“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
Winter 2021

LEARNING BY DOING, UNDOING AND REDOING

community courage empathy

innovation perspective activism

creativity collaboration

citizenship
Contents

Learning by Doing, Undoing and Redoing
Inspiring a New Generation of Active Citizens............................................4
Writing to a Future Self...................................................................................8
Parker Weekly Expands Readership, Earns Awards...................................10
Science and Fiction Class Encourages Multiple Perspectives...............14
Acting with Empathy: Design Thinking and Innovative Ideas for Social Good.................................................................17
Alumni Activists Make a Difference by Doing...........................................22
Courage, Creativity and Community through COVID-19.......................30

A Community of Learners
Parents: Tracey Mabrey.................................................................................36
Faculty/Staff: Ashleigh St. Peters.................................................................40
Alumni: Stuart Taylor ’15..............................................................................44
Class Notes......................................................................................................48

In Memoriam..................................................................................................60

With Gratitude for Their Leadership...........................................................63

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An Introduction from Dan Frank

Parker is no stranger to struggle. We learn by reflecting on what we do, undo and redo. We lean in to learn and change, as we work and rework our ways of engaging students in their growth and development as young people emerging as citizens and leaders in a diverse democracy.

A Parker education weaves imagination with practicality to create transformative experiences for our students. Our commitment remains deep and determined as we face the grave challenges of teaching and learning during a pandemic and times of national crisis involving civic traumas of racial injustice and political conflict.

At Parker, we build on our strengths, including generating imaginative and practical ways to teach and learn and supporting one another through a mighty effort to meet the genuine and significant needs of our community—students, teachers, staff and parents—during these times. Our enduring social entrepreneurial spirit, within a culture grounded in the social motive, invites our community to participate in creating the conditions—the ideas and the resources—to make a more model home, a more complete community, a more embryonic democracy than we had yesterday.

In the face of such relentlessly difficult and troubling conditions, we have persevered, thanks to the extra generosity of ideas and fortitude throughout our school community to make a Parker education come alive this year. Whether teaching and learning in school or at home, none of this has been easy. Worried about the health and well-being of their students and themselves, teachers have learned how to simultaneously teach groups of students—some in person in classrooms, others across the hall with an assistant teacher and still others learning from home. Students, too, have had to learn in new ways and cope with the ache of isolation and social, not just physical, distancing. Yet, in meeting these significant challenges, everyone participates in a school culture with a deep well of resourcefulness and creativity to make the best ideas work in practical and workable ways. And this culture of determination develops habits of iterative thinking and practice as lifelong developmental skills, so essential for real-world, collaborative problem-solving, a true hallmark of a Parker education.

The stories in this issue of The Live Creature are indeed a tribute to Parker’s people and culture of perseverance, imagination and practicality, all qualities of a vital approach to progressive education, in which we learn by doing, undoing and redoing.
Inspiring a New Generation of Active Citizens

The 2020 election was one of the most highly anticipated in recent history and resulted in the highest voter turnout in the United States in more than a century. Parker students were aware of the historical significance of this election, and several sought more information. Senior Leila Griffin said, “I realized that I felt unaffected by the last election. I felt a sense of obligation as a young person, who would not be able to vote in this year’s election, to become more involved.”

To remedy this, Griffin enrolled in Elections 2020, a quadrennial elective taught by US history teacher Andy Bigelow, that focuses on not only the election of the new president, but the process of elections at every level, from local to national. The class breaks down the concept of “participatory democracy” and the development of our current voting system.

“As a class, we react to the most recent news and the class takes shape around those events,” said senior Elliot Landolt. “This makes the class very enjoyable because I can never predict what we will talk about or what will happen on any given day. It seems like every minute was spent checking the news and wondering, ‘Will we discuss this on Monday?’”

In addition to current events, one of the most fascinating facets of Bigelow’s class is the plethora of guests who speak directly about elections or the democratic process. These presentations create learning experiences that resonated with the many identities the Parker community comprises and allow students to stretch beyond points of view to aid in their growth and development in becoming responsible citizens.

Guests typically began with an explanation about their journey to their current positions, followed by thoughtful questions from students, who were prepared after reading each speaker’s materials or articles about their positions on issues. Students did not hesitate to ask hard-hitting questions about policy choices or previous voting records, which resulted in candid discussions.

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“We offer this class every four years, and it fills up right away,” Bigelow shared. “These are kids who are passionate about politics or want to learn more, and this class allows them to do that because it’s student-driven.”

The students’ passion is clearly visible during class discussion, with some students even arriving early to discuss current happenings in the political sphere.

Election judge and senior Bodie Florsheim (seated) assists a voter during the 2020 election.
Guests, who have offered a variety of perspectives from both sides of the aisle, have included Illinois U.S. Representative Mike Quigley, former Illinois U.S. Senate candidate Mark Curran and *Washington Post* identity politics reporter Eugene Scott.

Scott was a favorite among students due to his informative and laid-back dialogue about the influence of identity and the importance of news consumption.

“As a person who specializes in identity politics, he definitely understands how to use his words with intention,” Griffin remarked. “His work is incredibly important because he studies livelihood and how intersectionality determines political action. Besides his immense knowledge, he was extremely eloquent and seemed to truly care about our questions.”

Senior Maddie Mendeloff said, “It’s inspiring to see someone so passionate about what he does, who actually walks the walk and takes the initiative of actively exposing himself to a variety of different experiences, people and places.”

The class speakers also featured two Parker alumni: U.S. History Professor David Farber ’74 and Stuart Taylor III ’15 (see “A Community of Learners: Alumni” on page 44) who worked with Stacey Abrams at Fair Fight and most recently as a research and policy associate for Jon Ossoff during his successful race for U.S. Senate in the Georgia runoff election.

Taylor reflected on his time at Parker and said, “What I really liked about Parker is that you’re learning through discussion. It’s a huge part of understanding different points. When you figure out that these ideologies are real and applicable, I think that’s when the best learning starts.”

Taylor also advised students to work hard when no one is watching, stay informed and watch what they post on social media. His biggest advice to those interested in politics was to volunteer or intern for a campaign at any level.

Elections 2020 students already have political volunteering under their belts, as 10 hours of fieldwork is a class requirement. The pandemic restricted students to phone and text banking for candidates, but several completed their hours as student election judges.

“Students often feel empowered after the experience and glad they helped make a difference,” Bigelow noted. “It is one step towards a lifelong commitment to voting and being active in their communities.”

In addition to making a difference, one of the biggest takeaways from Elections 2020 is the ability to see things from another point of view.

“What I really liked about Parker is that you’re learning through discussion. It’s a huge part of understanding different points. When you figure out that these ideologies are real and applicable, I think that’s when the best learning starts.”
At a time when politics may seem bleak and unpredictable, this class has inspired a new generation of voters to listen and use the power of their voice and their vote.

“I want the students to walk away from this class seeing they had the opportunity to challenge someone they may or may not agree with,” said Bigelow. “It’s okay to feel discomfort, and I hope it was a spark to get them involved because so much is at stake in elections at the local, state and federal levels.”

At a time when politics may seem bleak and unpredictable, this class has inspired a new generation of voters to listen and use the power of their voice and their vote.

“This class has only uplifted my thoughts on politics!” senior Grace Conrad exclaimed. “The biggest thing Elections did was allow me to gain a greater perspective on both sides of arguments in relation to the 2020 election. Even if I don’t agree with another belief, I am still very appreciative of hearing different perspectives.”

Every four years since 2012, teacher Andy Bigelow has used the presidential election as an opportunity to educate students on the process through the Elections elective.
Every four years, the country prepares for a year of intense debates, incessant advertisements and news cycles full of election coverage as voters must decide who our next leaders should be. For students who are too young to vote, the election can sneak by as just another passing moment, but for students in 7th grade history teacher Anthony Shaker’s class, the election is a time to record one’s own personal history.

For the past three election cycles, Shaker has given his students the opportunity to capture their feelings about the quadrennial event by writing letters to themselves four years into the future.

“I love the idea of giving kids a chance to see who they were, especially around a particular milestone day like an election,” Shaker said. “Even though they can’t vote and may not know the nuance of tax policy, their views still matter. The impact of the election is still going to affect them.”

Shaker asks students to reflect on things such as their current feelings, who they are as a person and who they think they will be when they finally receive their letters as juniors.

Juniors Emma Manley and Ruby Radis were both excited to receive their pieces of nostalgia.

“Getting the letter was a complete surprise!” exclaimed Manley. “When I opened it, I knew that it was something I wrote and that it was from after the 2016 election, and that’s how I figured out that it must’ve been from Mr. Shaker.”

“I actually screamed out of excitement when I spotted my handwriting,” said Radis. “I remembered writing it, but never expected to ever get it, but I am glad I did.”

Both students appreciated reading the perspectives of their younger selves and acknowledged their growth during the past four years. Their interest in politics has matured along with them.

Manley commented, “I think that some of the things I wrote were a little naive, and I’ve definitely learned more about politics and gotten more involved since then. In 7th grade, I wanted to study political science and journalism and what’s happened in the past four years has solidified that.”

“My values have shifted as I have learned and grown over these past few years,” said Radis. “I believe that my core values have stayed the same, but I am constantly learning and reading and have gotten a lot more involved in politics.”

Inspired by the activity, Manley and Radis continued the effort and wrote letters expressing their thoughts about the 2020 election which they won’t open until the 2024 election. Said Manley, “Everyone should consider trying this whether it be for the next inauguration, election or any important event in their life. Writing the letter helped me reflect on my feelings about the election and reading the letter helped me put the last four years into perspective on both a personal and political level.”
“I love the idea of giving kids a chance to see who they were, especially around a particular milestone day like an election.”

Continuing this introspection is exactly the kind of reaction that Shaker hopes his students will have to the assignment. To him, history is a study of other people’s experiences, so what better way to educate his students on the subject than to have them document their own personal stories?

“I hope that they are constantly reflecting about being present where they are and living in the moment and creating a record of where they are in this world,” Shaker said. “What I’ve learned as a teacher is history needs to be not just studying others’ experiences, but studying your own experience within a larger context. If it’s not personal, the kids aren’t going to feel it, they’re not going to remember it, and it won’t mean anything to them.”

The personal aspect was particularly meaningful to junior Jacob Boxerman as he recognized so much of his younger self in his current feelings. “Reading a letter written by me, but four years younger, was in all honesty a strange experience. In many ways we’re the same person as we were in the past, but in many other ways we change into a new person as the years go by. It’s a unique experience to hear your younger inner thoughts. It’s rare that the fruits of a class project don’t appear until four years after it’s done.”

The four-year gap between 7th and 11th grade is significant for students developmentally, and for Shaker, that span of time is far enough away to show distance, but close enough that students remember who they were.

“I think when you’re 12 and 13, you’re just starting to peek outside of who you are within your family,” Shaker said. “People think of 7th grade as painful, but I love knowing that the kids I taught look back on it fondly—not just for me, but for Parker and for the other teachers, that they’re open to knowing who they were as 7th graders rather than horrified by it.”

Junior Eli Moog believes the assignment should be done across the school. “I hope this activity is adapted for every grade because it is an amazing time capsule and shows a really important moment in American history.”

This type of curriculum shows how Parker encourages students to exercise personal and civic power by connecting thought with action. By validating each student’s reflection, this assignment continues to foster their personal voice and the growth in understanding and confidence when they choose to use it.

Shaker said, “It’s part of the Parker ethos to think about not just doing the work, but what it means to do the work and connecting to it on a personal level.”

Then and now: Jacob Boxerman.

Then and now: Eli Moog.
Parker Weekly Expands Readership, Earns Awards
By Kate Tabor, English Department Co-Chair and 7th grade teacher

Learning by Doing, Undoing and Redoing

Parker’s Student Publications Office on the fourth floor is dark. But the quiet at the end of the hall is misleading because The Parker Weekly continues business as usual, reporting on what is happening inside Parker and throughout Chicago. The pandemic has moved the publication primarily online, and this year’s editors and writers have taken up the challenge of collaborating in new ways.

During a global pandemic, when it is impossible to be together to collaborate, the editorial staff, writers and photographers have risen to new levels of professionalism and purpose. Dealing with new school schedules that impact working time, Zoom fatigue that makes communication all the harder and a chaotic and rapidly changing world that provides more news per minute than ever before, The Weekly staff has kept the presses hot and delivered quality content throughout this trying time.

