5th grade students read *We Shall Overcome: The Story of a Song*, and, while learning to sing, “We Shall Overcome,” each class engaged in acts of resistance and solidarity in developmentally aligned ways. JK students talked about what they would have done to stand up with Ruby Bridges. Kindergartners marched for equality for all.

These actions are instances of a broader commitment to educating students to attend to identity—their own and others’—and to historical patterns and legacies that shape our lives today. Passages from a review of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Social Justice Themes, JK–5th Grade, include teachers’ reflections such as the following:

*Social Justice...has to be enacted anew in every generation, in every year, in every day, in the living relations of person to person, in all social forms and institutions. —John Dewey*
As 3rd graders study the history of Chicago they explore issues related to conflicts that are created by human migration and the competing motives of different groups of people occupying the same space, the ramifications of decisions made based on the needs of one group of people and the devastating effects that incursion can have on indigenous populations. Throughout their historical studies they are coming to understand the complexity of political, social and cultural relationships…

The 5th grade uses the framework of the Choosing to Participate Curriculum. Through exploration of true stories, the autobiographical writings of Ruby Bridges, and Sylvia Mendez's book, Separate Is Never Equal, students come to understand that people are active participants in all situations, whether they choose to take active or bystander roles and that whatever role one chooses, there are ramifications. They ponder the words of Dr. King, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” As they look at the role of the government in civil rights, students begin to understand the complexity of state law versus federal law and 5th grade views of fairness are challenged.

The classroom is a space for creative exploration of democratic values, such as engaging with multiple perspectives and dialogue across differences. Teachers encourage students to feel, to think about the impact of their actions, to care about injustice, to take a stand as responsive human beings committed to a healthy, vibrant democratic society.

As part of a school-wide commitment to supporting students in learning about human rights in our country and throughout the world, the Middle, Intermediate and Lower Schools sustain a steady focus on refugees and immigration in classes, Morning Exes and special teach-ins. As one of the presentations explained:

The study of refugees is important for Parker because our mission statement calls on all of us, together, “to think and act with empathy, courage and clarity as responsible citizens in a democratic society and a global community.” Our study of refugees is an excellent way to incorporate what some have termed “marginalized voices” into our understanding of the world. Marginalized voices are people whose stories and voices have been pushed to the side, ignored or denied by people who have more power and status and who have more ways to share their stories. Without seeking out marginalized voices, it’s not possible to understand our city, country or the world.

Upper School classes, teach-ins, actions and assemblies engage students in responding to what is happening in the world in the course of their daily schedules. They also foster consciousness, critical thinking and a sense of agency by being transparent about pedagogy and curriculum and offering a counter-narrative to “the single story.” While clarifying the values they stand for, teachers and students are challenging assumptions and policies that perpetuate inequality, from segregation to mass incarceration to corporate welfare. A brief glimpse at social justice education at Parker through the lens of different subject areas includes:
Music, arts and performing arts provide powerful means of response to real-life events and emotions. Students explore the emotional, physical and social resonance of public life. They attend to the impact of what is happening in the world around them and interpret it with their bodies, paying close attention to their emotions and movements and to interrelations with others. Teachers model the importance of engaging in creative and immediate ways with local, national and global issues and how they impact us and others. So, in class and in performance, students together process police violence, elections and their own experiences with racism. Teachers ask students to make their feelings and responses more conscious so they can express themselves artistically and in life more authentically.

Physical education develops students’ awareness around ability, gender and body type. Students discuss bias and equity in relation to equipment access and school, national and international sporting events. They practice the fairness, responsibility for one another and community spirit that is at the heart of democratic life.

History courses emphasize the connections between historical events and considerations of current issues, such as the relationship between slavery and mass incarceration and reproduction of systems of power and privilege. History teachers respond to what is happening in the world with pop-up teach-ins for interested students and teachers—for example, on Boko Haram, the Syrian Civil War, the Russian invasion of Crimea and the Executive Orders on immigration and deportation. Students learn to be critical media consumers, alert to fake news and knowledgeable about how to find reliable news.
Through project-based learning and other progressive curricular approaches, students learn to understand science as part of how people in democratic society think about themselves in the world and negotiate public policy. For example, Biology classes consider racism, climate change and ecology, and Physics classes focus on energy policy in the U.S. Physics students read the book *Energy for Future Presidents* and attend a debate on energy policy in their study of how the public learns about the science issues we’re facing.

In mathematics classes, teachers apply problem-solving methods to non-mathematical questions in ways that further civic learning. Examples include the Exponential Growth project in Precalculus (featured in the Winter 2017 issue of *The Live Creature*), which focused on racial disparity in lending, student loans, payday loans, credit card debt and other predatory loans. Equity and access is an ongoing focus of adult conversations in the field when they ask who is taking which math classes and how they can promote strong achievement in all students. In these ways, social justice content and process are carried out together.

Social justice learning is embedded throughout the texts that teachers choose for English classes and unfolds in the course of conversations about how people are ostracized. Specific classes like journalism focus on events and understanding how to work with sources. Social justice concerns undergird teachers’ relationships with one another and with students: teachers talk about what they are doing in their classes and why they make the choices they do, sharing with students the pedagogic vocabulary they use.

Students in world languages classes engage with immigrant communities and cultures through art, music, Day of the Dead celebrations, Pilsen murals and opportunities to hear stories from students and teachers from immigrant families. Class discussions address difficult questions of the day, such as immigration policies, dominant culture oppression, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and the use of charged language in right wing/left wing politics across the globe, such as “the wall” and the label “illegal.” Advocacy also has a place in the study of world languages, as when students wrote letters in Spanish proposing the replacement of Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day and sent them to Latino aldermen.

Engaging with democratic life in discussion, projects and actions is an ongoing and natural part of life at Parker. As part of multiple partnerships, such as Mikva Challenge, the Progressive Education Network and the Democracy School Network, Parker’s mission-focused learning is anchored in a wider educational community of civic practice.

Young people have important perspectives and voices on public issues, and their studies facilitate their engagement with real-world problems. To grow as globally competent citizens, Parker teachers and students trace out relationships between local and global, micro and macro, planned curriculum and conditions that emerge in the world and the community. Deliberate dialogue about power and identity in education grounds learning in respect, responsibility and relationship.
We Are Able: Students Past and Present Promote Disability Awareness

As a demonstration of the Parker community’s commitment to inclusiveness, more than 40 Middle and Upper School students worked together—just prior to the annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3—to educate the school community about disabilities in general and disability etiquette in particular as part of a citywide awareness campaign orchestrated by We Are Able.

Founded by Griffen Saul, a Lincoln Park High School senior whose father died in 2015 after dealing with advanced multiple sclerosis for more than 20 years, We Are Able raises awareness in an attempt to create a society where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed and become leaders within their own community, as well as educate people about proper disability etiquette.

Parker senior Yiorgos Takoudis got involved with this group when a classmate who has a friendship with Saul suggested a campaign at Parker. "I chose to coordinate the We Are Able campaign because I was born with what is officially called an upper right limb deficiency, which I consider to be more of a physical difference than a disability,” Takoudis explained. “I have done several presentations on physical differences and shared my own experiences with my class. When I found out about the citywide We Are Able campaign, I knew it was my opportunity to enhance Parker’s progressive education and instruct students and parents on how to interact with a group of people who do not have a huge presence at Parker.

“I felt that Parker students needed some enlightening, not just because of the relatively low disability population at the school, but because people don't always know how to interact with people with disabilities. It is very important for one to empathize with others whom they typically do not associate with or understand, and I knew that the We Are Able campaign would help Parker students accomplish this.”

Joining him to spearhead the campaign at Parker was junior Zoe Gardner. “I have an interest in disability activism and felt this was the perfect way to raise awareness at Parker,” she said. “I was diagnosed with a learning disability called dyslexia at the age of seven, and for most of my childhood I struggled with my disability. I have come a

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Social Justice

Through their involvement, participating students broadened their personal understanding of the unique challenges facing those with a range of disabilities, growing as learners and human beings.
long way since my first diagnosis and now feel a strong desire to give back to the community of people with disabilities in any way I can. There are very few of us with disabilities at Parker, which means the majority of students go through their schooling without having to think about or interact with people who have them. So I felt it was crucial to have We Are Able Day to remind the school of the existence of people with disabilities, the importance of accessibility and the value of empathy."

"The benefits we saw were greater awareness of disability at Parker and the students’ increased capacity to empathize with people with disabilities."

The campaign kicked off with a Teach-In on the topic of disability activism, led by Parker alumna Rachel Arfa ’96 and Parker parent Barry Taylor (Molly ’20 and Hudson ’23). Both Arfa and Taylor are attorneys at Equip for Equality, a legal advocacy organization that advances the civil and human rights of people with disabilities in Illinois. Arfa shared her personal story, from the challenges of being a Parker student with a hearing disability to her current position as an attorney with a cochlear implant who passionately works every day for the human and civil rights of individuals with disabilities.

"It is probably no surprise I ended up being an advocate for people with disabilities, as I spent so much of my life advocating for my own access and could then use those skills to advocate for others with disabilities, as well as work with other attorneys also committed to this goal," Arfa commented. "I’m very fortunate and humbled to work at Equip for Equality on individual and systemic initiatives to make lives better for people with disabilities.

"My work focuses on employment and public accommodations. I am proud of working with my clients to achieve more equality in the workplace and in places of public accommodation. I am also passionate about making cultural organizations more accessible to people with disabilities."

