

BLAIR

BULLETIN

HONORING THE LIFE & LEGACY OF
Bill Timken '53

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SHAMILA KOHESTANI '08
TEACHES US ABOUT
COURAGE

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MENTORSHIP:
A HALLMARK OF THE
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On Exhibit



The Annual Student Art Exhibition

April 28-May 23, 2022, in The Romano Gallery

Displaying student work in all different mediums, this show celebrates the accomplishments, hard work and dedication of Blair's talented fine artists.

On the Cover:

An enlightened leader and one of Blair Academy's most loyal and generous benefactors, former Chair of the Board of Trustees **William R. Timken '53** profoundly shaped the trajectory of the School during four decades of dedicated service. The Blair community deeply mourns his passing on September 27, yet it will ever remember his enthusiasm, love and appreciation for the School that set him on a course for success and inspired his wholehearted leadership of this institution.

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Blair Celebrates the Life & Legacy of Former Board Chair **William R. Timken '53**

Blair mourns the passing of former Board of Trustees Chair Bill Timken, whose dedication, expertise and unstinting philanthropy helped lead the School from the tenuous times of the 1970s through its historic renaissance.

14 A Blair Profile in Courage: **Shamila Kohestani '08**

An Afghan emigre, Shamila's emergence as a powerful advocate for girls in her native country earned her the ESPYs' Arthur Ashe Courage Award in 2006, two years before she graduated from Blair. We caught up with Shamila recently to learn more about the winding road she has traveled and where it has taken her since leaving the hilltop.



48 Timeless: Vita of a Buccaneer Film Prodigy, **Lukas Dong '15**

Last year, Blair introduced J-term, a two-week learning opportunity during which students intensively study a subject that interests them. In this J-term article written by Blair student **Apple Wu '24** about renowned film producer **Lukas Dong '15**, readers gain a glimpse of not only how distinguished Blair alumni have made a global impact but also how exceptional writing is developed at Blair.

20 My Blair Mentor

The relationships built on the hilltop have always been quintessential to the Blair experience. In this new recurring feature, read about the specific role of mentorship at Blair by hearing from alums about the faculty members who impacted them most.



58 Blair at Afrobasket 2021

In May 2021, Blair alums and NBA legends **Luol Deng '03** and **Royal Ivey '00** reunited with Blair coach Joe Mantegna to lead the South Sudan Basketball Federation's Men's National Team in Afrobasket, the popular tournament that has served as a qualifier for the FIBA World Cup and the Summer Olympic Games. Here, the trio reflects on Afrobasket, their hopes for the future and the experiences on the campus that first brought them together.

74 Young Alumni Professional Panels

A new event series at Blair, titled the Young Alumni Professional Panels (YAPP), promises to connect students directly with alumni who are just a few years out of school to talk about their work and life experiences.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Blair's **Aidan Ward '22** Named NJ Governor's School Scholar

This past summer, Blair's **Aidan Ward '22** was chosen as a New Jersey Governor's School Scholar. Established in 1983, the prestigious Governor's School is an intensive summer program for rising seniors with an interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Bringing together some of the state's most motivated and high-achieving high school students, the Governor's School offers an enriched educational opportunity that connects students with like-minded peers and prepares them to enter high-demand fields.

Over the course of four weeks, Aidan took four classes taught by Rutgers University faculty—in robotics, physics, material science and game design—and collaborated with teammates on a final research project. "Our team saw that there are lots of crowdsourcing education sites for high school students, like Khan Academy," Aidan said, "but nothing for higher levels of education." Seeking to fill that void, Aidan's team modeled for their final project a crowdsourcing platform for tertiary education, complete with user-friendly website. Presented to invited guests at a research symposium and submitted to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Aidan's team project was well received.

While Aidan enjoyed the rigorous academic and immersive Governor's School experience, what he loved most was making friendships with students as passionate about science, and game design in particular, as he is. "What I got the most from is meeting people who are interested in the same things as me. Even a year after the program, we still have discourse, and it's pretty lively. I hope I am going to work with them again."

Staff

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SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

What do you think about the stories in this issue of the *Blair Bulletin*? Let us know—your letter may be published in the next issue. Please send your comments to bulletin@blair.edu.



One of the greatest aspects of boarding-school life is that, at any moment, you can be involved in so many different things...and the temptation is to do it all. I love the vitality and pace of days at Blair and our faculty try to fit in as much as we can each day: teaching, coaching, advising, conducting, directing, doing dorm duty, offering extra help sessions, meeting with prospective and current families, attending Skeptics and alumni gatherings—the list goes on and on.