During a global pandemic, when it is impossible to be together to collaborate, the editorial staff, writers and photographers have risen to new levels of professionalism and purpose.

The “presses” have mostly been virtual this year, with not only the usual breaking news stories, but the issue proper relying on The Weekly’s website for distribution. The site was once available only to individuals with a Parker email address. Because of their consistent drive for excellence, the staff was able to take The Parker Weekly public in its online form last spring, allowing access to the paper for anyone with the website link.

Working with a full staff of writers, copy and section editors and photographers is a tall order. Editors-in-Chief and seniors Julia Marks, Nicholas Skok and Zachary Joseph, with online editor and junior Jacob Boxerman, have led The Weekly’s work this year.

The Weekly started its online edition in 2015 using the Student News Organization’s (SNO) framework and support. SNO provided the technology template and opened up The Weekly to not only the tools, but a wider audience for their writing. The online editor submits stories for national recognition as Best of SNO, and each year Parker’s writers have claimed more awards than the previous year. So far this year, five writers have been awarded Best of SNO. Junior Emma Manley was the first with her feature “Nourishing NYC” about alumna Tania Maree Giordani ’16, who has created a nonprofit to support protesters in New York (see “Alumni Activists Make a Difference by Doing” on page 22).
Sophomore Samantha Gaines followed with “Books for Change,” a feature on Riya Jain ’24, who has published two picture books to help young children understand important health issues. The November issue earned two “Bests” for features by freshman Arjun Kalra and senior Zachary Joseph. And most recently, junior Tess Wayland received recognition for her article on Parker’s decision to rename Circle Drive after Jo Anderson. (Read these winning articles at fwarker.org/weeklysno.)

Creating and publishing remotely is challenging, but the paper had taken much of its production into a virtual space long before the pandemic forced the Publications Office to go dark. The Weekly moved its process tracking and editing online when English Department Co-Chair Matt Laufer was advisor to the paper. Writing and publishing The Weekly was then part of the Newspaper Production class, and Laufer and his staff developed online systems with the Google suite for communication, collaboration, editing and organization. This solid, creative use of available tools developed into an integrated system of writing, mentoring, editing and production. Even without the structure of a class, editors can instantly share their comments and ideas with their writing staff while section and copy editors can work in real time with their classmates. Staff and editors easily determine where a story is in process and who has had a chance to read and comment.

One of the impressive things about the work this year has been the development of new writers. News and feature writing have distinct characteristics, and The Weekly editors
Work with new staff writers to help them build their skills. There are clear requirements for story sources, quote-checking, fact-checking and perspective. Beginning with Journalism 101 in the weeks before school and continuing during in-school mini-sessions, the editors help writers with adhering to AP style, avoiding editorializing and shaping their stories. New staff writers have many sources for support. In addition to coaching from *The Weekly* Co-Advisor Eric Rampson, this year’s managing editor, junior Tess Wayland, has been tasked with helping new staff writers.

In some ways, the year has been frustrating for the editors-in-chief. They have had to find ways to encourage writers to make their deadlines and be present for meetings. When we are in the building, it’s easier to walk out of the Publications Office and find a writer who is late with a draft or ask a classmate to join a meeting. Working from their satellite offices, the editorial board must make an extra effort to connect with columnists and writers. With the world focused on the pandemic and its response, the content of the paper could also be singular, but *The Weekly* writers have taken a wider view. Stories like “Administrators of Color Conference Enters Third Year,” Kalra’s feature on the ACIS conference, looked

With the world focused on the pandemic and its response, the content of the paper could also be singular, but *The Weekly* writers have taken a wider view.
beyond the differences between an in-person and virtual event to celebrate the positives of accessibility and connection. Joseph’s feature on first-time voters looked closely at a once-in-a-lifetime experience during an election with global importance.

As often with long-term, successful student initiatives, the current editorial board stands on the shoulders of the teams who have gone before. Each team brings its own spirit to the work, and before they have leadership positions, editors will have worked with previous teams as staff writers and copy and section editors. Each team has brought their vision and passion for journalism to The Weekly. This team’s goal is to keep students engaged and informed amidst the pandemic and connect students to each other and the Parker community. It is the nature of the work that The Weekly will look closely at the institution that is the school, holding it to its mission and ideals. The success of The Weekly is not without effort, and it is the culmination of years of excellence.

Though student tenure on staff is limited to the four years of Upper School, The Parker Weekly has been a student-run publication for 110 years. From letter press in 1911 to the WordPress of today, The Weekly staff continues to provide insight and understanding about the world in and around Parker.

Check out all the latest Parker news at parkerweekly.org.

The Weekly’s editors-in-chief, all seniors, shared some thoughts about publishing the newspaper during this particular academic year:

One personal goal I have is to both inform the student body and give my writers the necessary tools to become great journalists, should they choose to continue this passion in the future. If a writer walks away from this year feeling like they learned something new about journalism or broadened their horizons through stepping outside their comfort zones, I have accomplished my goal.

—Zachary Joseph

This year, my goal is to continue to foster the community that The Weekly provides, even as we all learn remotely. I believe it not only unites the staff, but the school as a whole. Through laughing at memes on the Backpage that describe challenges of online school or reflecting on more serious pieces that foster discussion, it’s important to me that the sense of empowerment and community The Weekly provides does not disappear during an unpredictable time.

—Julia Marks

The pandemic has really put pressure on younger writers to learn the basics of journalism quicker and with less teaching, which we never envisioned. [The challenges of operating online have forced] younger writers to improve their writing on their own, and they have done a tremendous job. … We have worked on ways to make their transition into leadership roles easier next year. We want to do whatever we can to make sure the pandemic did not put our future editors and editorial board at a journalistic disadvantage.

—Nicholas Skok
Science and Fiction Class Encourages Multiple Perspectives

When considering core subjects in school, science and English are usually on opposite ends of the spectrum. Science classes typically lean toward laboratory experiences, formulaic approaches and mathematical equations with specific processes, while English classes entail free-form discussion, personal interpretation and creative writing. Both subjects, though different in approach, provide essential skills that prepare students to be responsible citizens who are eager to participate in democracy. What would happen if these concepts were combined into one course?

In 2016, while on a long flight home from an alumni event in San Francisco, two longtime Parker educators, US English teacher Michael Mahany and US science teacher Xiao Zhang, considered the possibility of this combination through a joint endeavor that would eventually lead to Science and Fiction.

The Science and Fiction class asks students to explore how factors outside the realm of science, such as societal context and literature, often drive the scientific discovery process. The course combines deep discussion about passages in literature with actual scientific processes of two prevalent issues in today’s society: climate change and artificial intelligence.

“Both of us wanted to try something different,” Zhang said. “We both have electives in our primary fields that we love to teach, but we also recognize the value of different viewpoints, so we built a bridge to reach out and develop a course that integrates multiple perspectives.”

With a combined 63 years at Parker, these teachers understand the importance of innovation in education. The administration strongly supported the effort, as the class aligns perfectly with the school’s mission to create learning experiences through curriculum that resonates with the many different identities the Parker community comprises.
Curriculum

Through the lenses of climate change and artificial intelligence, Mahany and Zhang worked to make the class as collaborative as possible and truly incorporate their respective subject areas every day.

“We work very hard to put the two perspectives together and not separate them as science vs. humanities,” Zhang described. “Students don’t see them as two ends of the spectrum anymore; they see it as more of a mixed, fluid spectrum.”

The course requires students to read contemporary science fiction, including novels, graphic novels and short stories, and conduct experiments and research as part of the scientific discovery process. Zhang had hoped to be able to include more laboratory experiments in the course, specifically on climate change elements such as the albedo effect and the greenhouse effect, but he had to put these experiences on hold due to the pandemic.

“For each part of the class, there are activities that Xiao has come up with in terms of science, and there are texts that we have come up with,” Mahany said. “It’s been kind of interesting to try to take something that I would have generally done in English, like a close study of a passage, and apply it to a scientific document.”

A great example is “Sunshine State,” a short story by Adam Flynn and Andrew Dana Hudson, which features a positive response to climate change surrounding the wetlands in Florida. Students prepared for the reading of this text by learning about the ecology of wetlands and how climate change is affecting the rising sea levels.

Students brought English and science together when they completed an assignment that required scientific knowledge they had learned from the story and the identity and analysis of important passages.
“I think the class is really interesting because usually when I’m reading creative stories, I’m trained to analyze the character development and plot line,” shared senior Emily Simon. “In this course, we’re challenged to do that, but also take it a step further and actually look at the science behind what they’re doing and how they’re affecting their surroundings. Even though it’s maybe not a realistic piece, there’s still a lot of analysis and things we can learn from science, which is really cool.”

Impact
Ultimately, Mahany and Zhang hope to show how combining science and the humanities is essential to students’ development as model citizens.

“I want students to take away that everything connects to something else, and that’s what it’s like in the real world,” Mahany said. “You’re a scientist, but you have to be able to write coherently, you have to understand language and the impact of language. You have to be able to figure out how you’re thinking about has an impact on individual people.”

Xhang added, “I want the students to be able to discern the facts they encounter. Examining facts and values will be very helpful in becoming a citizen who understands the importance of critical issues, but perhaps also in becoming leaders in resolving problems within those issues.”

Seventeen students enrolled in the course this semester, and Mahany and Zhang hope the interest continues and that the course becomes a model for interdisciplinary education at Parker. By teaching students how to be open to different perspectives and encouraging new ways of thinking, Science and Fiction is a transformational opportunity to stretch beyond current points of view.
When Middle and Upper School Library and Information Services Specialist Annette Lesak presented the opportunity to apply for a new venture called Project Invent in 2019, then-sophomore Talia Albert was immediately intrigued. “I had never been this excited for any other club or anything else like it.” Albert applied, and she and eight other students became part of Lesak’s inaugural class dedicated to Project Invent.

Project Invent is a national nonprofit organization that inspires students to become innovative thinkers and creative problem solvers. Each team has a community partner—a person confronting a difficulty in their life—and the students use design thinking and engineering to invent a device that helps alleviate the community partner’s difficulty.

“I am so proud and impressed with the commitment, enthusiasm and perseverance the Vita Voca team showed while school was meeting in person, and even more so when the pandemic presented a new hurdle in their project.”

At the culminating event, Demo Day, student teams travel to New York or the Bay Area and pitch their proposed prototypes to entrepreneurial and design thinking professionals to potentially earn seed funding for developing their inventions.

The 2019–20 team started by interviewing their community partner, then-junior Grayson Schementi, who suffers from food allergies, to learn about his daily life and every consideration he takes when he eats.

To fully understand the magnitude of Schementi’s challenge, the team explored his perspective. They documented their own food intake for a day and separated the items into two categories: Food Grayson Could Eat and Food Grayson Could Not Eat. Afterward, the students realized just how much food fell into the latter category.

“It was one of those moments where you’re like, wow, this really is a big thing,” said then-sophomore Ruby Radis. “He has to think about it constantly. It’s not something that’s a one-and-done fix; he has to live with it.”

Once they established the importance of their work, the team began flooding the whiteboard walls in the TIDES Garage with sticky notes full of ideas. Under Lesak’s direction, and with the support of Lower and Intermediate School Library and Information Services Specialist Mary Catherine Coleman and Lower and Intermediate School Technology Integration Specialist Sarah Beebe, the team began combining ideas to create Vita Voca, a life-saving kit to help administer aid to someone who suffers an allergic reaction.

“It has a built-in phone and voice instructions, kind of like a defibrillator, so we took inspiration from that,” said Albert. “There are also compartments, which was someone else’s idea. It was kind of cool that we started out with literally more than 100 ideas, and we brought it down into our own little kit.”

The Vita Voca team also sought additional expertise and advice from Parker parent Dr. Ruchi Gupta, director of the Institute for Public Health and Medicine’s (IPHAM) Center for Food Allergy & Asthma and professor of pediatrics and medicine at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Dr. Gupta provided feedback and offered probing questions to the team to enhance their invention.

Due to pandemic restrictions, Parker’s 2020–21 Project Invent team collaborated entirely online. These screenshots show an activity team members engaged in using the augmented reality application CoSpaces. Team members worked together to make specific objects within the virtual 3-D space.