With historical context in place, including background on the Americans with Disabilities Act,

The next day, Takoudis and Gardner distributed disability etiquette information to the Parker community and prominently displayed a “We Are Able” banner featuring signatures of school community members who had read the disability etiquette norms and promised to follow them.

Student volunteers who had been trained the previous day attended their classes, sensitively replicating disabilities such as blindness, deafness, muteness and other physical limitations. Participating Upper School students worked in teams of two and...
switched disabilities in the middle of the academic day to expand their educational challenge to more than just one experience.

Through their involvement, participating students broadened their personal understanding of the unique challenges facing those with a range of disabilities, growing as learners and human beings.

“The benefits we saw were greater awareness of disability at Parker and the students’ increased capacity to empathize with people with disabilities,” Gardner commented. “The campaign ended up being very successful; our participants were great, and we generated good discussion around the school. I feel that we brought the importance of accessibility to the attention of the school community.”

Takoudis was equally pleased with the outcome of the day. “This activity benefited the participants, who used their experiences to learn and teach others how to respectfully interact with individuals with disabilities. Overall, the We Are Able Day went extremely well, despite the evident challenges facing a school community that has few students with disabilities. I am happy I used my difference to educate others, something that is instilled in our school’s progressive education and mission, and I look forward to seeing this effort continue.”

Subsequent to the We Are Able events in December, Arfa and Taylor returned to Parker on January 30 to give a Morning Ex on empathy and equal access for those with disabilities.

*This is an update of an article that appeared in Parker’s weekly school enewsletter, This Week @ Parker.*
Parker Women Organize March in Washington

By Chloe Wagner ’18

Social Justice

After Election Day, I was feeling heartbroken and powerless. Although our teachers tried to console us the following week, it was apparent that a momentous change had occurred in the Parker community. Conversations in classes and the halls shifted to the upcoming presidency, and there was a common feeling of helplessness.

After the initial shock ended, I knew that we as students had to do something in response to the hateful rhetoric we had heard during the election cycle. After talking to my friends and teachers, we decided to attend the Women’s March on Washington the day after Inauguration Day. Ms. Shanti Elliott, Parker’s director of civic engagement, put us in touch with Chicago Women Take Action, the Women’s March on Washington and the Women’s March on Chicago, and we began meeting with these organizations to help us reach this goal. Those meetings helped us create our own brand: the Illinois Youth Chapter for the Women’s March on Washington (IL Youth WMW).

We learned what it takes to activate people and see a plan through during the two short months we had to organize our group. Our two main areas of focus were getting to DC, whether on our own bus or with another group that already had one, and making the trip free for all students interested in joining us. We also learned about PR, the importance of tenacity, asking the right questions to the right people and good community organizing. Surprisingly, our biggest obstacle was our age. As teenagers, some adults would meet with us only if our parents were present, and some refused to communicate with us entirely. This age restriction made it hard to do almost anything, from opening a bank account to giving interviews.

Creating Facebook, Twitter and GoFundMe accounts was our first priority. Social media helped us reach out to schools and students across the city who might want to join our trip and get more funding. About six weeks before the march, we sent out a press release through the Windy City Times and our social media outlets, which produced many interview requests. Neither my co-organizer Moré Fabiyi ’18 nor I had ever done something this public before, so our first radio interview was pretty rough. We learned the ropes quickly, and we were featured on WBEZ-FM and WCIU-TV and even in an article for NBC National.

At first, we were unsure we’d be able to cover the costs for students coming on the trip. Our GoFundMe had been gaining momentum, but it was not until the week before we left

It is hard to describe what I felt at the march with any other word except community.
that we were completely sure. Through perseverance and networking, we found a group that let us ride on their bus, and the woman organizing it offered free seats to nine of our students.

There are a lot of unknowns in organizing. We would try to reach out to an organization, or even the national march, and the most frequent answer was, “We don't know yet, we'll tell you when we do.” At times, we were even unsure of our own next move. In the last hours before loading the bus, we found another seat for a young man to join us.

On January 20, Inauguration Day, our group of 24 teens and five faculty members began our trek to Washington to attend the biggest inaugural protest in U.S. history. There were eight students from Parker; the rest attended public and private schools across the city. The trip lasted 36 hours, but it was by far the most rewarding thing I have ever done.

We arrived at about 8 a.m. that Saturday, exhausted but ready to work. As we walked to the National Mall, you could feel the energy building as we displayed our sign, which read, “Illinois Youth Grabs ‘Em By Da ‘cat face.” Everyone at the march was very supportive of our efforts and even cheered us on during some of our chants.

It is hard to describe what I felt at the march with any other word except community. Millions of people gathered at the U.S. Capitol to fight for our voices to be heard, and even though I knew only the people on my bus, I felt connected to every person there. It was extremely moving to be in a space with millions of people just like me, fighting for the same causes. The next six hours were filled with countless chants and songs as we made our way up the mall to the Washington Memorial. The actual march did not go as planned because there were too many marchers, so as the swarm of protesters made their way to Pennsylvania Avenue, we decided to head back to the bus, knowing we had done our job that day.

Coming away from this experience, it is even clearer to me how important youth voices are for our democracy. We may be younger than 18, but that does not mean our voices aren’t valid. In fact, it makes our experiences even more vital to our society. As a 16-year-old, I couldn’t vote in arguably the most important election of my lifetime. But I made my voice heard by organizing a bus full of politically active teens from a variety of schools and backgrounds. I know how hard it is to be politically active as a teen and to be heard by the adults around you. Parker has been a great resource in finding my own voice. My classes and conversations with teachers and students are geared towards political conversations of all kinds, which have benefited me.

It was extremely moving to be in a space with millions of people just like me, fighting for the same causes.
Nevertheless, there is always more work to do to foster a positive, politically active environment in our school.

January 21, 2017 has meant more to me than any other day in my life. I marched with millions of people from around the globe to fight for justice for all people. That day was special not only because of the number of people who showed up or the community we built, but because of what we were marching for. We marched because women’s rights are human rights, because love is love is love, because trans women are women, because black lives matter, because no human is illegal, because climate change is real, because feminism without intersectionality isn’t feminism at all.

We will continue to march because all people deserve the same civil rights regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, ability or age.

Our group continues to take a stand for the issues we believe in, and we are working to make changes for a better world. We have formed an organization called Chicago Youth Take Action and hope to inspire other teens across the city to be active in their communities. Our organization will be completely youth-led and focus on educating youth throughout the city on the issues that affect us the most. For more information, visit @ChiYouthTA on Twitter or @chiyouthtakeaction on Instagram or email contactcyta@gmail.com.
Black Lives Matter Takes Chicago: Youth Leaders Organize Protest Downtown
By Maya Plotnick ’18


These are only 11 of the thousands of people who have been victims of police brutality in America, paying with their lives. Together, police brutality and systemic racism are two of the most discussed issues today. Many protests have taken place all over the country in response to these killings—some have been peaceful, but most have resulted in even more violence and deaths. However, there is one group that aims to change this aspect of protesting and start a revolution right here in Chicago.

On the evening of August 7, 2016, hundreds of Chicagoans gathered at a protest organized by BLMChiYouth, a political organization led entirely by four black women ages 16 and 17: Eva Lewis, Maxine Wint, Sophia Byrd, and Parker junior Natalie Braye. The purpose of the march was to bring attention to the death of Paul O’Neal, an unarmed black man fatally shot by police officers in the South Shore neighborhood just 10 days prior to the protest. He was only 18 years old.

The event, organized primarily on the BLMChiYouth Facebook page, began about 5:15 p.m. in Wrigley Square, at the northwest corner of Millennium Park. Even 15 minutes early, the grass area in the middle of the square was filling up with protesters, while various organizers, speakers and performers patiently waited at the north end of the square. News cameras were scattered along the outskirts of the grass, all soon pointing to the front as a huddle of young leaders formed, ready to take the ultimate stand for justice.

The protest kicked off with some emotional and motivational speeches that touched on themes such as systemic racism and police brutality. One of the more impactful moments was when Lewis, one of the organizers, listed the names of other victims of police brutality, which protesters shouted back to her, including Sandra Bland, Laquan McDonald and Alton Sterling. Soon after, there was a quick transition to the actual march, which started traveling south on Michigan Avenue from Wrigley Square. As protesters walked in unison, many held up signs showing solidarity with Paul O’Neal and the Black Lives Matter movement. The growing crowd then turned onto Adams Street before making another turn onto State Street. Many police officers helped pave the

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The event, organized primarily on the BLMChiYouth Facebook page,
way as the march continued through the streets of downtown, but no major altercations or arrests occurred—from start to finish, the gathering was 100 percent peaceful.

The march continued down State Street, with fists in the air and shouts of, “No justice, no peace,” and “Black Lives Matter.” At one point, walking paused as the organizers told protesters to sit down in the street, blocking traffic in both directions and shutting down the busy downtown area.

Braye became a BLMChiYouth organizer through her connection with Wint after she saw a post about the sit-in on Instagram; they were friends in Middle School. Speaking of their first protest on July 11, Braye said, “Our protest was the biggest of six protests that took place the week after the shootings of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling…it really showed that if you give youth a platform, then they will use it and really make something amazing.”