On any given day, there is so much happening, and I love the energy of it all. And, as I shared with our students at a December Chapel, I try to maximize my time, be efficient and do more with each minute—in fact, I pride myself on my multitasking ability.

However, performing multiple tasks at the same time well is actually not possible. While it is natural for us to try to move at a fast pace and make the most of the minutes of every day, our faculty are continually encouraging our students to focus more on individual tasks and be more purposeful with how they spend their time. This isn't always easy, but we all need to be reminded that to be more productive, make meaningful connections and, ultimately, find joy, a shift and

“Connection requires time, space and focus, and being in the state of flow enhances our ability to engage, grow and become more community minded.”

commitment to focus are necessary. Our goal then becomes achieving a state of “flow” instead of optimizing efforts to multitask.

The concept of flow is a highly focused mental state when you are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter. Time slows down, and your senses are heightened; you are in sync with the task at hand. Many describe this state as being “in the zone.”

The pandemic has taught us that technology can connect us in powerful ways, but it also can fragment our focus and disrupt our flow. This is one of the reasons we at Blair are so committed to keeping our phones in our pockets and earbuds out of our ears when we walk on the pathways across campus. If we think about how we want to approach our day, our interactions with one another and our work, we need to be mindful of the ever-present temptations to juggle so much at once without truly being present in any of it. While we can convince ourselves that our devices enhance productivity and that we can give full attention to multiple tasks at once, we really can't.

One of Blair's core values has always been the power and impact of connection—with classmates, teachers, advisors, coaches and faculty in the dorm. The value of the boarding-school experience lies in the deep relationships our students build with one another and the adults in our community. Our daily schedules at Blair are packed with opportunities for students and faculty to forge bonds

that can be transformative and last a lifetime. But connection requires time, space and focus, and being in the state of flow enhances our ability to engage, grow and become more community minded. Pushing distractions aside is challenging, but it is worthwhile and underscores what makes Blair special: The people we meet here shape who we are and who we become, and they add value to our lives.

As we look toward the 175th anniversary of Blair's founding next year, the importance of building authentic relationships and achieving a flow state to amplify connection and carry forward the best of Blair's culture is always on my mind. When my family first visited Blair, we immediately felt at home, and that remains true for today's students and faculty, as well as so many generations of alums. Plans are underway to celebrate this incredible milestone throughout our next school year, and I hope we have the opportunity to welcome you home to Blair. Together, we will look back at our long and shared history and ahead to Blair's exciting future and all that is yet to come.

Peter G. Curran
Head of School



1

BLAIR CELEBRATES THE LIFE & LEGACY OF FORMER BOARD CHAIR

William R. Timken '53

AN

enlightened leader and one of Blair Academy's most loyal and generous benefactors, former Chair of the Board of Trustees **William R.**

Timken '53 profoundly shaped the trajectory of the School during four decades of dedicated service. The Blair community deeply mourns his passing on September 27, yet we will forever remember his enthusiasm, love and appreciation for the School that set him on a course for success and inspired his wholehearted leadership of this institution.