“This is an opportunity to make something that actually helps people. It’s super-interesting and cool, and I never even thought it was possible.”

Vita Voca, a life-saving kit to help administer aid to someone who suffers an allergic reaction.

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After additional development and fine tuning, Vita Voca was ready to present at Demo Day. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the team was unable to travel to New York, so the event took place online. The virtual version did not hinder the team’s performance, and they earned $600 of seed funding to continue working on their prototype through the iteration process.

Lesak said, “I am so proud and impressed with the commitment, enthusiasm and perseverance the Vita Voca team showed while school was meeting in person, and even more so when the pandemic presented a new hurdle in their project. The students showed enormous creativity and empathy in the development of their invention. It's extraordinarily difficult to invent something brand-new—our brains are always shooting down ideas before we have a chance to even share them—and the Vita Voca team stretched themselves and worked together to design and build something that could truly have life-saving impact. They were also a lovely bunch of students to hang out with and brought so much fun energy to the project.”

During the current academic year, some members of the original Vita Voca team—Albert, Radis, junior Sofia Brown and sophomores Yazmin Velazquez and Krystal Xu—are working on the prototype in the Year 2 track of Project Invent, called Accelerate. Though no longer in the formal class, the team meets via Zoom once a week and continues trying to bring their invention to fruition.

“I never thought of inventing as a real thing because inventing something is such a big thing,” said Brown. “It’s what adults do. This is an opportunity to make something that actually helps people. It’s super-interesting and cool, and I never even thought it was possible.”

Vita Voca’s hard work has inspired more students to join Project Invent with a new topic for 2020–21. Under the direction of Middle and Upper School Technology Integration Specialist Seth Bacon, a new set of students is hoping to do “everything to help,” as they venture into designing their own product.

Teacher Seth Bacon helped to manage virtual workspaces, timelines and to-do lists to ensure the entire team could track with each other’s efforts while working physically apart.
This new group is helping their community partner, Edgar, a friend of Bacon’s who suffers from a disease called Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, which causes chronic pain in his hands that can worsen when he overuses them.

Like the Vita Voca team, Bacon’s class interviewed Edgar to determine what they might invent to be most helpful. “Some of the needs we uncovered were pain management, what happens after what he calls ‘flare ups,’ when he uses his hands and they hurt a lot, and then what you do next,” explained Bacon. "He needs help with that situation, so we’re in the process of coming up with ideas to help.”

As with Vita Voca, the pandemic has affected Bacon’s class, but the distance between members hasn’t

Members of Vita Voca had an opportunity to learn more about human-centered design directly from Project Invent Founder and Director Connie Liu (R).
stopped them from working hard on team-building and tinkering while learning remotely.

“Ideally we would be in person with that idea of ‘tinkering’ and experimenting and building something and letting it fall apart and learning the lessons from that in more of a drawn-out and interesting way,” Bacon said. “The TIDES Garage is the perfect place to dream up a crazy idea and build, and we are attempting to recreate that specific experience over Zoom using Padlet.”

Padlet is a digital platform that allows for collaboration and ideation through online sticky notes, file-sharing and features that allow multiple people to work in the same area simultaneously despite being apart.

“I’ve really enjoyed the empathy aspect. You always hear the phrase, ‘walk a mile in their shoes,’ and I never took that seriously until this project, where I had to relate to one specific person.”

“Collaborating with everyone has been the highlight so far,” said junior Suzanne Alden “There are so many interesting ideas, and each person brings different things to the table, which makes it fun.”

Though they have not yet fully realized their idea, the students recently received vital feedback from industry experts as they begin to finalize their invention. “It was great to get a new perspective from different people,” commented junior Rebecca Bellick. “We learned to try not focusing on too many things and keep it simple and basic, which is important for our process.”

The team has already taken away important facets of the project and an idea Parker aims to instill in all students: acting with empathy.

Junior Ava Rosenberg said, “I’ve really enjoyed the empathy aspect. You always hear the phrase, ‘walk a mile in their shoes,’ and I never took that seriously until this project, where I had to relate to one specific person.”

For Bacon, the process illustrates how students grow into their own. “I think the agency is one of the most exciting parts of the program where students do this on their own with their own ideas and volition and carry through. I definitely see those feelings of pride and accomplishment with the Vita Voca folks and sense this in my new crew. It perfectly fits into the idea of being an active citizen and participating and creating your own ideas and space.”

Both groups involved in Project Invent are not only using their own voices, but they are connecting reflection with action and cultivating creative problem-solving through teamwork and collaboration.

Demo Days for both teams will take place virtually this spring.
Alumni Activists Make a Difference by Doing

**Learning by Doing, Undoing and Redoing**

Parker empowers students to take action when they feel passionately about a project, a cause or an activity. This engagement often continues to manifest after they graduate, whether provoked by events in society at large or personal motivation to make a difference. Several recent alumni have demonstrated, even during a pandemic, the ability to create change, improve lives and make an impact.

**Nourish NYC**

“Because of how I was raised, I believe activism is a daily commitment. It’s the intention behind your actions. It’s thinking about who you’re giving your money and your time to. It’s following through on these intentions even, and especially, when it’s not convenient.”

So said Tania Maree Giordani ’16 in an article for *Bon Appetit* magazine’s “healthyish” newsletter. Living in New York City and on a leave of absence from her studies at Barnard College, she was determined to take action during the first wave of protests following the murder of George Floyd in May. “I went to a protest and realized I’d shared my water bottle with three people, which is questionable during normal times, but especially bad during a pandemic. Also, it was very hot out, and my mask was basically useless after 30 minutes because it was wet. I wished I had extra masks.”

Giordani, who is immuno-compromised and has avoided going outside during the pandemic,
looked in vain for a fund supporting protestors. “I came up with NourishNYC
and hoped some people I knew would contribute,” she explained. “I thought I
might raise $200, maybe $1,000 max. I never imagined I’d raise $120,000!”

NourishNYC, Inc. is a community organization that aims to build
and practice a holistic approach to community care by centering
the needs of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities in its home base, New
York City, as well as Washington DC and Puerto Rico. The organization
partners with local businesses to provide water, snacks, transportation,
first-aid kits and personal protective equipment to protestors. “Our
operations currently include meal distribution, a partnership with a
group called The Fridge Girls to supply menstrual products to community
fridges in the Bronx and a mental wellness fund,” Giordani said.

Giordani has taken on a few assistants in the months since she
launched the organization but is mostly handling things by herself and has
big plans. “I’m going to learn as much as I can and build relationships and
do good things with that knowledge. I really want to open a community
center, which furthers our mission.”

Giordani has a history of community work, first inspired by her
mother, who has been an advocate for equitable access to education. “I’ve
followed in her footsteps. It was very ingrained in me as a child to always
give back, but if you’re doing it right, it’s a mutual relationship: How can we both
learn something from this? Like when I taught English as a second language, my
students taught me Spanish.”

She organized fundraisers while at Parker, including one for the survivors
of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. “Parker was so cool to just let me do it,” she
recalled. And, as she shared in the Bon Appetit article, “One of my high school
educators often assigned ‘smile at the sun’ for homework. It was my work
then; it is my work now. And it is my work to share that warmth with others
as well.” That teacher was Upper School English teacher Stacey Gibson.

“She is one of the most special people in this world,” Giordani
exclaimed. “I’m so grateful to her; she taught me to honor my humanity,
especially as a Black woman student, to remember who I was, remember I
deserve joy. That has gotten me through so much in my post-high-school life.”

Momentum Seekers
Sometimes people want to take
action but don’t know where to
begin. Filling this need was key to
the creation of Momentum Seekers
(momentumseekers.org), founded by
four members of Parker’s class of 2010.

“Right after the death of George
Floyd in May, everything exploded
in Chicago,” said Sam Zoll, founder
and chairman. “The protesting and
violence downtown hit me hard. I
really wanted to do something, but I
felt helpless. I couldn’t protest because
of COVID, but not everyone has to
hold the sign in the front yelling at
the police. There are lots of ways to
help, like bringing people medical
supplies or water, helping get the
word out. I realized I could use my
existing skills to help this cause.”
I’m a designer and engineer, so I’m most comfortable on the computer. I worked with a friend, Oscar Baker ’14, to create an automated email templating tool (justiceforgeorgenow.com), which helped people contact the appropriate authorities to help stop the officers who had not been charged initially with Floyd’s murder. This quick and easy approach to activism was extremely successful and raised the question, ‘How could we create a clear and accessible way for people to get involved with social activism on a larger scale?’ That’s when Momentum Seekers started to take shape.”

Zoll then contacted former Parker classmates Joe Abrahamson, Sam Cothern and Mason Friedman, who had all remained close since graduating. When Zoll expressed his frustration about the difficulty of sifting through the resources for contributing and participating, they decided to create a guide for activists, from rookies to experts, to learn and create change. They combined their expertise to form Momentum Seekers: Abrahamson had earned a bachelor’s degree in sports management and communications from the University of Vermont and a master’s degree in sports leadership from Northeastern University, Cothern earned a degree in economics from Hobart and William Smith College, Friedman...
had a bachelor of science degree in advertising from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and an associate degree in graphic design from the Illinois Institute of Art, and Zoll had earned his bachelor of science in architecture from the University of Michigan and participated in an advanced software engineering program through Hack Reactor.

Abrahamson had been quarantining on the East Coast due to potential exposure to the virus. “That made me feel even more useless, and I was surrounded by people involved in the movement. My roommate, a Black man my age, related his experience living in America. With my background of white privilege, I had never had someone close to me sharing that perspective, and it was a path to getting involved. I wanted other people to know there were many ways to help in a capacity they’re comfortable with.”

Momentum Seekers believes a person’s newness to activism should never limit their ability to create impact. The group provides “easy-to-use resources for learning and action, so you can get to what’s most important—fighting for change, sustainably.”

Friedman is using his expertise to help develop the organization’s brand. “I’m working to create a path moving forward in terms of short-term and long-term goals. We have great contributors and laid down the foundation with an active, diverse board. A little management can lead to many great things.”

Cothern recalled 8th grade at Parker for the seeds of activism in his life. “When I was in David Fuder’s 8th grade English class, we were involved in STAND (Students Taking Action Now Darfur) and protesting at City Hall. I found real excitement in that. George Floyd was another opportunity to engage a new generation of kids motivated to get involved.” Abrahamson remembered canvassing for then-presidential candidate Barack Obama in Indiana in 2008. Friedman has found Parker’s “everything to help and nothing to hinder” mantra guiding him in this effort.

“There are lots of ways to help, like bringing people medical supplies or water, helping get the word out. I realized I could use my existing skills to help this cause.”

In addition to focusing on Black Lives Matter, Momentum Seekers invested time and energy in encouraging millennials to vote. Said Friedman, “The One Vote Matters campaign was to show individual votes really do count. We referenced past elections that were won by 100 or 200 votes. In 2016, millennials registered but didn’t vote because they didn’t think their votes would make an impact. This time they were coming out in droves. I like to think our campaign made a difference.”

Momentum Seekers has applied for status as a tax-exempt, charitable organization to expand its scope of activities, hire staff (the organization is all-volunteer currently) and ramp up its fundraising efforts. “At first we were Black Lives Matter-centric with some attention to voting as it affected that movement,” explained Abrahamson. “Now we are planning to aggregate resources for women’s rights, environmental justice, LGBTQ issues, movements that need to be showcased in our society.”
Equal Justice Works
Eliana Green ‘11, who partly credits Parker with developing her mentality of being a global citizen, has long had a strong interest in learning about the African diaspora. She received her undergraduate degree in sociology with a concentration in social inequalities, along with a minor in African and African-American studies, from Loyola University New Orleans. She traveled extensively—to Cuba, Belize, Guatemala, Panama, Costa Rica and more—then worked for the Louisiana Department of Corrections in reentry from a social services perspective. That experience led her back to Loyola to earn a law degree with a certificate in social justice.

Most recently, Green’s passions and professional aspirations have been coming to life through a two-year fellowship with Equal Justice Works—“a left-leaning think tank that develops and mobilizes the next generation of lawyers committed to justice, sort of like the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps,” she described. Equal Justice Works accepts proposals from individuals and connects them to funders, which sponsor their projects, and nonprofits, which partner in the work (read more about Green’s fellowship at equaljusticeworks.org/fellows/elianagreen/).