When asked about lessons learned from these events, Braye said, “I’ve found that it’s really important to take a step back and process everything. It can be really stressful and emotionally and physically taxing to take part in protests, especially leading them. If you don’t take a moment to self-care when things are becoming too much, then you could make a rash decision that could endanger yourself as well as the hundreds of protesters you’re leading.”

Many of the protesters were quite outspoken on the issues relating to police shootings and the decision to take immediate action after they happen. One woman said, “I participate in all the [protests] that I can because this keeps happening.
Participating in one protest and then being done isn’t going to help.”

A male protester shared his idea about the changes necessary to reshape the justice system, saying, “We definitely want awareness to be raised, but also policy to be implemented. We want a policy where all police officers are required to have body cameras at all times and there are penalties for turning off the body cameras…what activists have been calling for is a long-promised Community Police Accountability Council (CPAC). We just want community policing policies in our city.”

The protest was widely successful, reaching as many as 500 participants, while the July protest reached approximately 1,000. Not only did media cover these events, but news outlets such as ABC7 Chicago and the Chicago Tribune wrote articles on the march afterwards.

“I don’t think anyone should be silent on important issues if they have the platform to speak out and make a difference.”

One of Braye’s favorite aspects of being a protest organizer is being part of change and bringing awareness to issues. She concluded, “I don’t think anyone should be silent on important issues if they have the platform to speak out and make a difference. At the end of the protests, there’s always this overwhelming feeling of love and strength and hope for the future. There really isn’t any other feeling like it.”
Responsible Citizens:
Presidential Election Impacts Curriculum

Since the early 1970s, Parker has offered an Elections class in the fall semester of presidential election years. Continuing this course in civics, Upper School history teacher Andy Bigelow added the course to the spring semester during the primaries as well. The class aims to educate students about the Electoral College, primaries, the nomination process, national conventions and local and state involvement in federal elections, as well as local politics. Every student completes at least 10 fieldwork hours canvassing for candidates, phone-banking, volunteering and attending rallies. Students read articles across the political spectrum, listen to a range of guest speakers from across the aisles, watch movies based on recent elections, reflect on their predictions as to the election’s outcome and debate and present on relevant topics.

Students also learn how to handle differences of opinion respectfully. “Four years ago I had eight students who supported Romney and 10 Obama supporters,” recalled Bigelow. “We went to Kenosha, Wisconsin on a bus as one group with two missions. This year, it was more about Bernie Sanders vs. Hillary Clinton; I had no Trump supporters. With that in mind, we focused on U.S. Senate elections across the nation since they have the biggest impact on a presidency with regard to the Supreme Court, cabinet nominations and legislation.”

“I saw democracy at work as my friends, family and neighbors came in and out of the voting booths doing their civic duty.”

Last fall, 13 students in the Elections class joined other Parker juniors and seniors to serve as election judges. Working with adult judges, they maintained safe and courteous voting, handling long lines, the occasional missing equipment and plenty of neighborhood community spirit. “The kids loved it and felt like they were truly participating in our democracy as active citizens,” Bigelow said. “It was very hard work, but they realized that it was crucial that they help out each year. Many flaws in our system were unveiled, and these kids were there to make sure democracy was secure.”

“Working as an election judge was one of the most rewarding jobs I’ve ever done,” said senior Will Polsky. “Not even a stone’s throw from my house, I saw democracy at work as my friends, family and neighbors came in and out of the voting booths doing their civic duty.”

Junior Noah Jennings also found the experience memorable. He shared, “What stuck with me the most was the number of accommodations we had available to help disabled voters. We had specific directions on assisting blind, deaf and physically impaired voters and made sure they were given the same privacy as other voters.”
For the previous spring’s “special edition” of the Elections class, Bigelow, working with Director of Civic Engagement Shanti Elliott, focused more on local and state elections, inviting several guest speakers: McCormick Foundation Democracy Scholar Shawn Healy, who spoke about the local context in relation to the national scene; political strategist and former Parker parent Marilyn Katz, who offered perspectives on Chicago political history and emphasized the role of young people in politics; and representatives of the two candidates running for U.S. Senate in Illinois: Max Hahm, on behalf of then-Senator Mark Kirk, and Aaron Hill and David Applegate, on behalf of current Senator Tammy Duckworth.

“First graders feel validated when they know their voice has been heard and they have been part of a decision. Outcomes of a vote enable young kids to learn about winning and losing and still support what the majority decides.”

Never one to let the relative youth of her students limit her curriculum, Bev “Greenie” Greenberg has been using the presidential election cycle as a teaching opportunity for her 1st graders since 2004. “Young children are more in tune with what is going on in the world today, and they hear their parents talking about our country and its leaders,” she said. “They also hear a variety of thoughts and opinions about who should be elected and why. While they don’t always understand all the information they hear, 1st graders are able to make decisions about why they like someone or not based on their perceptions of a person’s character and values.”

After six weeks of learning about different characters from stories they had read, students began considering those characters as possible candidates for “President of Children’s Literature.” Greenie then introduced some of the basic concepts of elections, including the difference between a democracy and a monarchy, the qualities of good leaders and specific election-related terminology. Working in small groups, students nominated Brother Berenstain Bear, Clifford the Big Red Dog, Skippy John Jones and Snoopy as candidates for the 2016 President of Children’s Literature.

“Children look at the characters for their traits, their contribution to literature, the way they relate to others in the stories and the good they do for their group, family or community,” Greenie described. “First graders learn how to think more deeply about their own friendships as a result. What draws you to someone else? What can you relate to based on your understanding of the character? The experience enables kids to begin learning how someone can inform their decisions through what they offer that rings true to their own value system.”
As they prepared promotional campaigns in groups based on their preferences of the candidates, the 1st graders visited Bigelow’s Elections class to share what they had learned. They invited the whole Parker community to participate in their election, guiding all those who voted based on their training as election officials. They even had a chance to meet an actual election judge who was working in Parker’s Small Gym on Election Day.

“While voting in 1st grade doesn’t focus on a winner in the form of one person, we do foster a child’s right to an opinion and feeling about something,” said Greenie. “Voting enables kids to see that the majority can sway a thought, opinion or decision (Should we have outdoor recess early or late? How many 1st graders want to do math work before their writing assignment?). First graders feel validated when they know their voice has been heard and they have been part of a decision. Outcomes of a vote enable young kids to learn about winning and losing and still support what the majority decides.

“The kids loved learning about the voting process, discovering how to relate to the voter as they explained the different candidates and giving out ‘I Voted’ stickers at the end. As one 1st grader said, ‘I wish we had elections every year!’”

After Bigelow’s Elections class tabulated 498 in-person and 75 absentee ballots from the 1st graders’ election, the winner for President of Children’s Literature was…Snoopy, with 277 votes!
A Return to Toy Shop

Colonel Parker once said, “The needs of society should determine the work of the school.” The spirit of this statement comes to life at Parker in many ways every day, and the December holiday season was no exception.

In the school’s earliest days, the annual Toy Shop curriculum involved students working side by side with their parents, teachers and peers to repair and “upcycle” their gently used and much-loved possessions. While the entire school no longer devotes two full weeks of class time to this enterprise, this same sense of responsibility and desire to contribute important resources to those who could benefit from them still resonates within our community, as an industrious group of Upper School shop students recently demonstrated. Under the watchful eye of Woodshop teacher Nick Rupard, these students used the skills they had been developing in class to build handmade items to donate like their counterparts from the previous century.

At the onset of this project, Rupard found inspiration in a story on WGN Radio about another shop teacher in Chicago who had worked with his friends and family to create handmade toys for children throughout the city for many years. Seeing an alignment with the school’s mission and history, his students’ skills and the shop’s resources, Rupard sought out an assortment of design options and set one of his classes to work on the various steps to produce the pieces.

The woodshop was abuzz with activity before and after the Thanksgiving recess, as students cut, sanded and painted a wooden menagerie of ducks, monkeys, sheep and more. After adding the finishing touches, Rupard packed up all the items and made a personal delivery to RefugeeOne, an organization the school had supported with a winter clothing and school supply drive prior to Thanksgiving. RefugeeOne creates opportunity for refugees fleeing war, terror and persecution to build new lives of safety, dignity and self-reliance.
Schools: Studies in Education turns 15

Origins of an idea

In partnership with the University of Chicago Press, Parker edits and publishes an international educational journal for public and independent school educators. Now in its 15th year, Schools: Studies in Education builds on Parker’s legacy contributions to the field of education as it offers contemporary educators a vital forum to share insights about teaching and learning in schools.

Each issue includes contemporary reflective essays by school educators and others who are passionate about education. Along with book and film reviews, each issue features an older but still relevant text to life in schools today in its “From the Archives” section. In recent years, “On the Horizon” provides educators an opportunity to explore contemporary policy and trends in education.

Schools first became an idea 25 years ago, when then-Middle and Upper School Head Dan Frank found an old cardboard box down by the school’s old boiler room. The box contained a collection of dusty journals called Studies In Education, which Parker published from 1912 to 1932. The journals contained the writings of Parker faculty, who documented their curricular innovations and student work during the early years of progressive education at the school. Eager to show someone the treasure he had discovered, Frank found Upper School English teacher Andy Kaplan right away. They agreed that Parker had to get back into the publishing business as a way to generate a renaissance of progressive education aided by Parker’s leadership. After considerable planning, the Board of Trustees agreed and included a journal in its long range strategic plan.