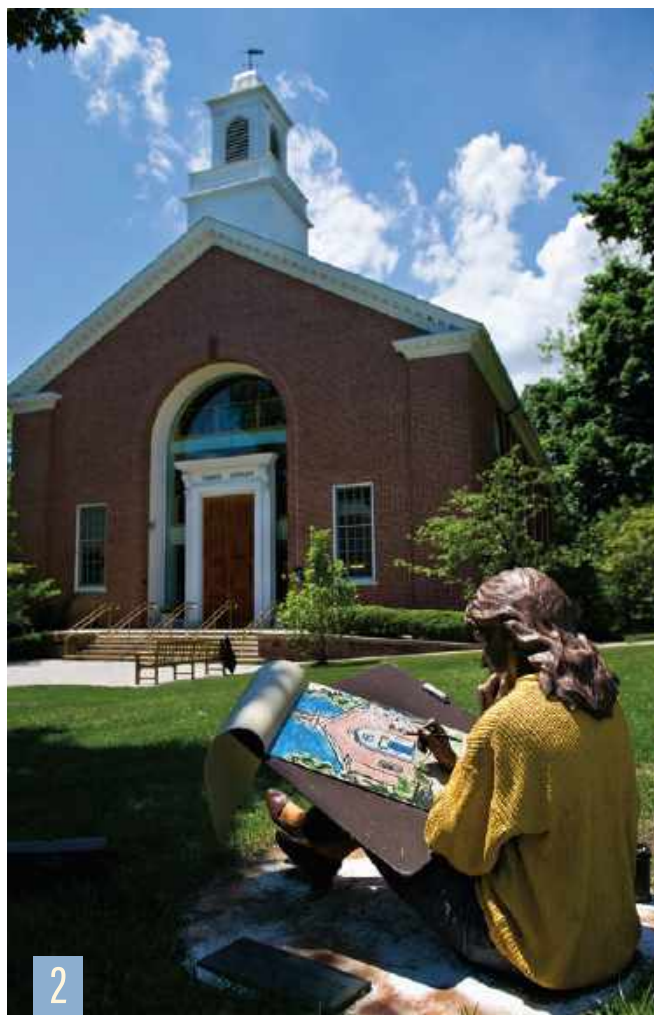
"Bill was such a caring man whose kind soul was so readily apparent in every interaction that I had with him," said Doug Kimmelman P'12 '13 '15 '22, Chair of Blair's Board of Trustees. "His decades of love and care for Blair will be felt for many generations to come, as will the impact of his strategic vision, forward-thinking leadership and extraordinary generosity."

Bill came to Blair as a junior in 1951 and, under the guidance of caring teachers, especially former English teacher Henry Cowan, he thrived. Mr. Cowan convinced him that if he applied himself, he could be a success, and that, Bill said, was the catalyst that made a lifelong difference for him.

From Blair, he matriculated at Colby College, where he continued to do well academically and as a varsity tennis player. He was also blessed to meet his future wife, Judy, at Colby, and they were devoted to each other through 63 years of marriage. The Timkens settled in New Jersey, where they raised their three children and Bill began a 42-year career as a securities industry executive. His work took him from Wall Street to San Francisco, where, in 1968, he became a founding partner of Hambrecht & Quist, retiring in 1999 as the company's vice chairman.

1 A typical shot of Bill on the dock of his and Judy's Lake Tahoe residence, doing chores.

2 Bill liked to joke that he was not sure why his gift to Blair was directed to remodeling the library to be an inviting, two-story space with a great deal of natural light because he did not spend much time there himself as a student. But the Timkens' gift has made the library one of the most visited and comfortable campus spaces. Ironically, the first page of the 1953 ACTA featured Memorial Hall.



2

Bill was a leader who always made sure everyone had space and felt valued; his style was all about including people and building them up. He had such an upbeat, youthful spirit and warm smile with a hint of mischievousness and irreverence—it was infectious. Here was this incredibly accomplished person who was optimistic, curious, steadfast, gentle and respectful. Bill was humble but also secure and comfortable in his own skin and thoughtfully strategic and intentional about how he moved Blair forward. He truly lit up the room when he returned to campus and loved spending time with students. Bill was definitely the right leader to succeed **Jack Bogle '47**, and we are grateful to him for all he accomplished on Blair's behalf and throughout his wonderful life."

— **Anne Cramer '75**, Secretary of the Board of Trustees

William R. Timken '53

Even as Bill ascended to leadership roles in business, he returned to his alma mater to serve. An amazing steward of Blair, his Blair Trusteeship began with his first term from 1981 to 1990 and continued from 1991 to 1997. Re-elected to the Board in 1998, he served as its Vice Chair in 2000 and Chair from 2001 to 2006. After serving again from 2007 to 2010, Bill was elected an emeritus Trustee, and he continued as a valued member of the Investment and Executive Committees until his passing.

Throughout his Trusteeship, Bill's dedication, expertise and unstinting philanthropy helped lead the School from the tenuous times of the 1970s through its historic renaissance, characterized by robust admission, a strengthened endowment, campus enhancements and expanded programming. He continually sought what was best for Blair, showing concern for the values of the School as much as for the progress he engendered. Perceptive and thoroughly knowledgeable about daily life at Blair, he became a partner with the administration during his years as Board Chair, freely offering his counsel when asked and helping to lead Blair's advancement through his daily writing of thank-you notes and making personal calls to key donors and volunteers.