Sponsored by Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) and global law firm Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP, Green is working with the California-based nonprofit Root & Rebound Reentry Advocates, which helps people navigate the collateral consequences of having a criminal record. Root & Rebound’s mission is to restore power and resources to the families and communities most harmed by mass incarceration through a three-prong model of legal advocacy, public education and policy reform and litigation (read more about Green’s role at rootandrebound.org/our-team/elianagreen/).

“My project leverages the organization’s holistic model to obtain reparations owed to the Black community for America’s failed War on Drugs,” said Green, who is based in Oakland. “Reparation means to ‘repair a harm,’ and a huge economic harm has been done. For example, California has a robust cannabis industry. How do we ensure we’re being equitable economically to account for the fact that some (mostly white) people are getting rich and others (mostly Black and Brown) are in jail or getting killed in their homes during no-knock drug raids like Breonna Taylor?”

Green assists with a wide range of civil legal issues that result from an individual’s criminal record, such as expungement of records and legal representation in occupational licensing hearings. “I had a client—with a master’s degree—who wanted to be a therapist and provide mental health services for her community, but she had a decade-old marijuana conviction creating a barrier. We’re trying to bring attention to people with the benchmarks for success who are being penalized in an area that others are profiting from.”

Green’s work also focuses on providing legal compliance training “We’re trying to bring attention to people with the benchmarks for success who are being penalized in an area that others are profiting from.”
and technical assistance for cannabis corporations to develop equitable hiring practices and create corporate social responsibility initiatives that center on those most harmed by cannabis prohibition. She has been working with Viola Brands, owned by former NBA player Al Harrington, and the company’s nonprofit arm, Viola Cares. With Viola’s collaborative support, she was the primary author of A New Leaf: A ‘How-To Guide’ for Successful Reentry After A Cannabis Conviction, which aims to help individuals with drug-related convictions advocate for themselves during their reentry process.

In addition, Green is educating individuals about the collateral consequences of a criminal record beyond incarceration. “Let’s say you’re offered probation—it may seem like a win, but you’d have a felony on your record, which likely means you’ll have trouble getting a job or finding housing.”

She continued, “My job changes every day. HPE believes in my vision, so I have a lot of autonomy and creative space to invent my own programming. And California is a cool place to do this, given it was the first state to legislate a study on the ways it economically benefited from the institution of slavery and how to make amends.”

With her fellowship funding ending in a few months, Green hopes to bring the knowledge and “out of the box” ideas she’s gained home to Chicago and pitch an advanced iteration of this project to other funders, with an eye to national decriminalization in the next few years. While she’s not in the performing arts, Green said she draws inspiration and her creative spirit from her younger sister, musician Yaffe Green ’20. Though Green is licensed to practice law in California and recently passed the Illinois Bar Exam, she noted, “I’m working on my title. I don’t want to be a lawyer; I’m more of a sociologist and community organizer who happens to have knowledge of the law.”
Women’s Suffrage to Women’s March

From a very young age, Jen O’Connor ’10 had a camera “attached to my hand,” she recounted. “I filmed everything; I was always into that kind of storytelling.” So it was no surprise that, after her four years in Parker’s Upper School, she studied film and television at the University of Denver, including a semester in London working for CBS and its news magazine program 60 Minutes.

She started her professional career in sports television production at Intersport, a media and marketing firm. After a few years, she launched her own business, expanding her expertise beyond the professional sports world to include other types of production, such as home renovation programs and branded content. Among the programs she has produced are Courage in Sports, an annual program for CBS’s inspirational stories; Hockey City Classic live at Soldier Field; College Football’s Open Season on CBS; ESPN’s annual College Slam Dunk and 3-Point Championship and its annual Under Armour All America Game; content for the Sundance Film Festival; and CNBC’s The Deed, a home renovation program.

Earlier this year, though, she received a phone call that caused a sharp change of direction. “A producer I worked with, someone who really makes things happen, wanted to do a piece for the Democratic National Convention (DNC). I typically stay away from the political space, but this was going to focus on women and female empowerment in the context of the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote. So I was on board, along with two other women.” Creating the piece presented several challenges. Due to the pandemic, the team could not film anything new, instead having to dig up all the archival footage working completely from their homes. The work began in mid-July, giving the team only three to four weeks until the DNC in late August. “This was one of the largest, quickest shows I’ve ever done,” O’Connor said. “And though I have mostly broadcast TV experience, this was also digital. Some of our editors were overseas so the work took place literally 24/7, but as a producer, you’re used to working around the clock.”

The final product, “America Rising: From Women’s Suffrage to the Women’s March,” incorporated archival footage of the Suffragist movement combined with modern-day coverage of marches, women in politics and more. O’Connor pulled all the clips to help tell the story visually and participated in writing

“I typically stay away from the political space, but this was going to focus on women and female empowerment in the context of the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote. So I was on board, along with two other women.”
the narration, which was voiced by actress Alfre Woodard. “We finished in time to air on the third night of the DNC, right before Hillary Clinton spoke,” O’Connor shared. “That timing was a surprise to all of us, it was very exciting!” She was also excited to use an as-yet unreleased song by Jessi Wilson, “Keep Risin.” (View the video here: fwparker.org/OConnorLink)

O’Connor also produced the COVID In Memoriam for the DNC’s second night, which she had to put together by herself with only a few days’ notice. “It was so tough to do this, talking to families who had lost loved ones, but it was amazing to have one of the late John Prine’s unreleased songs from his family.” (View the video here: fwparker.org/OConnor10.)

Although this project was new territory for O’Connor, she noted, “Everything I produce is human storytelling so it was easy to transition into this activist-type piece.”
Courage, Creativity and Community through COVID-19

Parker’s close community of teachers, learners and families have faced this year of distance head-on with a degree of courage, creativity and conviction that Colonel Francis Wayland Parker himself surely would commend.

From devising plans for a safe return to learning on campus to supporting the social, emotional and academic needs of remote learners, from the herculean efforts of integrating safety protocols to connecting with parents, alumni and the community in new ways, there has been no shortage of innovation this year.

Learning by Doing, Undoing and Redoing

It Takes a Village

Morning drop-off and afternoon pickup have always been busy times on campus. Now that at-home and on-campus health checks are a part of daily practice for learners in the building, these normal routines require the time and care of many more employees—including Principal Dan Frank, the Division Heads, Development Office staff and more—to ensure a smooth and efficient transition. What Peter Hofmann and 4th grade K-walkers once managed now requires the time and care of 25–30 employees.
What Does Learning Look Like?
Students in Junior Kindergarten through 8th grade had the option to learn on campus beginning in September. A class now requires at least twice the physical classroom space of a normal academic year, offering opportunities to use the campus in creative new ways. While instruction is still occurring in classrooms, students are also using the cafeteria, atriums, hallways, gyms, Kovler Family Library and the Heller Auditorium. Upper School students joined their younger counterparts on a hybrid schedule in January. Those opting to learn remotely are adapting to learning from teachers in a different setting, whether their teacher is in an empty classroom or an at-home Zoom studio.
The Student Experience

Despite distance, mentors are finding meaningful ways to engage with students through their personal passions in a range of clubs and activities, both in person and on screen.

With more than 75 virtual clubs, organizations and affinity groups available, students looking to pursue interests beyond the classroom have many options to consider, such as astrophysics, baking, investing, poetry, the environment and more.

Fall athletics were available only to Upper School students, limited to three sports: Girls’ Tennis, Golf and Cross Country. Parker’s student-athletes jumped at the chance to get outside and get moving, swelling the ranks of these three teams to unprecedented numbers. Cross Country participation doubled, Golf nearly tripled, and Girls’ Tennis experienced a nearly fivefold increase!

Beyond participation, these student-athletes gave their Parker best all season long, earning a number of accolades:

- The Girls’ Cross Country team finished second at the ISL Conference Meet, with junior Sofia Brown finishing 25th among 120 competitors in the final meet.
- In her first year on Parker’s golf team, sophomore Lucy Wrubel advanced to regional competition—Parker’s first student-athlete in the state finals since 2013.
- Golf Captain and senior Nicholas Skok qualified for the Sectional Tournament for his fourth consecutive year and finished the season well ahead of half the participants in the final Sectional matchup.

Cultivating Community Despite Distance

The essential energy and enthusiasm of our parents, guardians, alumni and extended community has fortunately found new outlets.

The Parents’ Association (PA) has been the driving force in developing new ways for parents and guardians to engage with each other and support the school:

- As a way of celebrating the spirit and diversity of families, the PA created Community Connect, a virtual event platform offering online experiences generously donated by Parker alumni and parents. Offerings to date have included cooking classes, yoga, meditation, flower arranging, trivia and a special Holiday Series just for Parker employees. For more information, visit fwparker.org/communityconnect.

- Pandemic or no pandemic, a family has to eat! To this end, members of the PA’s Engagement Committee have been collaborating with the school to produce a Web-based version of the Parker Cooks cookbook from long ago, featuring recipes from current parents and guardians, available at fwparker.org/parkercooks.

- The partnership between school and home has only grown stronger due to the realities of remote learning, and Parker leadership has long believed that engaged and active parents and guardians are among the school’s most vital resources. To capture and showcase the myriad talents, experiences and resources embodied within the Parker community, parent leaders have worked with the school to develop the Parent Educational Resource, an online archive of information supplied and curated by Parker parents, viewable at fwparker.org/PER.

- With physical distance as the standard this year, PA leaders knew there would be far fewer opportunities for parents and guardians to interact with teachers and school staff. To bridge this gap, they launched the Gimme Five! series, which features five fun, random facts volunteered by a different Parker employee every few weeks. Anyone wishing to get to know Parker’s finest on a different level and reclaim some of the levity and “human touch” COVID has restricted this year may read these features at fwparker.org/gimmefive.

Left: Cornelia Daniels McNamara ’90 offered a class in flower arranging.
Right: Amy Owen ’86 taught yoga.
Countless hours of parent volunteer involvement continue to support traditional school events, enhance other activities and continue the school’s mission to do “everything to help and nothing to hinder” those outside the school community.

- Grade-level potluck gatherings have been transformed to a wide range of virtual events featuring trivia, hands-on cooking and mixology demonstrations and a gathering during which guests advocated for their favorite takeout spots and recipes, joined by Parker parent and alumnus David Manilow ’77, creator and executive producer of the WTTW program Check, Please!.

- Unable to promote the annual New Book Fair in person, parent volunteers stepped up and spoke up, recording themselves sharing their favorite stories and working with the school to deliver these messages to parents throughout the duration of the sale. These videos are available at fwparker.org/newbookfair.

- Adding a layer of novelty to the school’s first Zoom-based Fall Play, Art by Yasmina Reza, PA leaders orchestrated a multi-day treat bag drive to add something sweet to each family’s at-home experience watching the show.

- Parent leaders made it possible for all families to support the school’s 20th annual Thanksgiving Food Drive by staffing a delivery point for parents and guardians to safely make donations. The effort supported the Midwest Workers Association, an all-volunteer organization that advocates for and empowers the Englewood and Pullman neighborhoods, staffed and run by residents in these communities.

The Alumni Office has been offering opportunities for alumni to gather in a number of online town halls since March 2020. The team has also worked with English teacher Michael Mahany and recently retired English teacher Bonnie Seebold to orchestrate a series of virtual book clubs especially for alumni. Thus far, three of the five events have been fully registered within 24 hours—a testament to the lasting influence of these master teachers and the love of literature instilled in Parker graduates.

Since pandemic restrictions made it impossible to welcome interested students and families in the building to learn more about the school and its curriculum and culture, Parker’s Admission team has had to thoughtfully reinvent the way Parker cultivates its complete community.

- As a school dedicated to opening its doors for broad access, overcoming systemic obstacles to a great education, Parker completely eliminated its admission application fee for the 2021–22 academic year.

- Each of the school’s three annual Open House events took place virtually, with recorded and live elements showcasing students, teachers and learning. By recording these events, the Admission team was able to offer multiple
opportunities for people to attend, ensuring access to all who wanted to learn more about Parker.

- New virtual Admission events offered information sessions (including a first-ever session in Spanish), student and parent panels and a spotlight on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in Parker’s curriculum and community.