Our vision

Linking the past with the future, Frank and Kaplan included the name of the old journal as the subtitle of the new publication, believing in the power of stories about the experiences of teachers, students, administrators and parents in their classes and in the culture of schools. “But we wanted to create a larger, more expansive platform than the original journal,” Frank explained. “We deliberately aimed to include writers beyond Parker’s own talented educators. We wanted to provide an inspiring and affirmative path for teachers who wanted to expand their professional lives through writing for publication, a path usually reserved for university educators. While those who teach at universities devote considerable time to writing, elementary and secondary school teachers have precious little free time, between teaching, meeting with colleagues and parents and preparing for their classes. Andy and I were crazy enough to want to encourage teachers to consider adding onto their already-busy teaching lives by writing for our new publication. We reached out to public and independent school educators, as well as clinicians, university professors, parents and students from around the world, and have encountered terrific response throughout the years.”
Frank also described the publication’s mission. “From the beginning, we were interested in providing a forum for public and independent school teachers to describe in detail their own experiences, in their own words. We curate well-written descriptive narratives coupled with thoughtful reflective commentary on the meaning of the stories they have rendered, with the analysis amplified by educational and social psychological theory about human development and cultural and social systems.”

With support from seed grants, Frank organized a couple of conferences that produced the first essays for *Schools*. From the beginning, he and Kaplan have enjoyed a special partnership: as executive editor, Frank searches for writers and funding while Kaplan, as editor, chooses the themes, works with an impressive list of nationally known educators who serve as consulting editors, edits the manuscripts and prepares them for publication.

**University of Chicago Press partnership**

When *Schools* reached its fifth year of self-publishing, the University of Chicago Press—the world’s largest academic press—invited Parker to enter into a publishing partnership. Representatives from the Press said Parker had created a new and compelling niche of scholarship that explored the subjective experience of school life, which they were eager to support. The Press would publish and distribute the journal, and Parker would hold onto editorial control. The Press also placed all the original *Studies in Education* journals on the Web so that they are available to all.

**Reach and impact**

Unlike other education journals, *Schools* has deliberately sought writers currently experiencing school life as teachers, administrators, students and parents, rather than draw only on the traditional pool of university scholars and researchers. Kaplan noted, “Throughout the years, *Schools* has published articles by writers from Chile, Japan, Finland, Ghana, China, Bosnia and England. Each issue typically contains an even mix of U.S. public and independent school educators who write about what it feels like to teach and learn in schools. High school students and parents also have contributed reflective essays about school life.” Catlin-Gabel School in Portland, Oregon recently invited Kaplan to a progressive education reading group that used essays from *Schools* to inform their work.

Because *Schools* gives public space for classroom educators to talk about what happens when learning actually occurs, many people who never thought about writing for an academic journal find a welcome place to discuss, celebrate and wonder about their practice.
Schools is an author-friendly journal. Kaplan said, “Many journals stake their reputation on the percentage of manuscripts they reject. But we are a progressive journal. I draw on my 39 years of teaching English at Parker, and I continue to look at writing as work in progress; my job is to encourage and guide writers until the draft is ready for publication.” Frank added, ”We have a commitment to people and to help them achieve their ambitions to grow professionally as writers. We are far more interested in affirmation than rejection as a foundation for our journal’s identity.”

The strength of Schools lies in its editorial commitment to excellent, compelling writing and commentary that provides a publishable space for people to share their experiences, insights and understandings—drawn from success and failure—as they endeavor to make sense of their subjective experience of the systems and structures that comprise school life.

To subscribe to Schools, visit journals.uchicago.edu/schools. Subscriptions offer unlimited access to the entire 14 years of issues. The website also offers subscribers access to the Parker faculty publication Studies in Education, which the school published from 1912 to 1932. To submit a manuscript, or discuss an idea or an outline, email akaplan@fwparker.org

“In each issue, we present one or more historical documents on education that present ideas and issues of ongoing importance. We have featured documents from all over the world and from the distant as well as the recent past. For example, we published excerpts from Horace Mann’s annual reports to the Massachusetts assembly on the necessity of what he called “common schools,” thus beginning the American experiment in universal public education. A couple of years later, we published a number of essays on restorative justice and the practice of student-centered discipline. In searching for historical documents at the University of Chicago Library, I came on a fabulous essay by Jean Piaget, written for the League of Nations education yearbook in 1932 and never since republished. But the earliest historical document came from Parker School, written by our first principal, Flora J. Cooke, in the 1920 Record. Anticipating Piaget’s work by 12 years, Ms. Cooke announced the beginning of “student self-government” at Parker.”

—Andy Kaplan, editor
Enrichment at Parker

Parker students have always thrived on their involvement with ideas and each other, inside and outside the classroom. In addition to the formal academic program, students become known and valued as individuals and citizens before and after school through enrichment experiences.

A wide range of clubs, committees and activities are available to students at all grade levels, aimed at sparking passions and enthusiasm in new and exciting ways while fostering new connections among students, faculty and staff throughout the school. Here is a sampling of these offerings to offer a glimpse into this dynamic part of school life.

While their peers are playing outside, some Lower School students venture to the Lower School Science Room before class to partake in Open Science time. This open-ended time allows students to take a deeper dive into topics covered in class, explore more about any scientific phenomena they have an interest in or learn to care for and spend time with the classroom animals.

Fifth grade teacher Mike McPharlin '91 taps into the early morning athletic energy of 4th and 5th grade students with the Parker Pacers club by leading interested students at all levels of fitness in a brisk run before the school day begins. Members of the Parker Pacers have also had the opportunity to participate in formal competitions with students from other schools.

Music Department Co-Chair Sunnie Hikawa's ('67) Cadet Orchestra meets in the mornings and gives student instrumentalists in 3rd–5th grades an opportunity to develop their skills while playing in a group, as well as formal and informal performance opportunities throughout the year.

STEM and Coding teacher Adam Colestock ‘97, Lower and Intermediate School Technology Facilitator Seth Bacon ‘01 and 5th grade teacher assistant Julie Hrobon welcome 4th and 5th grade students to Coding Club, where they can build on their Scratch programming skills and learn new techniques for programming.
Members of the **Student Athletic Council** work with the Athletics Department to encourage school spirit and student support of Parker's student-athletes. This year, student leaders went a step further and orchestrated an afternoon’s worth of Faculty/Staff vs. Students competition in volleyball and basketball to build camaraderie and community through physical activity.

Middle School students who love to sing gather regularly in the mornings with Music teacher Rob Denien as part of the **Pop Vocal Ensemble**. This group sings pop tunes and other songs student members are interested in during formal and informal performance opportunities throughout the year.

Members of the **Middle School Social Justice League** meet with faculty in the morning to investigate their own cultural and social identities and gain a broader sense of awareness (both self and other) that helps promote a more just society.

For Upper School students who love to tinker, prototype and test their skills at mechanical and computer engineering, Web design and more, the **Upper School Robotics Club** is a perfect outlet. This year’s team secured an Inspire Award in competition—the highest honor the governing organization awards to the team excelling in all areas of competition, outreach to the community, robot design, team spirit and engineering accomplishment while displaying unparalleled cooperation.

The best place for Parker’s emerging Upper School citizens to try their hand at diplomacy on a global scale brings students together to adopt roles of UN diplomats by representing the perspectives of various countries during discussions of internal policy and events. **Model UN** forums take place around the city, country and globe, and Parker's teams have visited Montreal, Paris, St. Petersburg and beyond for recent competitions.

Students who love math and want to work on challenging problems beyond their classroom learning collaboratively with like-minded members of the school community look to **Upper School Math Club**. One recent club activity was the Annual Parker Pi Day Recitation Contests with senior JJ Freedman reciting 246 digits of pi from memory!
Lucy Moog

A Community of Learners: Parents

Citizenship, participation, being the change you seek—these are values Lucy (Herman) Moog first developed as a student in Parker’s class of ’85. Now the parent of three Parker students, she finds the school continues to instill this mission in its entire community of learners, educators and supporters.

“I recognize the support, the caring, the emphasis on community service and the encouragement to participate in the world,” Moog commented. “Parker’s emphasis on civic engagement is the secret sauce.”

For Moog and her husband, Parker trustee Matt Moog, the decision to send their sons to the school was an easy one, not only because of her own success there, but the fact that her brother Skip Herman’s (’71) daughter Katy ’13 and her sister Cathy’s (’73) daughter Suzanne ’11 thrived while at Parker. “I’ve always felt Parker raises citizens and that’s what I wanted for my kids,” she said. “My kids are three distinct individuals. They have different passions and curiosities, and the school has challenged them to learn and grow.”

“I recognize the support, the caring, the emphasis on community service and the encouragement to participate in the world. Parker’s emphasis on civic engagement is the secret sauce.”

Moog’s oldest son, Max, is a senior with a passion for history and international affairs who enjoys telling stories through video. He runs the Student Interview Review Board (SIRB) and has enjoyed the process of interviewing candidates for administrative positions. Sophomore Charlie loves math, science, history and Model UN and has been head of the Morning Ex Committee for two years. “They plan the whole Morning Ex calendar for the year,” Moog noted. “Morning Ex is the center of the Parker world from JK on up. Charlie views his position as an honor, a responsibility and an opportunity.”