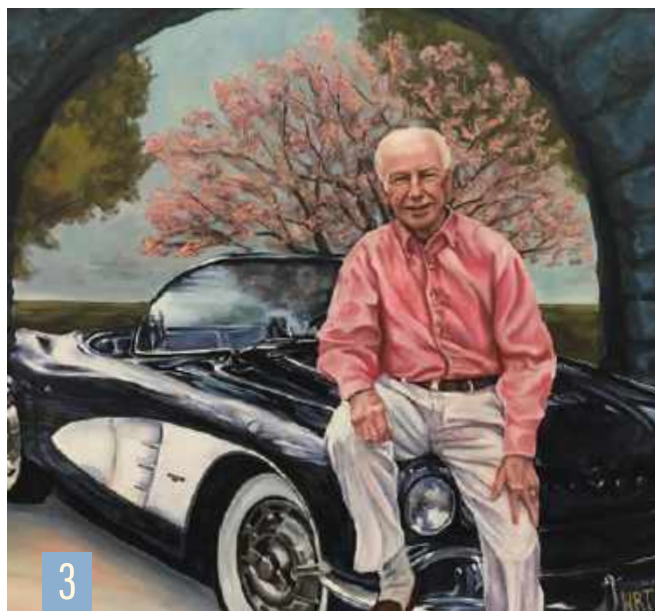
“

Mr. Timken was such a gracious gentleman with a grand sense of humor. He good-naturedly joked with me that he had no idea why they picked the library as the recipient of his gifts as he didn't think he went to the library as a student. He loved the library's gorgeous atmosphere and was happy to hear that students—including his grandson, Eric—came here on their free blocks to relax and socialize, as well as to work. Once, stormy weather forced the 50th-reunion party indoors. We joked that Mr. Timken would cover the cost of any damage done to the library in exchange for removing all the 'normal' library rules. We had a great evening in this lovely space, and there was not one ring on any of the wood surfaces to be found. Mr. Timken was of a generation that knew how to enjoy time with people with respect and care. He loved Blair!”

— Ann Williams, Director of Timken Library

The Timkens' homes in Morristown, New Jersey, and Lafayette and Lake Tahoe, California, were the sites of many Blair gatherings over the years, and Bill and Judy the most gracious and hospitable of hosts and Blair ambassadors. Their exceptional philanthropic support of Blair's plans and projects through the decades includes generous gifts for Cowan Auditorium in what is now the Bogle Science Center and, of course, Timken Library, where a portrait of Bill on one of his classic cars overlooks all who work and study in its inviting spaces (*below*). The Timkens were among the inaugural members of the John C. Bogle '47 Circle of Benefactors in 2016, acknowledgment of their extraordinary support of Blair Academy. They could not have been prouder when their grandson, **Eric Timken '11**, followed in his grandfather's footsteps to Blair.

“Bill was one of the titans who made Blair what it is today,” said Head of School Peter G. Curran. “His humble, understated but extremely strategic and effective way of moving our School forward is emblematic of Blair culture: He was a stalwart who knew how to get it done, a wonderful person who was always there and who had his own thoughtful and deliberate energy and style.”



3 This portrait of Bill, pictured with one of his beloved classic cars, hangs in Timken Library's first floor above an area popular with students seeking a quiet space to study and relax.

4 Bill with grandson, **Eric '11**, in front of the library that bears the Timken family name.



William R. Timken '53



Bill's fellow Trustees honored him in 2006 for his 25 years of service on the Board by establishing the William R. Timken '53 Scholarship, which was presented to him upon his retirement and continues to afford deserving students the opportunity to take advantage of all that Blair has to offer. Bill also received Blair's Alumnus of the Year award in

1995 and the School's highest honor, the Citation of Merit, in 1998. When he retired as Board Chair in 2006, then-Headmaster T. Chandler Hardwick III reflected upon Bill's legacy in these words:

"In all that he did both as a Trustee for 25 years and as the Chair of the Board for the last five of those years, Bill Timken evinced remarkable loyalty, responsible service and, finally, enlightened leadership of this School....Blair has been blessed with exceptionally strong Trustees and impressive Chairmen, and now Bill takes his rightful place as one of our best. His distinctive and very personal portrait has a special place in the Timken Library and will remind us in the years ahead of the combination of qualities that made Bill such a superb leader."

Blair Academy will be forever grateful to Bill for his devotion and all he has done to sustain his beloved alma mater for the future generations of students who will come, study and learn here. Indeed, among Blair's exceptionally strong Trustees and impressive Chairs, he will ever, always be known as one of the best. ■

5 Judy Timken and her grandson, **Eric '11** (third and fourth from left), at a service celebrating Bill's life in Lafayette, California, in November 2021. Pictured with her (from left to right) are Blair's Head of School Peter G. Curran, former Director of Advancement and Strategic Planning Monie Hardwick, Blair's 15th Head of School Chan Hardwick and Chief Operating Officer Jim Frick.