Director of Enrollment and Financial Aid Karen Fisher shared, “To meet the moment, we rethought and redesigned every aspect of our process with a DEI lens to make it optimally accessible, attractive and engaging for prospective families. Our team listened actively to the needs of prospective families experiencing many changes during this most unusual and challenging year. We have provided them with a warm, welcoming and inclusive process and multiple opportunities to learn about Parker and interact with our community.”

For lifelong learners, the school has opened its doors wider than ever—albeit virtually—for an ever-growing list of academic conferences and Nightviews public events. With all events online, more people can share in the life of the school. While Parker’s public events have always been free and open to the public, the school has also either waived or significantly reduced the registration fees associated with the conferences the school is supporting. More information and registration for upcoming events is available below:

### Academic Conferences

**Young Women of Color Symposium**  
“Stand Out, Step Out, Speak Out”  
Saturday, March 20  
_fwparker.org/YWOC_

**Young Men of Color Symposium for Middle School and Upper School Students of Color**  
Saturday, May 1  
_fwp Parker.org/YMOC_

### Public Events

**2020–21 Robert A. Pritzker Visiting Scientist•Inventor•Engineer in Residence**

Dr. Farah Fahim, Principal Electrical Engineer, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory  
Wednesday, March 24 | 7 p.m.  
_fwparker.org/pritzker_

**7th Annual Jeanne Harris Hansell Endowed Fund for Poetry presents Natasha Trethewey**

Thursday, April 1 | 7 p.m.  
_fwparker.org/hansell_

**Cullen J. Davis Young Men of Color Symposium for Middle School and Upper School Students of Color with Phuc Tran**

Saturday, May 1  
_fwparker.org/YMOC_

**Joan W. Harris Visiting Music Scholar in Residence The Westerlies**

Monday, May 17 | 7 p.m.  
_fwparker.org/harris_
Tracey Mabrey

Anyone looking for Tracey Mabrey, mother of Zuri Mabrey-Wakefield ’19 (now a sophomore at Barnard College) and senior Aziza Mabrey-Wakefield, when she’s at Parker knows where to find her: in the blue theater seats outside the Heller Auditorium. “Both my children played instruments and competed on athletic teams, so that’s been a good central hangout spot for them to find me,” she said.

Mabrey, who is originally from Toledo, Ohio, moved to Chicago’s Galewood-Montclare neighborhood with her husband and their young children 17 years ago when DePaul University hired her to create a master of social work program. When they began searching for a school, location was important. “Zuri was a 9/11 baby, and like many 9/11 parents, we knew we had to look for a school near one of our offices,” she explained. “I was at DePaul’s Lincoln Park campus, and Stan was at the University of Illinois at Chicago, so we had to choose. Parker was one of 10 schools we toured.”

But there was more to the choice than geography. “My husband and I value education, but we wanted a school that would welcome us as adults. We wanted people to know us and we wanted to be hands-on. We both grew up in Ohio and attended public schools, and they were like Parker—they had seasoned teachers, school nurses, after-school programs—so Parker reflected our school experiences.”

Mabrey described her children as different from one another, but Parker provided each of them with “the experiences they needed to do well. Zuri is very independent. She has been used to talking and being treated like an adult from the beginning—her first word was Stan, her father’s name! She was happy at Parker right away, and in some classes, she related more to the teacher than the students.” Zuri played violin from SK through her senior year and trumpet in Middle School. “Hers was the first grade to have Spanish beginning in JK, which yielded incredible opportunities. She discovered she had a gift and love for languages, which led her to an Independent Study teaching herself Portuguese.” Zuri also played volleyball, soccer and basketball and was among a group of students who brought the Model UN conference back to Parker.

Aziza took longer to warm up to Parker, but when the time came to consider transferring to a different high school, she decided to stay. “That choice speaks volumes about her connection to the school,” Mabrey noted. She appreciates the many good teachers both girls have had, and she especially recalled former Junior Kindergarten Grade Head Frances Judd, who taught Zuri, as “transformational. I continue to think she made me a better parent.”

“My husband and I value education, but we wanted a school that would welcome us as adults. We wanted people to know us and we wanted to be hands-on.”
Mabrey appreciates the social aspect as well. “Zuri has friends she met when she was four, and they are like my other children. I remain connected to their mothers as well—we call each other co-moms! Aziza has had those kinds of friendships, too.” She noted that Zuri was the only Black child in her cohort until 6th grade, but Aziza had other Black children in her grade from the beginning. “It’s a metric that we must keep in mind. I hope things in this area continue to improve.” Aziza has participated in field hockey, basketball and soccer; played the saxophone in Middle School and the cello from JK through her junior year; and has stage-managed a few productions.

Living up to her goal of being hands-on, Mabrey has been involved in the school from the beginning. “For the first 10 years, I volunteered at the Book Fair because I love books. My favorite part was taking things down.” She also served a term on the Board of Trustees and on the Nominating Committee and an accreditation subcommittee.
Mabrey looks back on her nearly 16 years at Parker to two institutions that “bookend” her experience: Parker PM, when her children were young, and College Counseling, which has helped them consider their paths after graduating.

“Parker PM is one of the most appealing things about Parker,” she stated. “We were both working and had no child care. Parker PM is so beautifully designed and affirming; it was the most diverse gathering of the student population. Our children met other children of color and children in other grades, and each year they got a little more freedom, which was so developmentally appropriate. I didn't realize how smooth the transition would be from school to Parker PM. The school needs to amplify the program because it would attract parents who have to leave home to go to work. It's a lovely nest of age, ethnic and socioeconomic differences.

“The last time both my children were at Parker PM together, Aziza had signed up for a PLUS class. I forgot, and when I came to pick her up, I didn't know where she was, I was beginning to panic. Three people stopped what they were doing to help me. And that's a great illustration of Parker: there's always somebody to answer a question or help with something.”

On the other end of the Parker timeline, Mabrey said the College Counseling Office “knows what they’re doing. The process has worked spectacularly well for both our kids, and they’re completely different workers with different aspirations.”

Although everyone has been staying at home in recent months, Mabrey identified her family as “homebodies” in general. “We live 10 miles from Parker, so since we spend so much time at school or work, we enjoy our time at home.” But they also have taken advantage of Chicago’s special features. “When the children were young, we joined a different museum every year and visited often. We also like exploring ethnic neighborhoods.”

Mabrey has found much to value throughout their family's time at Parker. “The teachers—Frances Judd, Lisa Nielsen, Sara Abu, Greenie, Stacey Gibson, Kathy Wild, so many others—have seen everything, and they helped unlock my children’s joy in learning. Both kids have had amazing opportunities, academically and personally, that they wouldn't have had anywhere else, and we will be forever grateful for that.”
Ashleigh St. Peters
Lower School Dean of Student Life

A Community of Learners: Faculty/Staff

Working with children has been part of Ashleigh St. Peters’ life since she was practically a child herself. From babysitting to spending 17 summers as camper, counselor and one of several day camp directors at North Shore Country Day School Summer Programs, from teaching to serving as Parker’s new Lower School Dean of Student Life, “I’ve always loved being around children,” she said.

St. Peters had a strong connection to progressive education even before arriving at Parker. She grew up in the Evanston-Wilmette area and attended North Shore Country Day School—founded and headed by Perry Dunlap Smith, Parker class of 1906—from JK through 12th grade. “There were a lot of similarities to Parker,” she recalled. “We had Morning Ex and a Country Day Fair (instead of County Fair). So much of who I am is from being part of that community. I learned who I was within a group and within a broader community while growing up. It would have been hard to envision teaching in a place that didn’t value that.”

“I like to try new things, and the school constantly encourages us to grow through professional development and evaluations.”

After earning her undergraduate degrees in psychology and elementary education from Notre Dame University, she worked as an assistant teacher in Northfield, then as a 2nd grade assistant teacher at Latin School. Among her conversations before accepting her first job was one with Parker’s then-Intermediate and Middle School Head Tom Rosenbluth and then-Lower School Head Mary Ann Manley. So when Manley reached out about an opening on the Kindergarten team, St. Peters responded immediately and became an SK Grade Head.

Comparing Parker to her education at North Shore, St. Peters noted, though Parker was larger, both schools shared “a sense of autonomy and the importance of building community with parents. It’s so important to have that as part of the learning experience, especially in JK and SK, and it was crucial to me in terms of the kind of teacher I wanted to be.”

She had found her “dream job,” as she called it, at the age of 24, working first with fellow SK Grade Heads Jo Davis and Priscilla Taylor, then Kirkland La Rue and Nanci Moore. “The primary thing in SK is trying to meet every kid where they are and move them forward, while finding ways to center the element of ‘play,’” she explained. “It’s hardest in early childhood because the spectrum is very wide, and I experienced the most professional growth in that area. And so much of what we learned about each child was through the lens of their family, from the casual conversations every day. It must be very challenging to try doing this remotely.”
“There are endless opportunities for this role to evolve and change as the needs of the students and school continue to shift and grow. We have big-dream ideas about more student programming in the Lower School, perhaps student government and community service.”

During her four years as an SK Grade Head, St. Peters finished a master’s program in reading instruction and curriculum at the University of Illinois at Chicago. When a teaching position opened up in 3rd grade, she was ready to take on more. “I like to try new things, and the school constantly encourages us to grow through professional development and evaluations.”

St. Peters enjoyed working with the 3rd grade team and rethinking the study of Chicago history, including the study of indigenous nations native to the Chicago region. “We met with indigenous educators and consultants to inform our practice. It is essential to center inclusivity, accuracy and authenticity when we consider teaching about who was originally here on this land we now call Chicago. Our goal in telling the story of this region is to balance developmentally appropriate content for eight- and nine-year-olds while also ensuring we present multiple viewpoints and perspectives. These studies are exciting because the students are at an age when they are just beginning to understand systems, and therefore, through our curriculum, we were able to begin discussions of racism, sexism and other ‘isms’ that frequently led to deeper conversations about equity and justice.”

Last spring, St. Peters shifted to a role at Parker that was new to her and the school: Lower School Dean of Student Life, which she officially began in fall 2020. She said, “There are endless opportunities for this role to evolve and change as the needs of the students and school continue to shift and grow. We have big-dream ideas about more student programming in the Lower School, perhaps student government and community service. For now, especially in a pandemic year, teachers have so much on their plates, and the Division Head has so much to handle, I’m just trying to help wherever I can. I continue to be grateful that the school community isn’t new to me, my relationships with colleagues aren’t new, and thus empathizing with teachers, students and parents to support them in various ways comes with greater ease. During my first week on the job, we were looking at blueprints to figure out ways to get kids in and out of the building safely. And with JK and SK teachers moving to a full day, I’m doing what I can to support them.”
St. Peters mentions her experience as a Diversity Coordinator, the Students of Color Affinity group and the National Association of Independent Schools Student Diversity Leadership Conference as critical to her work. “The ability to be flexible is the key to success in this new position. I’m open and willing to try things I haven’t done before.” She has enjoyed having more contact with members of the administration, such as Principal Dan Frank, CFO Robert Haugh and other Division Heads. “Despite our physical distance, I’m feeling more connected to different parts of the school.”

Next on her schedule is a maternity leave, as she and her husband are enjoying spending time with their daughter, Charlotte—Charlie for short—who arrived on December 31, 2020. When she returns in late March, St. Peters will no doubt have developed some imaginative ideas to explore as she completes her first year as Dean of Student Life.
Stuart Taylor ’15

A Community of Learners: Alumni

Stuart Taylor spent late fall 2020 as a research and policy associate working on paid media, policy analysis and press relations for Jon Ossoff, who ended up winning a runoff election to represent Georgia in the U.S. Senate. Taylor previously held a similar position for Fair Fight Action, an Atlanta organization that promotes fair elections, voter participation and voting rights, founded by former Minority Leader of the Georgia House of Representatives Stacey Abrams. He wrote and developed in-depth policy backgrounders, composed opposition research books and assisted with paid media. He was also a research intern for Abrams when she ran for governor of Georgia and a finance intern for Dan Berschinski’s campaign for the Georgia House of Representatives. He earned a bachelor’s degree in international studies, with a minor in economics, from Emory University.

Why did you decide to major in international studies?