Eli, a 7th grader, has discovered many new extracurricular opportunities since entering Middle School, including the Clark Street Journal, Model UN and athletics. “He’s enjoyed the chance to interact with kids in different sections and grades,” Moog said. Along the same lines, her two older sons have found new interests since entering the Upper School. “Upper School has been incredible for them, helping them open doors and find things that hadn’t crossed their paths before.”
Moog has noted the faculty’s positive influence on her boys. “They are fantastic advisors, teachers, friends, coaches—and disciplinarians, if need be. Both boys have enjoyed great bonding experiences with fellow advisees. And it’s comforting to know an extra adult is looking out for them every day.” As Max considered his post-graduation options this year, Moog also appreciated the College Counseling staff’s knowledge and approach. “Their relationship with Max was so supportive. They guided him through the process, and he rose to the occasion and took charge of it.” Max will enroll at Colorado College in the fall.

Having served as a grade chair for each of the 14 years she’s had children at the school, Moog said her favorite Parker event is the Cooke & the Colonel Scholarship Dinners, which she co-chaired with Liz Saltzman in 2007. “I love that people open their homes and it’s an intimate gathering,” she said. “Parents can make new friends and see old friends they haven’t seen in a while, and thanks to the generosity of parents, expenses are lower so most of the proceeds go directly to the Scholarship Fund.”

(L–R) Richard Saltzman, Elizabeth Saltzman, Lucy Moog and Matt Moog at the Cooke & the Colonel Scholarship Dinner.
In their free time, Moog and her family enjoy traveling and playing cards and games. “We’re also crazy Cubs fans,” she exclaimed. “We go to spring training games in Mesa, and Eli spends hours at the training camp to check out the new players. I take Eli to the Cubs Convention every year. I grew up going to games with my Dad and brother, so I love sharing this with my kids.”

Stating that “politics is my passion,” in 2016, she successfully ran for Democratic Committeeman of the 43rd Ward. “I’m really glad I did it. Matt was very supportive and encouraging; he said there are so many reasons not to do it, but there’s only one reason to do it—because you want to make a difference, so don’t look back.”
“This year is not what we thought it would be, but the good part is that people are coming out of the woodwork who want to get involved. There are many new organizations popping up to help women identify offices to run for and support them, and it feels good to be involved in that.”

Working with other North Side neighborhoods and suburbs, her office has focused on candidates who might be vulnerable to challengers. “First, we targeted U.S. Representative Peter Roskam of the 6th District, and though he won re-election, Hillary Clinton won his district, so we see some options for change in the 2018 elections. We identified older women to talk to him about the Affordable Care Act, and now there are some great potential candidates to challenge him.” She and her volunteers also worked on some of the municipal elections this past April in villages outside Chicago, running phone banks for Democratic challengers.

“The 43rd is a very independent ward; both Governor Rauner and Hillary did very well,” she explained. “Our work gives people an opportunity to participate in politics, whether it’s the presidential election or other races down the ballot.” She took her family on a road trip to Iowa before last year’s presidential caucuses. “We went for 18 hours and saw three presidential candidates—Marco Rubio, Bernie Sanders and Ted Cruz—speak in very small forums. It was a great experience for my kids.”

That participation and activism started for her at Parker. Moog has found it gratifying that, though much has changed physically since she was a student, Parker is still fundamentally the school she grew up with. “I think of it as my kids’ school now, but so much of the philosophy of warmth, teaching to the child, learning by doing, experiential learning is all still there—and more—for them.”
Kirkland La Rue: Senior Kindergarten Grade Head

“There's something about the ages of five and six that speak to me. Their world is still opening up to them, they're figuring out what's real and what's not real, and every day is a discovery. There's something about my temperament that works well with kindergarten.”

Kirkland La Rue joined Parker’s SK team in 2014. “My days are full of fun, fast-moving conversations,” he said. “I enjoy playing games, introducing topics in ways that capture attention with a sense of fun and play.”

Born in New York and raised in Columbia, Maryland, La Rue grew up with parents in the legal profession: his father is a law professor at Howard University, and his mother was an attorney, arbitrator and mediator before retiring. There also are quite a few teachers on both sides of his family. He first discovered he might have a calling in “the other family business,” he said with a smile, when he was on AAU Summer Travel and high school track and field teams. “As I got older, the track coach asked me to try teaching some of what I knew to the younger kids on the team. It was fun and didn’t feel like work. So by the time I needed to figure out what I wanted to do in college, I’d had various opportunities to work with kids, and it fell into place.”

La Rue received a human development degree from Howard University, which involved courses in education. The university has a laboratory school, the Howard University Early Learning Programs, for children up to Kindergarten. Viewing the school as an opportunity to “see what you’re learning in your textbook come to life in classrooms,” he started volunteering for the program and eventually joined the staff part time.

He continued further down this path following his junior year. “I participated in the Institute for Recruitment of Teachers, a summer intensive on the campus of Philips Academy Andover,” he described. “Each summer IRT invites a cohort of college students to campus for a series of workshops and seminars geared at preparing them for grad school and the world of academia. IRT’s curriculum is designed to expose participants to critical theory in education, humanities and social science with the rigor of a grad school program.”

Through IRT and his work at Howard, La Rue earned a scholarship to Tufts to pursue his master of teaching degree in child development. “I fell in love with the child development program, which focused on early childhood education and was housed within a department steeped in progressive philosophy,” he said. He then returned home and taught Kindergarten at the Park School, a progressive school in Baltimore, for seven years. By then, he was ready to make a move, so he cast a wide net and came to Parker, where he has taught SK for the past three years.

“Five-year-olds want to know their voices are being heard and respected. They are beginning to understand their voices matter, their voices count.”

I knew to the younger kids on the team. It was fun and didn’t feel like work. So by the time I needed to figure out what I wanted to do in college, I’d had various opportunities to work with kids, and it fell into place.”
While the aspect of play is one of his favorite parts of the job, he also has worked with his young students on social justice issues. “In my classroom I’ve tried to help kids explore identity, which I find just as valuable as the math, language and science work we’re doing. For me, progressive education means educating the whole child. We’re beginning to unpack kids’ observations about the world around them. Research shows that we help kids by giving them developmentally appropriate language about their observations related to identity and difference.”

La Rue and his SK colleagues, Nanci Moore and Dana O’Brien, decided to use the Women’s March on Washington and International Women’s Day as an opportunity to place their classroom work in a context. “We came up with the idea of marching for strong, smart girls.”

While watching video footage of marches in DC and other places, as well as the 1963 March on Washington, La Rue asked his students what they noticed. “They picked up on the signs, the songs, the chants,” he described. “Then, when I told them that we were going to get to march, too, there was such electricity!” The class talked about the word “strong,” so they had a sense of its different
meanings—muscular strength, strength in words and actions—to different people. “We also had to talk about why we were marching for girls, not boys, which was a particularly significant moment for this group. The girls were super-excited, and some of the boys had questions, like, 'Is the boys' march tomorrow?' I had to be candid and explain that boys get lots of opportunities to see themselves as strong and smart, but girls don’t get as many, so today is about the girls in our class. While a couple of the girls seemed to understand, for most of them this was probably the first time they’d been confronted with that idea.”

The SK students marched throughout the school—down the administrative hallway, by the library, even through the auditorium during an Upper School Morning Ex. Said La Rue, “By the end, many Upper Schoolers had picked up our chant and joined us: ‘One-two-three-four, smart girls are at the door!’ People poked their heads out of classrooms and offices and clapped. The kids noticed on the videos of marches that people on the sidelines were cheering and supporting the marchers, so it was nice for them to see that when they marched.”

La Rue’s students enjoyed not only making signs but also knowing they were standing up and using their voices like adults. “Five-year-olds want to know their voices are being heard and respected. They are beginning to understand their voices matter, their voices count.”

As they continue their study of identity, La Rue’s students have been studying family structure. “Kids have brought in family photos, and we’ve been reading lots of books about different ways families come together. My family is one of adoption, so I’ve used that as a platform to share and help them understand it. It gets to the heart of what family is all about.” At the same time, the class has been studying two-dimensional shapes, so La Rue had them create “maps” of their families, which they’ve displayed on a classroom board to form a “constellation of families.” He said, “It’s been cool to watch the kids check out each other’s families and ask questions.”

La Rue has expanded his relationships with Parker families and his colleagues through his involvement with SEED: Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity. “I trained at SEED in the summer of 2015. SEED’s mission is broad, but it’s generally interested in creating positive school change through conversations about identity, equity and diversity. SEED facilitators agree to lead a yearlong seminar at their school, church, civic organization, etc. At Parker, I’ve led two seminars, one for faculty and staff and another for parents in the community. Each monthly meeting is different, but many of the threads remain the same. The meetings are an opportunity to share stories, listen to diverse points of view and reflect on how one’s personal experiences and those of others are connected to society and culture at large.”
Rozell “Prexy” Nesbitt ’62

Prexy Nesbitt has spent more than five decades as an educator, activist and speaker on Africa, foreign policy and racism. He has made more than 100 trips to Africa, including trips taken in secret to apartheid-torn South Africa. His career has also included extensive consulting and training on class, race, multiculturalism and diversity. An experienced teacher and lecturer at both the high school and university levels, he has also worked as a social worker, union organizer, special assistant to the late Mayor Harold Washington and senior program officer with the MacArthur Foundation in Chicago.