6 On June 13, 1998, Bill welcomed attendees to the official dedication of Timken Library, formerly known as Memorial Hall. Then Head of School Chan Hardwick presented the Timkens with bricks at the ceremony to commemorate the conclusion of the building's complete renovation.



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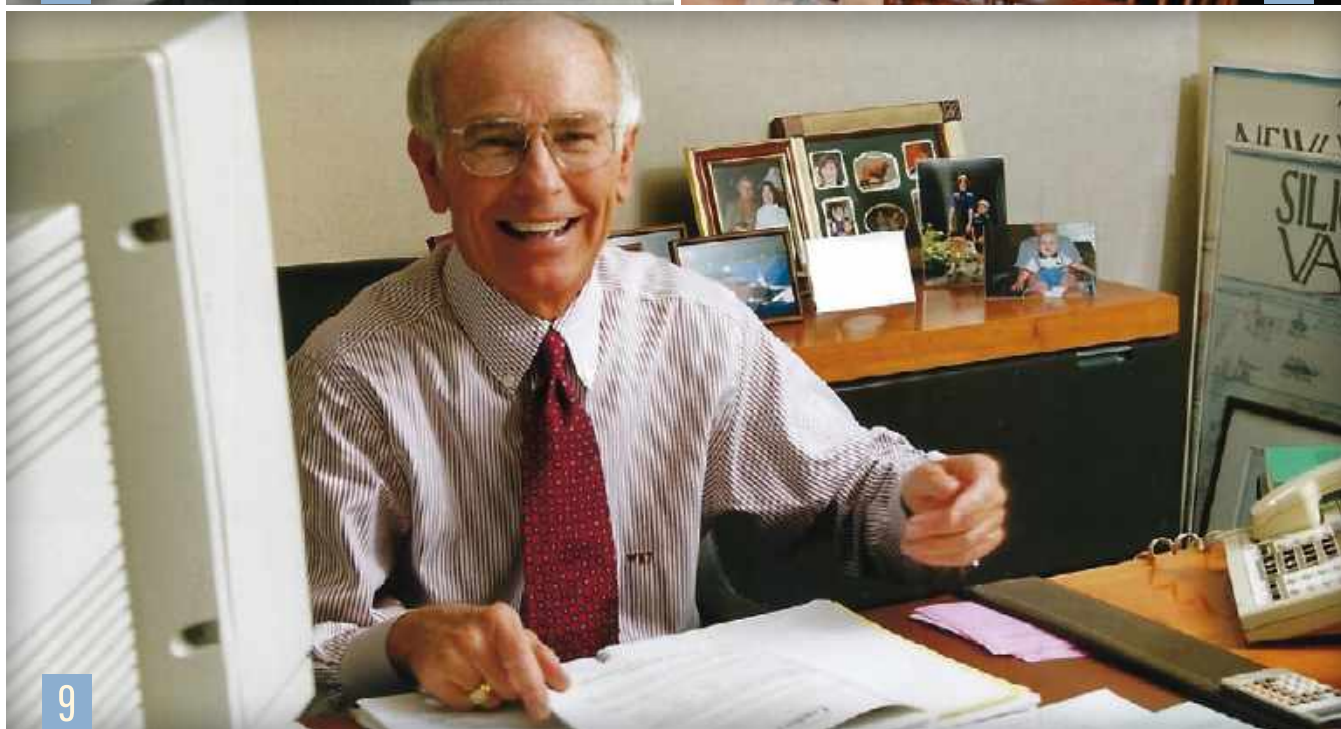
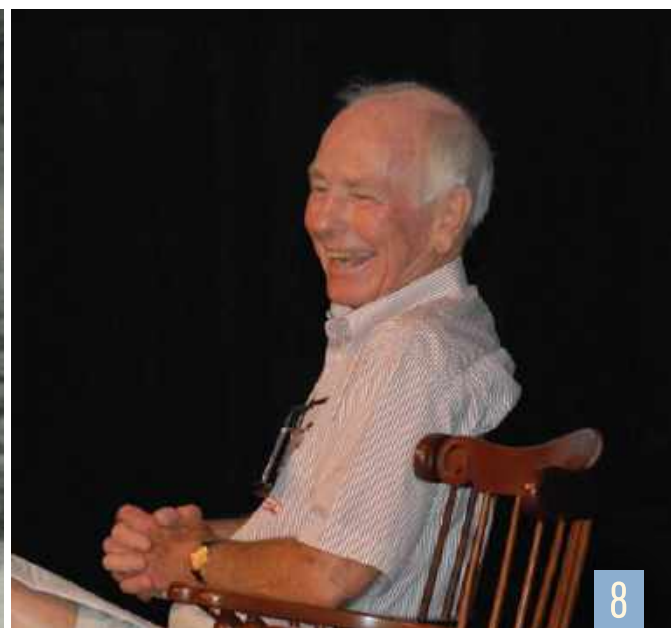
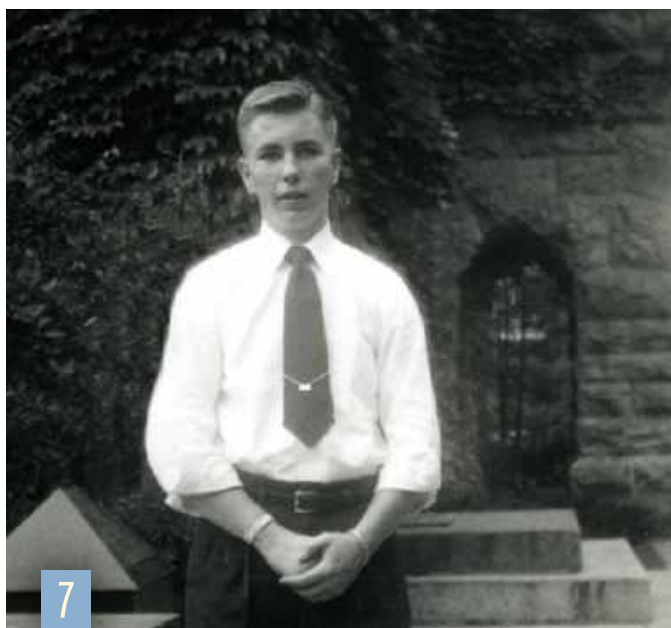
Bill Timken emerged as the architect for a defining governance model that would build a Board of Trustees propelling Blair forward with more success and demonstrable progress than at any other time in the School's long history. Taking the baton from his friend and colleague, Jack Bogle, a leader who inspired Bill and with whom he collaborated as the new Board Chair, Bill offered his version of dedicated and visionary leadership. When he stepped aside after eight years, he left a model of school management that would continue to thrive into the next two decades and likely beyond. The Timken era wonderfully complemented as well as refined the arc of Blair's success from the 20th into the 21st century; in that regard, Bill Timken will be the model for which future leaders will seek to be an equal."