When I enrolled at Emory, my heart was set on applying to the undergraduate business school. However, in my sophomore year, I took comparative politics with a teacher who was a phenomenal lecturer. I ended up taking every class I could with that professor. From then on, I decided that I wanted to pursue international studies and go into politics. And immediately following that summer, I joined my first campaign working for a Georgia House of Representatives candidate.

Why did you decide to stay in Atlanta after college?

First and foremost, I love the weather in Atlanta. When I visited in November of my senior year, it was 75 degrees and sunny. When I returned home to Chicago, it was snowing. From that moment on, I knew I wanted to go to school in a warmer climate. However, after going to school in Atlanta, I stayed there because I built many professional relationships from working on Abrams for Governor. These relationships guided me to continue to work for Abrams at Fair Fight Action.

You got involved in politics pretty quickly. How did that first opportunity happen?

After I decided to pursue politics, I reached out to as many political organizations as I could. My roommate, who played a large part in convincing me to switch to politics, was volunteering with the Berschinski campaign and encouraged me to join. On that campaign, I helped knock on doors, organize events and research donors. We lost in the primary election; however, it gave me a taste of campaign life. I knew I wanted to do more and work on bigger campaigns.

How did you get involved in Stacey Abrams’ campaign for governor?

I joined Stacey Abrams’ campaign in August 2018. I spent the summer doing research; however, I quickly realized that gathering data wasn’t as fun as I thought. When I heard the campaign was looking for interns, I immediately applied. After being accepted, I was given the option of which team I wanted to join. I decided to work with the research team because my boss (now mentor) said the research team supports all departments and would be allowed to work in collaboration with each department. I ended up working very closely with the communications and debate preparation teams. It was my first real taste of a fast-paced campaign-style working environment.
DEMOCRACY ONLY WORKS WHEN WE WORK FOR IT WHEN WE FIGHT FOR IT AND WHEN WE DEMAND IT

STACEY ABREU
Fair Fight Action is a voting rights organization founded by Stacey Abrams that advocates for election reform and specializes in fighting voter suppression. Fair Fight Action also has a research-sharing agreement with Fair Fight PAC that advocates for democratic positions in Georgia politics. While at Fair Fight, I worked as a researcher mostly with Fair Fight PAC doing opposition research, writing talking points for issues during the legislative session and fact-checking or approving all media the organization sent out. Research in politics often has the final say on most of the outgoing media, so the position kept me very busy.

It is going great! It has been a big step up from working in local Georgia politics to a national political campaign. And, of course, with a lot of attention on the race, there is increased pressure surrounding my job. It is both nerve-wracking and extremely rewarding to work for Ossoff. However, this is easily the hardest I have ever worked in my life. Working during peak campaign season often means you have to give up a lot of your nonprofessional life. But the thrill balances out the exhaustion.

Note: Ossoff won the runoff election and is representing Georgia in the U.S. Senate.

Work hard! I was blessed with the opportunity to work with Fair Fight based on building a strong reputation as an intern for Abrams for Governor. I stood out because I was willing to work the hardest even when my assigned projects weren’t glamorous. This bore fruit when I graduated from Emory. My former boss called and told me she wanted me to work for her. Within a week, I joined Fair Fight and was thrown into the working world because she knew I worked hard and could keep up with the pace.

My fondest memories were competing on the basketball team, especially during the Parker vs. Latin games at DePaul. The school spirit was electrifying, and it’s always fun to beat your rival on a big stage. Additionally, I loved being the Student Athletics President during my senior year. My crowning achievement was creating Parker Sports Scores, a Facebook page designed to emulate ESPN by posting all Parker sports teams’ scores and statistics. Outside sports, I look fondly on the Parker traditions, such as Class Day, Morning Ex and “12 Days of Christmas”.

What is Fair Fight Action, and what was your role with that organization?

How are things going as you prepare for Jon Ossoff’s runoff election for U.S. Senate?

Do you have any good advice to share from any of this work?

What are some of your favorite Parker memories?
My decision to switch to politics happened while I was attending college. However, I credit many Parker teachers for helping me become a person comfortable changing my passions. For that, I thank Ms. Gibson, Mr. Zhang and Mr. Banks. Whether it was on the basketball court or in the classroom, these three people encouraged me to take on bigger roles in the community, advised me to speak up for myself and gave me knowledge on how to be a leader. By the time I matriculated to college and decided I was going to make a significant career change, I had tools and advice to rely on that provided me with a sense of confidence in my decision.

I am a huge sports fan. When I have free time, I love to watch live sports games or highlights. Outside my professional life, I spend the majority of my time watching sports and hanging out with my friends. I am also a homebody. I love spending time at home watching TV, playing games with my friends and cooking.
Class Notes

Parker alumni: please send your class notes to Assistant Director of the Alumni Office Maggi Steib, msteib@fwparker.org.

Disclaimer: The views, thoughts and opinions expressed in these Class Notes are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views or opinions of Francis W. Parker School and its wider community.

1950

Alfred M. King writes, “I tried somewhat unsuccessfully to see if we could have a 70th (and final?) reunion in September. Basically, I struck out even before the reunion events were cancelled. Whether it is genetics, the economy or the environment, the surviving members of the class of 1950 have all ‘beaten the actuarial odds’ from 1932–33 when we were born. Also, 50% of the graduating class is still alive and seemingly going strong. Keep it up.

“On a personal note, my wife just celebrated her 90th birthday with a family reunion. She has totally recovered from her stroke three years ago.

“Still active in the community. Serve on the County Economic Development Authority and the Broadband Commission and the Real Estate Appeals Board. Writing weekly book reviews for the local newspaper and going to too many physicians. Older friends used to comment they spent half their time in doctors’ offices. Now I am experiencing that myself. Am in good health and my only complaint is the result of the recent election. I am sure most FWP graduates do not share my sentiments, but I still am proud of the fact that I am ‘to the right of Martin Van Buren.’ At my age, I refuse to change!”

1951

Helen (Harris) Kogel Brandt writes, “In 1994, my husband, Richard Brandt, and I moved from our beloved Santa Fe, New Mexico, where we had lived for about 20 years. After spending almost three years building our very special home, we became involved with the College of Santa Fe (now defunct) and numerous music and arts organizations. We both wrote poetry and prose, organized the Santa Fe Poets’ Society (still operating, I believe), skied (for a while!) and traveled back and forth to Los Angeles for Trans-Lux movie theaters and Richard’s involvement in the American Film Institute, of which he was chairman for several years. And I became part of a team building several movie theaters in Santa Fe, Espanola and Durango, Colorado.

“We left Santa Fe somewhat regretfully, moving to Phoenix, Arizona to an outstanding mid-size retirement residence, Sagewood, which offered health facilities we knew we would one day need. We’ve had an outstanding life here, meeting many outstanding people, getting to know Phoenix and involved in many activities here.

“Unfortunately, after five years, Richard developed multiple myeloma leukemia and passed away after a year or so in December 1998, due to a series of serious infections caused by his medications, which did a great job on his blood cells, but diminished his capacity to ward off other diseases.

“During these years I have seen and talked to several class members: Susan Lackritz Kaplan, Joan Schwartz, Hattula Moholy-Nagy and Kathy Horween Burkman, and through them, I have heard about you other FWP 1951 ‘survivors.’
“Looking back on my 13 years at FWP, I have the most positive memories! I adored the old, now long ago, razed Victorian building, in which I still circulate to the areas of our studies in my imagination; our teachers, most of all Helen Richard, John Holabird, Emily Ellison and many others in all sorts of roles and capacities they played, large and small, as staff members at FWP, still remembered. But I especially adored you, our classmates; you were the best!”

1952
William E. Lowry has been honored by the board of trustees of his alma mater, Kenyon College, who voted to rename the Kenyon Athletic Center after him. According to The Kenyon Collegian, “Lowry was the fifth Black person ever to graduate from Kenyon and served on the Board of Trustees for over two decades; he remains an emeritus member. ‘I was just floored, I really was,’ Lowry said… ‘What does it mean to me? Well, it means just about everything.’” Read the full story at fwparker.org/Lowry52.

1954
Natalie Crohn Schmitt received the 2020 Ennio Flaiano Award in Italian culture for her book Performing Commedia dell’Arte, 1570–1630, (London: Routledge, 2020). Awards, which are granted in cinema, creative writing, radio-television, theatre and Italian culture, are given in honor of Ennio Flaiano, Franco Zefferelli’s screenwriter. Actress Helen Mirren, a Korean scholar and Schmitt were the only non-Italians to receive an award this year.

1955
George Basch writes, “In 2010 I established the Himalayan Stove Project as a memorial to my son, Paul, who committed suicide in 1997 at the age of 28. In mid-March, 2020, we realized that, with the on-rushing global pandemic, continuing the Himalayan Stove Project would be futile. We suspended all operations, and it’s highly unlikely that they will ever resume as the pandemic rages on. We, with the support of a wonderful global donor community, have made a profound, multi-generational impact in Nepal. We’ve delivered 6,548 family stoves. When adding in the Mass Feeding stoves that we distributed, and other relief work that we did in 2015–16 after the 2015 earthquake, we have impacted the lives of over 50,000 people. To give that perspective, the seating capacity of Minute Maid Stadium (Houston Astros home) is 41,168.

“It was very sad to have had to end this effort, but the results have been very gratifying. When conditions allow I’d love to come back to FWP and give a Morning Ex program. In the meantime there’s a good video highlighting our efforts on the opening page of our website at himalayanstoveproject.org.”

1957

Aimee Brown Price writes, “Having been hauled off to California after 8th grade, I am particularly nostalgic about Parker and grateful to our superb teachers—especially Miss Davis and the after-lunch Greek mythological plays we created; Mr. Leodas, yes to the sagas and geography, though so much has changed in African nation names since; and Miss Greenebaum—Chinese culture (Jimmy Lowry’s oral reading about braziers was memorable) and so much else. I am intensely and truly interested in classmates and our linear histories, and I hope they too might write about themselves and make contact (a.brownprice@gmail.com).

“We have lived in New York since 1982: my husband and I are well—not yet doddering, safely at home, Zooming to our three sons, their wives and our 10 grandkids. Happily, I am still doing art history, writing, lecturing (Zoom again), reading (now *Don Quixote*, which I adore). I am going over memorabilia, among which letters from David Goles, Helen Geraghty, et al when I was exiled in high school. The best and fondly to you all.”

1960

Merle Gross writes, “I’m thinking about another class get-together post-inauguration. Jim Frank had a thyroidectomy and other classmates are dealing with other medical issues. We really DO like and care about one another. And Jim shared, ‘Having a two-and-a-half-hour operation at age 77 isn’t so easy, and getting back to myself will take longer than I had hoped. The surgery itself accomplished its mission, and I am no longer a proud owner of my own thyroid gland.’”

1961

Larry Garner writes, “A grandchild is born: daughter Julia (class of ’97) brought into the world a baby boy, Nico Garner Prazeres, last May, and he’s the joy of our life.”

Larry Garner’s grandchild Nico: “Ain’t life grand!”

Larry Levin and Hara Levin write, “Much of our free time revolves around our three grandchildren: Noa (12 years old) takes singing, dancing and acting lessons with hopes to perform on Broadway someday; Ivy (almost 10 years old) has a fascination with art and photography; and Asher (almost 10 years old) is playing Northbrook (Illinois) traveling-team baseball.”

1963

Barbi Beers writes, “First of all I hope all my classmates are doing well and staying safe. I moved to Mexico three years ago from Portland, Oregon. We had planned on moving back by the new year; however, with the pandemic, we put those plans on hold. I’d love to hear from my classmates and know how you all are doing.”
1964

Dan Block writes, “After 51+ years of teaching at Fort Worth Country Day School in Fort Worth, Texas, I am sitting this year out due to risks from the Trump Virus. Our school requires in-person classroom teaching, which I have been advised to avoid. Parker did so much to prepare me for my long career at Country Day, and I owe so much to my long-suffering teachers at Parker. I have worked hard to instill Parker values into my other family. As an honorary alum of Country Day and an alum of FWP, I feel a strong kinship to both institutions. I may return to Country Day when the pandemic is behind us, but probably not again in the classroom.”

Lore Silberman writes, “I recently moved to San Diego. Any older alumni out here?”