A product of the University College of Dar Es Salaam and Antioch College, he was active in the U.S., Canada and Europe in the struggle to end apartheid and worked to end colonialism in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe (former Rhodesia) and Namibia (former Southwest Africa). From 1979 to 1983, he worked worldwide as the program director of the World Council of Churches Program to Combat Racism based in Geneva, Switzerland. In the late ’80s, he served as senior consultant to the Mozambique government, organizing in North America to prevent the apartheid-backed rebel movement, RENAMO, from gaining official support from the Reagan administration and its allies.

Today, he travels the U.S. speaking on social justice issues relating to race, multiculturalism and diversity; community and labor organizing; and militarism and war, especially in relation to Africa. He continues to teach African history courses at Columbia College Chicago and leads educational and cultural tours of Southern Africa, Latin America and Chicago’s South and West Sides. He founded and leads Making the Road (MTR), an educational project that aims to make in-person links across national, ethnic and racial borders and generations to foster progressive analysis and activism on different axes of racial, social, cultural and economic justice.

My family started me on social justice issues when I was in elementary school. Also the church I belonged to, the Warren Avenue Congregational Church, was very active on social justice issues. Both my mother and father were teachers and had come from families who were very active politically. My father, along with his brother, my Uncle George, for instance, organized the redcap workers union at the Randolph Street Trailways bus station in the late 1930s. My mother, a former Parker board member, was the director of the Maxwell Street YWCA and organized the first group of children from Lawndale to join the Chicago Children’s Choir. Both were examples of living lives in which one “gave back,” as they often stated it.
How did you come to work with Dr. Martin Luther King? What was the nature of your relationship with him?

The Warren Avenue Church invited Dr. King and his organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), to make its home base there. I was returning from Tanzania at the time, and my mother suggested that I volunteer with Dr. King and the SCLC. Dr. King was interested in me because he wanted to take his nonviolent movement to Rhodesia (later called Zimbabwe), so we were on a first-name basis. He had at least two meetings with me to talk about Africa. Working with Dr. King was a great learning experience.

What brought you to Tanzania? How did this impact your life upon returning?

I went to the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania after I was rejected from joining the University College of Rhodesia. I did this through my year abroad while I was at Antioch College. The students I met there had a great impact on me, especially the students who were refugees from South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique. These classmates had nothing. Many of them had walked north out of South Africa and Namibia with only a shopping bag's worth of extra clothing while I had arrived in Dar Es Salaam with two footlockers of clothing and books. They taught me to live with very little and to appreciate what I had.

Tell us about your teaching career.

Since 1970, I have taught largely African-American, African and social change-related subjects. I have taught at Columbia College Chicago, Illinois Institute of Technology, Saint Xavier College, Mundelein College and Kalamazoo College, as well as at Parker and St. Mary's High School. The most rewarding aspect of teaching has been running into students who remember me, and remember my classes, and felt that they gained something truly beneficial to them.

What was it like to work for Mayor Harold Washington?

Working for Harold Washington was one of the great experiences of my life. I served with the special unit that answered only to Mayor Washington and his chief assistant. We were sent all over the city, addressing all kinds of problems. I have had the good fortune to work with some extraordinary leaders like Harold, Nelson Mandela, Dr. King and Samora Machel, the first president of Mozambique, which was a great opportunity for me to learn about leadership. Harold, for instance, was a very principled man. He wasn't one to work in the old Chicago "Machine" style of buying voters from church ministers by giving them jobs. He told me it was my task to liaise with the ministers who supported him by getting them lists of job openings and showing them how to apply for jobs, not just doling them out like cookies or candy.
You've consulted for and worked with leaders of foreign countries and governments. What has been most satisfying about that work?

I got to work with Nelson Mandela only in his later years, sporadically, but I was very close to his widow, Graça Machel, from Mozambique. I also was a guest in their house on various occasions and brought visitors to their home to meet them. The greatest joy I have had, from the work I’ve done in foreign countries, is getting to know people who are open to learning about people all over the world. People worldwide say to me, “Why are you going back to the United States? You’re really one of us!”

Why did you found Making the Road? What is its function and purpose?

Making the Road was founded to enable people, especially young people, to have the joy and learning opportunity that travel, and getting outside of the United States, provides. Each MTR Travel Seminar, focused on a specific transnational issue area, highlights the history of social justice movements and the challenges of today’s struggles in the countries visited as well as in the United States and globally.

How did your time as a student at Parker influence and impact the direction your life has taken?

One of my favorite memories as a Parker student was the 8th grade senior picnic, and I, an 8th grader, was fortunate to be invited by the late and famous Karen “Cookie” Kupcinet, a senior, to be her date. Another great memory has to do with Miss Marshall’s 7th grade speech class. In 1977 or ’78, I was giving a divestment (anti-apartheid) speech at Stanford University, and when I entered the auditorium, who should greet me but Miss Marshall! I announced to the overflow audience of students that my 7th grade teacher was there, and they all rose and gave her a standing ovation! It was so wonderful of them to do that and made the rest of my speech very easy that day.

Prexy Nesbitt with African scholar and professor Betsy Schmidt on a Making the Road trip to Cuba.
As an administrator it was a great joy to work with the faculty and staff. I was very honored Principal Don Monroe invited me to serve as the dean of students and later as dean of diversity. One of multiple memorable situations in my work as Parker’s dean of students was when several parents enrolled an exchange student—a young man from war-torn Bosnia—in the Upper School. Limited in his language skills and not able to transcend being an “outsider,” he didn’t mesh well with many Parker students. He therefore built a social life outside Parker with some youth from a neighboring high school. A young man from that school felt that our Bosnian student was infringing on his turf (mostly getting cozy with his girlfriend) and threatened to kill him. Because our student was accustomed to dealing with violent threats, he responded as he was conditioned to—he armed himself, including fortifying the home of the shocked friend at Parker whose home was where he was staying! When the whole sad saga threatened to intensify further, I and other administrators, working with Chicago law enforcement officials, arranged to fly our student back home to Bosnia.

I am still in touch with many Parker families whose students I worked with as the dean of students. Many are now adults and have their own families. These wonderful relationships have provided a certain constancy and continuity in my own life.

My other lasting memory is my closeness to various members of my class. We don’t meet much as a total class, but I have had the good fortune to travel the United States through my work and activities, so I’ve had the chance to encounter these old classmates of mine, and we are almost always able to revisit old memories and renew our closeness. This dynamic had a special magic and healing dimension when many of my classmates reached out to me on the occasion of my sister Roanne’s tragic death. In fact, I noticed during my student years and my sojourn as an administrator/teacher that one of the great strengths of the Parker community was its ability to come together and be a source of comfort and renewal when there was a crisis.
Alumni Reconnect

(L–R) Oran Whiting ’79, Cameron Pilcher ’12 and James Lowry ’57 at the Alumni of Color Gathering on March 21 at Café Ba-Ba-Reeba in Chicago.

(L–R) Elizabeth (Lulu) Miranda ’84, Lara Khoury ’89, Alicia Gonzalez ’96 and Gerick Smith ’89 at the Alumni of Color Gathering on March 21 at Café Ba-Ba-Reeba in Chicago.

(L–R) Genevieve Carter ’09, Upper School English teacher Theresa Collins and Upper School History teacher Andy Bigelow at the Young Alumni Happy Hour on April 12 at the Chicago Athletic Association.
(L–R) Class of 2011 members Emily Selch, Nick Demirjian, Bianca Ladipo and Makenzie Jones at the New York Regional Alumni Gathering on April 20 at Rockefeller Center.

(L–R, back row) Lhakpa Bhutia ’12, Sarah Weiss ’11, Hannah Kaminsky ’12, Bryce Fibel ’11, Blair Fischer ’11, Catherine O’Connor ’11, Katie Struve ’11, (front row) Megan O’Connor ’11, Tess Ursini ’11 and Courtney Carone ’11 at the Young Alumni Happy Hour on April 12 at the Chicago Athletic Association.

Class Notes

Parker alumni: please send your class notes to Joe Bruno, Associate Director of Alumni Engagement, jbruno@fwparker.org.

1944

Chris Holabird writes, “Congratulations on the recent Parker publication [The Live Creature] featuring Math for Meaning. I’m greatly impressed with the many ways in which math teaching has been enriched and enlivened, and I can picture math becoming one of the favorite subjects at Parker, not only because it is challenging but because it is just plain fun. Along those lines I wanted to share a note from my lifelong friendship with one of Parker’s all-time favorite math teachers, the late Barr McCutcheon. Many alumni will remember him with great affection as a teacher who made his classes fun, and I am sure he would have contributed a further definition to Sven Carlsson’s very interesting discussion of the polygon. ‘A polygon,’ Barr always said, ‘is a dead parrot.’ I think Colonel Parker would have smiled.”

1950

Alfred M. King wrote, “Recently took up bowling and after a few lessons actually had a game over 150. Never too old to learn a new skill!”

1951

Betty Heistad Barrett reports that life is good and very busy. Her many children and grandchildren keep her hopping between performances of ballet and music. She says she doesn't know where all these performers came from. Her grandchildren are growing up: three are freshmen in college, and two more go to college in the fall. She still calls Huntington, West Virginia home, but spends January through April in Naples, Florida. She keeps busy with concerts, speakers and other events and, finally, has time to read. She “has become an enthusiastic one-week-a-year Chautauquan” and looks forward to the “next one on journalism and ethics in the digital age.”

Helen Harris Brandt and Richard have sold their large home in Santa Fe and moved to a retirement community in Phoenix, which they love. She reports there are so many things to do. They retain a small apartment in Santa Fe and spend summers there.