Dr. Jon Suzuki has been appointed to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Immunology Devices Panel and Medical Advisory Committee, which is responsible for evaluating COVID-19 vaccine applications, interpreting the vaccine clinical trial data and ultimately approving the vaccines for use. He is currently providing education seminars on COVID-19 immunology to the U.S. Navy, Army and Air Force. He holds clinical professorships at the University of Maryland, the University of Washington and Nova Southeastern University and is on the faculty of the U.S. Navy Walter Reed National Medical Center. Dr. Suzuki is professor emeritus of microbiology and immunology (School of Medicine) and professor emeritus of periodontology and oral implantology (School of Dentistry) at Temple University. He served as chairman and director of graduate periodontology and oral implantology and associate dean for graduate education at Temple University. He also served as dean, chief of hospital dentistry and CEO of the Faculty Practice Plan at the University of Pittsburgh. He is chairman of the FDA Dental Products Advisory Panel until 2022.

1966

Peter Logan writes, “My news includes two members of the class of 1964 (Norman Welch and Dan Michel). The three of us plus the late Roger Maltz formed the band The Dynamics during 1963–64. We were inspired by the Beatles and had a lot of fun. We played at Parker dances, cut a record (Summer USA) and played at Second City. A rock band was still a bit controversial at FWP, and when we took an encore at Morning Ex it was grist for the mill. Hard to believe, looking back. Anyway, I’ve stayed in touch with Norman (and Roger), but had not seen Dan since 1964. But that changed in October. We had a Zoom reunion of the three of us. It was great to catch up, reminisce and talk about our current lives. We’re doing a second session tomorrow. Otherwise, I see some classmates and others in nearby classes regularly on Facebook. Deborah ("Debbie") McKay, Polly Hackett Holabird ’67, Frank Lewin ’69 and others are regular posters.”

The Dynamics including Peter Logan, Roger Maltz, Dan Michel and Norman Welch.
1969

Mark Anderson writes, “Even though I am retired, I still sing and teach. My singing is done now with The Philly POPS. Although the coronavirus has shut down our performances, we are still providing at-home learning. I am creating sing-alongs (songs we did in all my classes when I taught at FWP) as presentations, and the POPS publishes them as “Mr. Mark's Marvelous Sing-Alongs” on YouTube. I invite all my former students and any Parkerites who want something for their kids to do to take advantage of them. We hope to be back performing soon but until then feel free to sing along. Here is an example of one on YouTube, 'Old Dan Tucker'! Have fun and sing out!” Watch Anderson’s video at fwparker.org/Anderson69.

Joe Flynn writes, “My late father, Joseph T. Flynn, served in the U.S. Army during World War II as a medic in the 741st Field Artillery unit. Like most vets who returned home, he had war stories to tell. One of them stuck with me for decades. Dad’s unit had made its way into Germany by the time of the Allied victory. Just about all of the men in the 741st figured their part in the war was over. Only the medics were warned they might be shipped to the far side of the world. An invasion of Japan was expected to produce as many as a million U.S. casualties. Every medic in uniform would soon be needed in Japan. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki changed all that. Still, Dad’s story persisted in my memory: a soldier thinking his war was over but maybe it wasn’t.

“That was the inspiration for my Take the Money trilogy—300,000+ words—that I spent the last year writing. For story purposes I changed the medic to a former Chicago cop who’s on the run from a venegful organized crime boss. The story moves from Chicago, coast-to-coast in the U.S., across the Atlantic, into France, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, back to France, stopping over in Ireland and finally returning home to Chicago for its conclusion. The Take the Money trilogy was published on Amazon Kindle in November 2020, and the initial reader reviews are mostly 5 stars. It’s always good to know your work is appreciated.

“My thanks to Dad and my best wishes to the Parker community.”

1970

Ellen Watanabe Huxtable has responded to COVID by taking her business peer advisory group online. Members of these small, industry-exclusive groups work together to share information, ideas and insights. A positive COVID discovery: collaboration is not limited by geography!

1971

James Marienthal is excited to announce the release of his second music album, Speak to the Sky, available on CD and all digital platforms. He plays various indigenous flutes, silver flute, piano and percussion. His previous album, Mysteries of the Night, Alive Inside the Tank, was named the #1 Healing Arts Music album of 2018 and reached #8 worldwide on the Zone Music Reporter New Age chart. His music has been described as “like jamming with God... intoxicating and mesmerizing” and was acclaimed by The World Flute Society as “Extraordinary music...ethereal, spiritual, meditative, and absolutely amazing...”
As a music producer, Marienthal founded Silver Wave Records in 1986 with the mission of presenting quality innovative music to the world while being a positive force in people’s lives. Silver Wave helped lead the way in bringing New Age and Contemporary Native American music to a worldwide audience. Its Grammy Award-winning catalog features artists such as Peter Kater & R. Carlos Nakai, Mary Youngblood, Joanne Shenandoah, Robert Mirabal and many more. After 30 years of producing other artists, he is now pursuing his own career as a musician. Please visit jamesmarienthal.com for more information.

William Marks writes that he is “very proud to be working alongside my business partner and friend, attorney Ben Crump, on the George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake and Ahmaud Arbery cases.”

William Marks (R) and Ben Crump.

Melissa Shiflett’s most recent opera, My Undying Love: An Amusement, had its New York premiere June 21–23, 2019, at University Settlement House in the East Village in New York City. After 30 years in New York, she and her family have moved back to Chicago and are loving the beautiful parks and Lake Michigan.

1975

Jonathan Alter writes, “My latest book, His Very Best: Jimmy Carter, a Life, the first full-length biography of former President Carter, was published in 2020.”

1976

John Sierra writes, “I am still in the Chicago area, living on Diamond Lake, Illinois. I’m happily married to Aliona Sierra with 22-year-old son Nikita starting a new life with three friends in Schaumburg. He completed architecture undergraduate and graduate education at Illinois Institute of Technology. I am currently practicing as a healthcare management consultant at Eckroth Planning Group. I have had a unique and rewarding practice assisting doctors, nurses and administrators with capital project investments and service line strategies totaling over $2.5 billion in completed projects all over the USA. The practice is now significantly changed with COVID pandemic. Parker was a wonderful education. Parker’s mission to promote citizenship and critical thinking still runs very deep in me. I am very active in philanthropy with fundraisers, churches, schools, food pantries and Knights of Columbus. We also travel internationally having enjoyed vacations in Mexico, Ireland, Turkey and Moldova. Moscow and St. Petersburg are on the bucket list for next year. I still maintain close friendships with my past Parker classmates and enjoy Dan Frank’s philosophical newsletters.”

John Sierra and Aliona Sierra.
1979

Carroll Dady Bogert writes, “I went to Parker for 11 years, although I left after 9th grade. Both of my siblings were 14-year veterans.

“Classmates might be interested in the video series we created called We Are Witnesses: Chicago—it was nominated for an Emmy! I am president of The Marshall Project, a nonprofit newsroom covering criminal justice. Last year we collaborated with Kartemquin Films to produce short videos of 16 people who have been caught up in the criminal justice system. They speak straight to the camera: crime victims and crime perpetrators; cops and judges; parents of incarcerated children; the former warden of the Cook County Jail; and a trans activist who works in the jail. We co-published these videos in September 2019 with WBEZ, The Chicago Reader and Univision (in Spanish). We also held more than two dozen screenings all over the city, mostly in branches of the Chicago Public Library. Criminal justice issues are pretty hot in Chicago right now, so the videos are timely.”

Gary Silverman is a partner at international law firm White & Case, a member of the firm’s M&A/Private Equity group and a co-founder of its Chicago office.

1980

Harry Alter writes, “After almost 25 years in academic emergency medicine, I left the faculty at Alameda Health System in Oakland, California to become the interim medical director for Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless. The job was vacant when the pandemic hit, and I was on sabbatical, so I volunteered for three months setting up our COVID hotels for people experiencing homelessness in my county. They are allowing me to take the position while they conduct a national search. My first new job in many years, it requires a lot of listening and learning, which is fun. Creating a job that I hope will be obsolete in my lifetime is a specific challenge. I see Lindsay Harris from time to time here and Brendan Smith, and I miss my regular trips to Chicago to see my FWP community. This will pass. Stay safe everyone!”

1984

Ben Kufrin, a cinematographer, was director of photography for the feature film Foster Boy, which had its theatrical, wide-streaming and video-on-demand release September 25. The film stars Matthew Modine as a high-powered corporate attorney caught up in a scandalous corruption and abuse case within a for-profit foster care agency. A portion of the drama was filmed in Chicago, where some of the story is set, as well as in Los Angeles. The movie also stars Louis Gossett Jr., Shane Paul McGhie, Julie Benz and Amy Brenneman among others. More info about Foster Boy is available at fwparker.org/Kurfin84.
1985

Tracy Occomy Crowder has won the New Visions Award for her manuscript, *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key*. Established to increase the number of authors of color writing for children and teens, the New Visions Award is given to a middle grade or young adult manuscript by a new author of color or Native author. Winners receive a cash prize and a publishing contract with Lee & Low Books, a children’s book publisher specializing in diversity.

*Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* is a middle grade mystery novel about a 10-year-old boy who uses the scientific method to prove everything—in this case, the origins of a mysterious golden key he and his friends find in their backyard. Montgomery interviews his neighbors and connects with his community as he solves the mystery, inspired by author Occomy Crowder’s own upbringing and family history in the Washington Park area of the South Side of Chicago. She said, “I felt like it was important to expand the adventure/mystery genre to include more books with Black boys like my son as protagonists. My goal is to write mysteries that involve different periods of Black history and aspects of Black culture as the backdrop for characters who experience the funny little occurrences and tensions of everyday life.”

Occomy Crowder is a community organizer, working on social change for the past 30 years to improve communities across Illinois. Publication of *Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key* is planned for fall 2022.

1987

Julie Oppenheimer writes, “Hi all from the southside of Chicago! Lucky to have fulfilling work (union organizer) and a lovely family, but still, like all of you, I hope one day to grow up to be David Singer.”

1989

Catherine Bentivegna Adami thanks all of the members of the Parker community who reached out to her after the loss of her mother, longtime Parker staff member Theresa Bentivegna, this past August. She and her brother, Dino Bentivegna ’92, will hold a memorial service for her in May 2021.

Adami published her second novel, *Oedipa Sex* (oedipasex.com) in December 2020. Inspired by Thomas Pynchon’s character Oedipa Maas from *The Crying of Lot 49* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the book is a nonstop comedic thrill ride on the importance of self-love. Oedipa “Eddy” Sass, freshly adult-orphaned, pop culture-obsessed and depressed, attempts to wipe the slate clean of her regrets the night before her birthday. Her subconscious quest is filled with celebrities and ghosts, and each trial reveals a new lesson. As her confidence builds, she hopes to reemerge in the morning ready to say yes to life once again. Adami included longtime Parker English teacher Marie Stone as a character and among the book’s dedications: “To a teacher who inspired me: ‘Mention sex and they’ll remember everything you say.’”
Ron Lieber’s book *The Price You Pay for College*, which came out in January, is about who pays what and why, whether or not people are nuts for throwing $300,000 checks around and how the aid and discounting systems became so unpredictable and opaque. He traces his predilection for financial aid system-beating to when Parker’s then-college counselor, John McClintock, referred him to a stranger in Evanston for help applying. That person turned out to be an assistant director of financial aid at Northwestern, who had a hot side hustle giving advice in exchange for cash on the barrel. Lieber continues to live in Brooklyn and just had an outdoor playdate with Eric Klinenberg.

1999

Catherine (Whelan-Wuest) Merritt shared, “My mother, Maria Whelan, was a Parker parent, advocate, champion and foundational member of the embryonic community from 1985 to 2005. She was also mother to Ellen Whelan-Wuest ’01 and Maeve Whelan-Wuest ’05 and a larger-than-life presence at Parker. Anyone who attended Parker while her daughters were there knew her as the loudest, most enthusiastic cheerleader at any Parker event (sporting or otherwise) she attended. She wasn’t just a cheerleader; she was also a champion. She served as the head of the Parents’ Committee for two terms, she worked with the Middle School in expanding its community service program, she worked with the board on expanding community engagement efforts, she spoke during numerous MLK Morning Exes, and she was a constant among friends, teachers and members of the Parker community for more than 20 years.

“She was the living embodiment of Parker’s mission and purpose. She created community wherever she was and saw in every person someone worthy of respect, a good joke and a great story. She worked tirelessly to expand opportunity and happiness for as many people as possible, and the world is forever changed by her.

“Her family greatly appreciates the outpouring of love and support from the Parker community since her death. She was a force of nature, and all who knew her are left wondering how to fill the void she leaves behind.”

2000

Lizy Gershenzon writes, “I am the co-founder, owner and product designer at Future Fonts (futurefonts.xyz). It is a digital platform and creative community that sells fonts from contemporary type designers from all over the world. We currently represent over 140 fonts from 70 independent type foundries in 25 countries. This upcoming year I am trying to put positive energy into the world by producing an art show called HyperText in addition to its mini-digital conference, HyperTalks. Both will be launching at the end of February. Our goal is to support independent designers, encourage creative risk taking and nurture the design community.” Updates will be available at Instagram.com/futurefonts.

Rachel Terp lives in Berkeley, California with her husband, Owen Poindexter, and their two children, Leo (4 years old) and Lyra (1 year old). In 2020, she launched Terp Law (terplaw.com), a law firm dedicated to representing working people in the San Francisco/Bay Area.
2003

Jordan Frazes was honored on SheSaidSo’s Alternative Power 100, celebrating her newly launched FRAZES CREATIVE agency on the annual list highlighting the year’s most “resilient and adaptable” music industry professionals. “After over a decade of running PR at Atlantic’s Big Beat (with artists like Charli XCX and David Guetta) Jordan has made an incredible leap by starting her own women-led PR consultancy. Being an entrepreneur during 2020 is an incredibly difficult feat and not only has Jordan successfully grown her business but she’s done so in a diverse intentional resilient and adaptable way. Throughout the pandemic Jordan has helped artists adapt and innovated to find new ways to promote her clients in meaningful (and safe!) ways. Two of her roster artists Nicki Nicole and Nathy Peluso also secured Latin Grammy nominations including Best New Artist for both and Best Alternative Song for the latter. Her other client Aminé’s album landed in the Billboard Top 20 his highest chart debut and she coordinated a trailblazing late-night television performance from 2000 feet above ground in a hot air balloon on Jimmy Kimmel Live! Jordan is a connector a supporter and someone I truly believe belongs on this list.”

Sophie Grimes and her husband Wanyu Cho joyfully welcomed son Roger Young Cho to their family in early August.

2004

Julie Raskin writes, “I recently got married on live TV! We were one of the first couples to take advantage of New York Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order allowing for virtual weddings last April. We were planning to have an in-person wedding last summer, but as the pandemic ensued, we called it off. Once we learned about the virtual wedding option, we started planning to elope when I learned that my favorite TV news personality, Pat Kiernan of NY1, had tweeted that he was offering to officiate virtual weddings. I reached out immediately, and within 10 days he was marrying us on the morning news show. My husband and I set up our phones and laptop in our apartment to stream to NY1 and our dog was the ring bearer.
The entire thing was done virtually with no in-person presence. It was sad not to be with our friends and family but we feel so lucky that we could still get married and that our loved ones could tune in from around the country! Watch the virtual wedding at fwparker.org/Raskin04.”

2007

Timeica Bethel writes, “I married Marcus G. Manning-Macaire on Saturday, June 20 at Saint Sabina Church in Chicago. Initially, we were anticipating 300 guests including a couple Parker classmates and staff members, but COVID-19 changed everything. We ended up with only 11 family members in attendance, but the wedding was livestreamed on Facebook for everyone to see.”

2008

Charlie De Mar, “whose star continues to rise as a general assignment reporter at CBS-owned WBBM-Channel 2,” according to media columnist Robert Feder, has expanded his horizons. “In a unique arrangement, his latest contract renewal includes additional duties as a Chicago-based network correspondent for CBS News. De Mar, who grew up in the Lincoln Park neighborhood and attended Francis W. Parker School, graduated cum laude from the University of Arizona in 2012. Before joining CBS 2 in 2016, he was a reporter for CBS affiliate WTTV and Fox affiliate WXIN in Indianapolis and a reporter and fill-in news anchor at WFFT, the Fox affiliate in Fort Wayne, Indiana.”

2016

Matthew Friend appeared on The Today Show with Hoda and Jenna this past summer. For those who don’t know him, he does amazing impressions of a range of folks like Barack Obama, Stewie from Family Guy and even our own Dan Frank. He’s freshly graduated from New York University and is definitely making a name for himself. Watch at fwparker.org/Friend16.
In Memoriam

Parker alumni: please send news regarding an alumnus's passing, along with any personal memories you wish to share, to Assistant Director of the Alumni Office Maggi Steib, msteib@fwparker.org. We will obtain consent from the family to share an obituary or send notification to classmates.

Hawley Hunter Stodder ’50 (nee Charlotte Hawley Hunter), retired alumni director at Francis W. Parker School, was the mother of Timothy Jay Stodder ’77 and Suzan Carter Stodder ’76. Donations in her name to the American Cancer Society are encouraged.

Punky Fristrom ’51, according to classmate Jim McCall, “was a principled, congenial, determined and very able person who overcame a major handicap from polio in our 6th grade to lead an active life of teaching, mentoring and leadership in education, as well as coaching football, extensive travel and other pursuits. Among them was a continuing love of the theatre (in England as well as here), which we shared by attending local productions together with our wives on the average of every six weeks for the past 30-plus years. He also led poetry workshops right up until his final illness. In all our years at Parker, he was active in theatre productions of every kind and participated in athletics, even with his handicap. He also shone brightly as a student leader at Parker and was endeared to his classmates. He later went on to Swarthmore and Harvard. Away from the school, he and his brother, James (‘Jim’) were close to my family. I remember many late afternoon and evening inter-family baseball and football games in nearby Lincoln Park, visits to museums and Saturday sports board games. I also remember the many times when, after school, we would go to Wrigley Field for late afternoon Cubs games.”

Dr. Bernard (Bud) Gore ’56, according to an obituary in the San Francisco Chronicle, attended “Northwestern University undergraduate and medical school. Upon completion of his training in obstetrics and gynecology, he was a major in the U.S. Air Force at Hamilton Air Force base. He was in private practice for 37 years in San Francisco. He loved his practice and was proud of the many children he brought into the world. As an adjunct to his medical practice he was committed to medical education at Yale University Medical School and USF, having attained an associate professorship in ob/gyn. He was an early supporter for women to exercise free choice in their reproductive health and participated in the clinical research of RU 486 which became an integral method for women and their choices. Bud had varied interests including classical music, duplicate bridge, fly fishing, traveling with his wife and spending time with his grandchildren. He loved Alaska and shared that with his family. He furthered his love of anthropology by spending hours visiting Native American sites throughout the west. After moving to Arizona, he became a volunteer at the Desert Botanical...
Garden. As a docent, Bud enjoyed teaching visitors about the botany and beauty of the desert.” Gore is survived by his wife, Cathy Daniel; his daughters, Debra and Diana; his five grandchildren; his three stepchildren; his sister, Nancy Gore Marcus; and his brother, Robert Bennet Gore.

Ira Gold ’65, brother of Merle Welch ’69, worked in computer science at the University of Maryland from 1969 until his retirement in 2015.

Dalia Gadiel Sak ’65 was living at Aztec RV Resort in Margate, Florida, according to an obituary: “Born December 22, 1947 in Chicago, Illinois to Peter and Renee (Silbermann) Gadiel, Dalia married the love of her life, Richard Sak, in November 1986. As a child, she was her father’s inspiration for the ’Morton Salt Girl’ logo, excelled at ballet and was an exceptional artist who went on to earn two master’s degrees. Loved by the thousands of students whose lives she impacted, she finished her career as the language department chairman teaching French and Spanish at Byron Jr. High/Shaker Middle School in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Dalia loved traveling, gardening and the beach. She was active in the breeding, showing, raising and snuggling of long-haired dachshunds and was heavily involved in the Dachshund Club of America.”

Juli Zatz ’66

Lonnie Edwards ’70, M.D. was born in Chicago. His funeral program reads, “He graduated from Francis W. Parker High School in Chicago, Illinois and Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. He attended medical school at the University of Illinois. Upon graduation from medical school, he did his fellowship training at Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois. Dr. Edwards served as director of the Echocardiographic Laboratory at Hines Veterans Administration Hospital. Later, he became the Chief of Cardiology at Hines, from April 2012 until his retirement in March 2020, after 33 years of service.”

Tracy Louis Filliger ’73, known as Lou for many years, had been living in Woodland Hills, California for 19 years and was married to Laura Ian Filliger. He became a very successful FSA Fellow of the Actuarial Society and owned his own company, Pacific Crest Actuaries. He loved to hike, he loved to learn. He is survived by his wife, Laura; two children, Laura and Louis; three stepchildren, Sara, Jesse and Madeleine; and six grandchildren.
Ian Edward Cordwell ’76, according to an obituary in The Arizona Republic, received his bachelor’s degree in art history and his master’s in historic preservation. “He practiced historical preservation planning first in Montgomery, Alabama, then in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Elgin, Illinois. Moving to Arizona in 1997, he then practiced urban planning for the Town of Cave Creek for 22 years. Ian was promoted to director of planning in 2001. On December 31, 1988, Ian married Julie Ann Phillips in Chicago, Illinois. They raised two children: Ryan, 28, and Cailan, 21.

“Ian was known for his engaging sense of humor, his welcoming smile and his kind and compassionate spirit. He loved his community and was dedicated to helping others. As a planner, he thrived on problem resolution and worked toward the best outcome for all involved. Ian enjoyed architectural design and designing homes. As an artist, he produced watercolor paintings and jewelry. Ian enjoyed nature and loved animals, rescuing many pets over the years. He loved to sing and sang for many years in the Desert Foothills Christmas Pageant. Ian enjoyed all types of music and in particular loved The Beatles and The Cat Empire, ‘Brighter than Gold’ being a favorite. The last song that was played for him was ‘Happy Together’ by The Turtles, a childhood favorite of his and his brother Colin [’74]. Among Ian’s last written words were those he wished for us all to honor, ‘People need to help each other.’”
With Gratitude for Their Leadership
by Principal Dan Frank

Francis W. Parker School congratulates three educational leaders moving on to new opportunities.

John Novick, Intermediate and Middle School Head since 2012, will begin next academic year as the Head of School at North Park Elementary School, an independent school in Chicago’s North Center neighborhood.

For the past eight years, John has been supportive and effective. Leading with respect and empathy, he facilitated the launch of the critical position of Intermediate and Middle School Dean of Student Life. John worked with the Language and Cultural Studies Department to increase Spanish instruction for 4th and 5th graders and, in collaboration with Math Department colleagues, established an 8th grade program that offers all students Upper School-level Algebra. John partnered with the Middle School leadership team to launch a new social-emotional learning program and set a positive, nurturing tone for his division. We will truly miss his contributions to the quality of educational life at Parker.

Left: John and his wife, Dana Marie.

Justin Brandon, who has served as Upper School Head since 2017, will be the new Assistant Head of Academic Affairs at Ravenscroft School, a pre-K–12 independent day school in Raleigh, North Carolina. Seventh grade science teacher Angela Miklavcic Brandon, Justin’s wife, will join him at Ravenscroft School as the Assistant Head of Upper School.

During his time at Parker, Justin has led the Upper School in an inclusive and equitable manner with a mission-based focus on optimal student experience. He has worked to strengthen faculty organization and professional development and created structures to support student initiatives. Working with the DEI Coordinators, Justin helped form the Upper School Diversity Task Force. He provided essential guidance in the creation and management of the Administrators of Color Conference and the Cullen J. Davis Young Men of Color Symposium.

As a Co-Chair of the Science Department, Angela has been a vital member of the 7th grade faculty who worked to deepen the science curriculum and bring an impressive group of visiting scientists to Parker.

We extend our gratitude, best wishes and congratulations to John, Justin and Angela in their new administrative leadership roles.

Above: Justin and Angela with their daughter, Parker 2nd grader Jozi Brandon.
Learning by Doing, Undoing and Redoing

Community  Courage  Empathy

Innovation  Perspective  Activism

Creativity  Collaboration  Citizenship

Diversity / Innovation / Citizenship
Winter 2021