Kathy Horween Burkman is still very active professionally with the recent publication of two books: April Cruel, a mystery, and The Drama of the Double Permeable Boundaries, about drama, film and the novel. In addition, this year, she directed two plays. She and Allan were excited about the birth of their first grandchild in December.
Karen Dettmers Grimm and her husband have moved to Hilton Head, South Carolina.

Barry Hornstein and Melanie have their mountain home in Santa Fe on the market and plan to move to a smaller place in town. They have two grown sons, no grandchildren.

Susan Lackritz Kaplan is looking forward to meeting Helen and Hattula Moholy-Nagy in Los Angeles in February around the opening of the Laszlo Moholy-Nagy retrospective exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum. Hattula and her husband, Roger Bray, still live in Ann Arbor. Hattula is now the proud grandmother of three red-headed grandsons.

Jim McCall reports that he and Carole are still in Solana Beach in the same house they've been in for 30 years. Both stay busy and active, Jim says, with the partial replacement of two knees.

Butch Pfaelzer keeps busy with travel to visit his and wife Lorna's six children and 15 grandchildren who are scattered from Boise to London. In addition, he is busy helping small social service agencies through the Executive Service Corps of Chicago and serves as vice chair of the Merit School of Music (founded by his wife, Alice, who passed away 11 years ago). In his spare time he sits on several other boards, travels and stays in good shape with Pilates.

1954
Bill Freehling writes, “In my biography of Abraham Lincoln, to be published next year, I thank (see below) my fabulous Parker history teacher Sonia Salk Heller (along with two later teachers): ‘A trio of teachers set me on the trail that culminates with this volume. Sonia Salk Heller, my high school American history teacher at Chicago’s Francis W. Parker High School, urged that political history must be based on social history in the largest sense. Arthur M. Schlesinger Junior, director of my honors thesis at Harvard College, taught that history is too important to be written for only academics. Kenneth M. Stampp, director of my PHD dissertation at the University of California, Berkeley, instructed that history for any audience must be based on rigorous academic research.”

1959
Jonna Antonow Kaplan writes, “Still living in Seattle and working with children and families. I continue to really like it. We have a new puppy, Lenny, who looks like he might be able to go into the agility ring. He’s a lot of fun. Our class has greatly diminished, which is so sad. I especially miss Pauline Dubkin, who was a sensational person.”
1960

Jim Frank, after nearly two years on dialysis, received a kidney transplant on September 30, 2016 at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. He is recovering, and after a few months, is slowly regaining his old strength. Despite his many medications to keep him going, and immunosuppressed, he's dialysis-free and very happy. Jim welcomes notes at Jim.frank1@Verizon.net.

1961

Larry Garner gave a dramatic/comedic reading of his translation of three short stories from Alberto Moravia's *Roman Tales* at the Italian Cultural Institute of Chicago in May.

Melva Ziman Novak writes, “My husband David and I have been greatly enjoying living in Toronto for the past 20 years. Until retiring recently, I reprised my work teaching high school French in several private schools here. David continues to hold an endowed chair in Jewish Studies and Philosophy at the University of Toronto. We are eagerly looking forward to spending a month this spring in Scotland where David will be delivering the 6 Gifford Lectures of 2017 at the University of Aberdeen. These lectures were established by the will of Adam Lord Gifford (died 1887) to promote the study of theology and philosophy and the relationship between religion and science. William James, Karl Barth, Hannah Arendt, Henri Bergson, Alfred North Whitehead, John Dewey, Albert Schweitzer, Reinhold Niebuhr and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks are among the notable past presenters. Needless to say, David is both humbled and honored to participate. We have been married for 53 wonderful years and have two children and five grandchildren, ages 9 to 21. Fondest greetings to all my classmates.”

1975

Nikki Pope writes, “2016 was a rocky year for many of us. We lost music legends. We aged one more year. For my classmates, we're one year closer to being 60 years old—and there was a time when I thought 35 was really, really old!

“Some really great things also happened in 2016. I reconnected with old FWP friends. My nephew got engaged. Courtney Lance ’76 and I recorded Whoopi Goldberg for the audiobook edition of our award-winning nonfiction book *Pruno, Ramen, and a Side of Hope: Stories of Surviving Wrongful Conviction*. We did a Morning Ex on the book last year. It was amazing to meet and work with Whoopi, but we also were able to meet and work with many other artists, including Bill Kurtis, Ashley Judd, Eugene Byrd and many more. FWP alumna Lisa Zane ’79 performed the story submitted by Joyce Ride, mother of astronaut Sally Ride, as a companion to the story by exoneree Gloria Killian, performed by Laraine Newman (of *SNL* and Second City). The production was a bit of an FWP old home week and a lot of Sweet Home Chicago, with Richard Steele reading a story and local sound engineer Charles Johnson doing all of the post-production work.”
“Courtney and I were excited to learn that our book is a finalist for the Audies (the Oscars of audiobooks). We already received the prestigious Earphones Award and will be in New York City in June for the awards ceremony where we will find out if we won! You can read a wonderful review of Pruno at audiofilemagazine.com/reviews/read/122227/ and listen to a clip of one performance (Whoopi Goldberg and Laraine Newman). In the true Parker spirit, we are sharing half of our royalties with the innocent men and women whose stories are told in our book. It’s available on Audible and iTunes. Courtney and I are currently working on new projects, including a selection of short stories and an audiobook of poetry written and performed by exonorees. Stay tuned and visit prunoproject.com.

“The support we’ve received from the FWP community reminds me of what a close-knit community we are. It truly is a ‘complete community’ that has uplifted us in our work to fight against wrongful conviction. More than just a class update, I want to thank my classmates, many schoolmates and the greater Parker community for being here for me and Courtney. It encourages me to keep on with this work, and you can be sure I’ll let you know about our next project (it’s in the works and I can hardly keep my mouth closed about it!).”

1978

Eric Forsberg writes, “Living one’s life seems to be a more circuitous experience than I had ever expected. When I was attending Parker (thank God I attended Parker!), I figured that my life would follow a straight line, hopefully in an assent. I imagined that my deep friendships made at Parker would be with me for my entire life like an eye or hand (one cannot trade in one’s hand). The route that I chose as a teen has proven to be more circuitous. For this I am both grateful and a bit mystified.

“In my junior year at Parker I decided that I would be an artist, specifically a filmmaker. I also decided to be a writer, a stage director, a painter, a world traveler, a musician and a spiritual seeker. Each of these journeys was supported by one or more of my close Parker friends. Chris Henry and Ralph Saunders ’79 supported my traveling and spiritual search. Charles Schneider supported my filmmaking and painting. Harrison Fried ’79 and Ken Saunders supported my writing and music, Neil Giuntoli and Peter Saltzman ’79 supported my work in the theater, and a number of my teachers supported me as an artist in general, including John Leary, [Bill] Duffy, Jim Mesple and Marie Stone. If I had gone to any school other than Parker, I may have ended up being a lawyer—or a guy living under a bridge (I actually wanted to be the first one but my artist-parents wouldn’t hear of it).

“For good or ill, I have tried to give my daughter, Lola, the same sense of potential for self-realization as Parker and my relationships there gave me. It is a hard road to trek—because it is not predictable or safe. It sure is fun, though.
“Keeping in mind the true purpose of this class note, my recent accomplishments include writing and/or directing over two dozen feature films, mostly for Syfy. The most recent film Troy 2, will be released this summer. I wrote and directed over 60 stage productions before I left Chicago in 1997. I lived in Europe twice: Paris from 1986 to 1987 and Vienna in 1996. My poems and short stories have been published all over the world in hundreds of publications. I have made and lost (and made and lost…) millions of dollars in real estate over the years (I just love to fix up old houses back to their original condition). I worked with The Falcon Project in Los Angeles, hiring local gang members to help me fix up houses in their neighborhood. In 1989, I disguised myself as a Berber so I could travel from southern Morocco along the disputed Algerian border, passing through military checkpoints, in order to meet my father in Nice. In 1996, while taking a train through war-torn Serbia in the middle of the night, a corrupt official boarded, shouting and rummaging through everyone’s bags while his men started throwing people off the train. I bribed the official with a wad of US Dollars I had hidden in my shoe and was thus allowed to travel on to safe-haven in Sofia. I moved to Los Angeles in 1997 to make movies, and I have indeed made movies. I was married for 15 years. I have a wonderful daughter. In 2010, my film Mega Piranha drew the largest viewership in Syfy Channel history (the same year my house was foreclosed on and my producer bought a ranch in Utah).

“Most recently, my father, a famous writer and religious filmmaker, died suddenly. So I am now devoting my time to delivering his materials to the Archives at Northwestern University and University of California, Los Angeles. It was not what I expected, but what is?

“It has been a great life so far—and a confusing one at times. I think that without the solid foundation of belief in myself that I got from Parker, I never could have weathered it for as long as I have. Hopefully there will be more years to come, where I can draw on my Parker power to see me through exciting adventures once more. Time and time again—my four years at Parker emerge as an unrelenting source of strength. Thank you.”
1979

Andrew Chukerman writes, “I still toil in the entertainment industry out west and manage to scrounge up some interesting projects once in a while. Most recently, I worked on the feature film Rules Don’t Apply, written and directed by and starring Warren Beatty. I am the featured solo pianist on the soundtrack, and I have a small on-camera bit. Also recorded for the new HBO series Westworld. Nearest and dearest to my heart, however, are two new musical projects, The Piaggi Suite and Song of Paradise, the latter co-produced by Chris Bensinger ’78. Our family suffered the loss of my dear father, Irwin Chukerman, in 2016, but we’re all managing. On a brighter note, I had the privilege of attending one of the Cubs-Dodgers playoff games in LA with fellow Parkerites Bruno Oliver ’83 and Peter Jacobson ’83.”

(L–R) Bruno Oliver ’83, Peter Jacobson ’83 and Andrew Chukerman.

1984

Cinematographer Ben Kufrin’s latest feature film as director of photography, a romantic comedy called The Bounce Back, opened in theaters nationwide December 9, 2016.

1989

Kim Kamin writes, “Still in Chicago in the same house across the street from my parents that Greg and I bought in 1998. Our son, Grayson Z Kamin Schementi, recently turned 13 and is in 8th grade. Jen (Pohl) Kotler ’97 is the alum I see most frequently. Her daughter and my niece have become very close friends. Also love keeping up with so many classmates via Facebook. Was particularly good to have thoughtful and intelligent perspectives and information shared during this crazy election season. I recently celebrated my second anniversary as principal, chief wealth strategist and client advisor at Gresham Partners. We are a multi-family office currently serving 90 unrelated families across the country. In many ways, my role in assisting families with their planning, philanthropy and personal needs is very similar to when I was practicing law as a trusts and estates attorney. Still teaching as an adjunct professor at Northwestern Law School and have been invited to begin teaching a course in an executive program at Booth. Northwestern awarded me with the 2016/2017 William M. Trumbull Lectureship. Since it was established in 1977, there have been only 11 past recipients of this honor.”
Dan Rosenberg’s novel *The Towers Still Stand* was the 2017 winner of the Soon To Be Famous Illinois Author Project. He was one of three finalists from a pool of 66 entries. Rosenberg’s book, his first work of fiction, is an alternate history thriller premised on the failure of the September 11 attacks. He lives in Highland Park, Illinois, with his wife, Debbie, and two boys, Jonah (17) and Evan (13).

1990

Regan Pritzker writes, “I wanted to share a great photo of a mini reunion in San Francisco recently. Eric Klinenberg ’89, a professor of sociology at New York University, is currently working at Stanford and gave a talk on building climate-resilient cities. In the audience were Melanie Nutter ’89, who runs a consulting firm dedicated to promoting urban sustainability; Katerina Christopoulos, an associate professor of medicine at University of California, San Francisco; Eric Antonow ’87, a Facebook and Google alumnus now honing his coaching and meditation skills; and me, a director of impact investing for the Libra Foundation.”

(L–R) Regan Pritzker, Katerina Christopoulos, Eric Klinenberg ’89, Melanie Nutter ’89 and Eric Antonow ’87.

1992

Allison Amend’s paperback *Enchanted Islands* was a New York Times Editor’s Pick.

1995

Elizabeth Harding is excited to share that she recently received final fellowship, which is the equivalent of tenure, with the Unitarian Universalist Association. After years of evaluations, meetings, mentorship and growth, this is a huge milestone! It will include being recognized at her denomination’s Service of the Living Tradition, which acknowledges ministers at the beginning of their fellowship process, retiring ministers and deceased ministers. She was also published on the Worship Web, an online resource for ministers and lay people within Unitarian Universalism this year.
1996

Julie (Edidin) Weisler and her husband, Larry, attended Game 3 of the World Series.

Julie (Edidin) Weisler and her husband, Larry.

1999

Jake Berlin writes, “My wife and I welcomed our first child, daughter Lydia Hayes Berlin, in November. She’s a happy, active baby and we’re thrilled (and tired!). Also, I’ve changed jobs: I’m now a managing partner of Rethink Energy, a clean energy venture capital fund focusing on companies leveraging software, data and analytics to push forward the clean energy future.”

Jenna (Blick) Martin writes, “On February 2, 2017 my husband, Jeremy, and I welcomed our son, Asa Blick Martin, into the world. He weighed 5 lbs., 7 oz. and was 18.5 inches long. We are looking forward to our many future adventures with him!”

2003

Taylor Stern is joyfully living in sunny Los Angeles, where she surrounds herself with treasured FWP connections. She is near half siblings Deborah Stern ’69, Gardner H. Stern III ’71 and Rita Stern Milch ’73, who also call West L.A. home. She proudly joined the faculty of the Wildwood School last fall teaching 9th grade humanities and coincidentally teaches the children of FWP alumnae Amy Coleman ’82 and Laurie Zerwer ’85! Last, she happily explores the Los Angeles restaurant scene with best friend Hilary Hawn and, when schedules permit, with Nick Coleman and his wife, Lily. When not “geeking” out over all things progressive education and all things culinary, she is road tripping to various California destinations with her dog, Sandy.
In Memoriam

Margot Parke ’54 “kept on going in spite of her health problems and was enthusiastic about our ‘off-cycle’ reunion last fall,” writes classmate Dorothy Ramm. “We are so glad she was able to be there with us. She also took pride in the fact that her grandchildren [3rd grader Cyrus and 1st grader Soraya] are attending Parker.” Ann (Lackritz) Fuller writes, “My sister, Susan [’51], and I visited Margot at her San Francisco apartment with a sweeping view of the city in mid-January. She was recovering from major abdominal surgery. In spite of being very weak physically, her mind and spirit were good and she appreciated our visit. Her survival for so long with serious health conditions showed her toughness and strong will to live. She talked about a planned future move to Chicago to be closer to Jason and family. As our classmates leave us, the times we have spent together at reunions become even more precious.” Christine (Chapin) Harris writes, “My last extended interaction with Margot really reflects her character and her devotion to the class. When I was helping to arrange the 60th reunion, I tried to find a venue for the dinner. Margot immediately contacted me and offered to have it at her Chicago apartment near the Water Tower. After thinking about the number that might attend, she said her apartment was too small but she would check the ‘party room’ in her building. It turned out that that space was too big. It was so kind of her to try to accommodate the class even though she already had considerable physical limitations. As it happened, Margot was in the hospital at the time of the reunion so missed it. The dinner was at Bistrot Margot and I told her I considered that to be in honor of her generosity and the very hard work she (and Judy) did in arranging our remarkable 50th reunion dinner.” John Loeb writes, “Margot was a wonderful woman and an unbelievable fighter to maintain and enjoy life to the very end of her serious condition. She never stopped.” Annick (Deutch) Smith writes, “I’m glad I got a chance to visit with Margot at our reunion and sad that she’s gone. A fine woman who will be missed.” George Stone echoed that sentiment, remembering her as “a fine person.” Phoebe Telser writes, “It’s so sad to lose yet another classmate. Margot surely put up a long and brave fight. She will be missed.” George Walker writes, “Margot was incredible—in spite of her illness she did not let it stop her… Was so good to see her at our last reunion. She and I were at the curb after the Saturday reunion dinner, she waiting for her Uber driver and me for a cab to take me back to my hotel. I asked if I could help her; she said no, she was OK, and when her driver showed up, she climbed into the car and her driver folded up her wheelchair and she took off. Fantastic!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! She will be very much missed.”
Joan Nierman Weiss arrived at Parker in 9th grade, having spent her elementary school years at two Chicago-area private schools. “Parker was very unique, and diverse for the time, and I loved that about it.” As a field hockey player and an active participant in Parker’s once-bustling Toy Shop, Weiss feels strongly, to this day, that her experiences at Parker were unlike any she had had in her previous schools and the experiences of her older siblings at their school.

She reflects on the independence, confidence and trust teachers gave her to play an active role in her own learning. “All of the teachers were very special. They treated you like they cared about you.” One experience that sticks with Weiss was, in one of her later years at Parker, visiting a police station on her own to speak with and learn more about drug-addicted individuals. She used her visit and the scenes she observed there to inform her writing for a paper. “Where else could I have gone and had this kind of experience? Parker was a thoughtful, special place.”

In the years following graduation, she married Marco Weiss, a West Coast native and attorney, and together they have traveled extensively, living in Chicago, Los Angeles and abroad in Russia, the UK and France. They have been active, longtime supporters of many cultural and social service organizations around Chicago and Los Angeles, but their support of Parker is a special one rooted in the unique educational experience Weiss received here. Like many alumni, she reminisces about the close-knit friendships she developed during high school. Her group of friends hailed from different parts of Chicago, and she reflects on how fortunate she was to have had friendships with a diverse group of people. “I had so many friends that I probably wouldn’t have met anywhere else, and I was lucky they were at Parker.”

Of his wife and her innate ability to empathize and connect with others from all walks of life, Marco says, “Joan doesn’t know the boundaries. She accepts people for who they are and what they are, and I think she learned that from her parents growing up and her experience at Parker.”

Joan Nierman Weiss graduated from Parker in 1953. She and her husband, Marco Weiss, have one son, William, and live in Chicago. Most recently, they hosted Joan’s 60th reunion gathering. They are passionate supporters of diversity initiatives and proud to support Parker through a meaningful planned gift, for which our school is forever grateful.

The Anita McCormick Blaine Planned Giving Society recognizes members of the community who have included Parker in their estate plans. For more information about the Society or planned giving, contact the Development and Alumni Office at 773.797.5520 or development@fwparker.org.