– **T. Chandler Hardwick III**, Blair's 15th Head of School

When Blair undertook the historic *Ever, Always Campaign* during the 2008 recession, Bill was confident that alumni, parents and friends would support the School. He believed philanthropy was built on leadership and trust, so beyond his and Judy's own generous giving, he also began writing what would become—literally—hundreds of handwritten notes to express his gratitude to campaign donors. If a donor gave multiple years, he would look back at his notes, seeking to be as personal as possible. I don't believe there is another Board Chair anywhere who invested the time or caring Bill did in letting people know the impact their giving had on students and teachers."

– **Monie Hardwick**, Blair's former Director of Advancement & Director of Strategic Planning

William R. Timken '53



7 The 1953 ACTA noted that Bill (*pictured by the Arch here*) was a joker—affectionately known by his classmates as “Tilly”—who moved in a “wide circle of friends” and was active in the Blue and White Key, Omicron Kappa Delta, the Blue Color Club and various sports teams, including varsity soccer, varsity tennis and JV basketball.

8 Bill loved returning to campus for Alumni Weekend during his tenure as Board Chair (*pictured here on June 7, 2008*).

9 Bill working in his office at Hambrecht & Quist at 1 Bush Street in San Francisco.

10 At the 2013 groundbreaking for Blair’s newest dormitories, Bill (*far right*) posed with those who preceded and succeeded him as Chair of the Blair Academy Board of Trustees (*left to right*): Doug Kimmelman P’12 ’13 ’15 ’22, **Jim Jenkins ’66** and **Jack Bogle ’47**.

11 During his senior year, Bill (*pictured in the third row*) was proud to receive “Varsity B’s” for his athletic contributions as a member of the soccer and tennis teams.



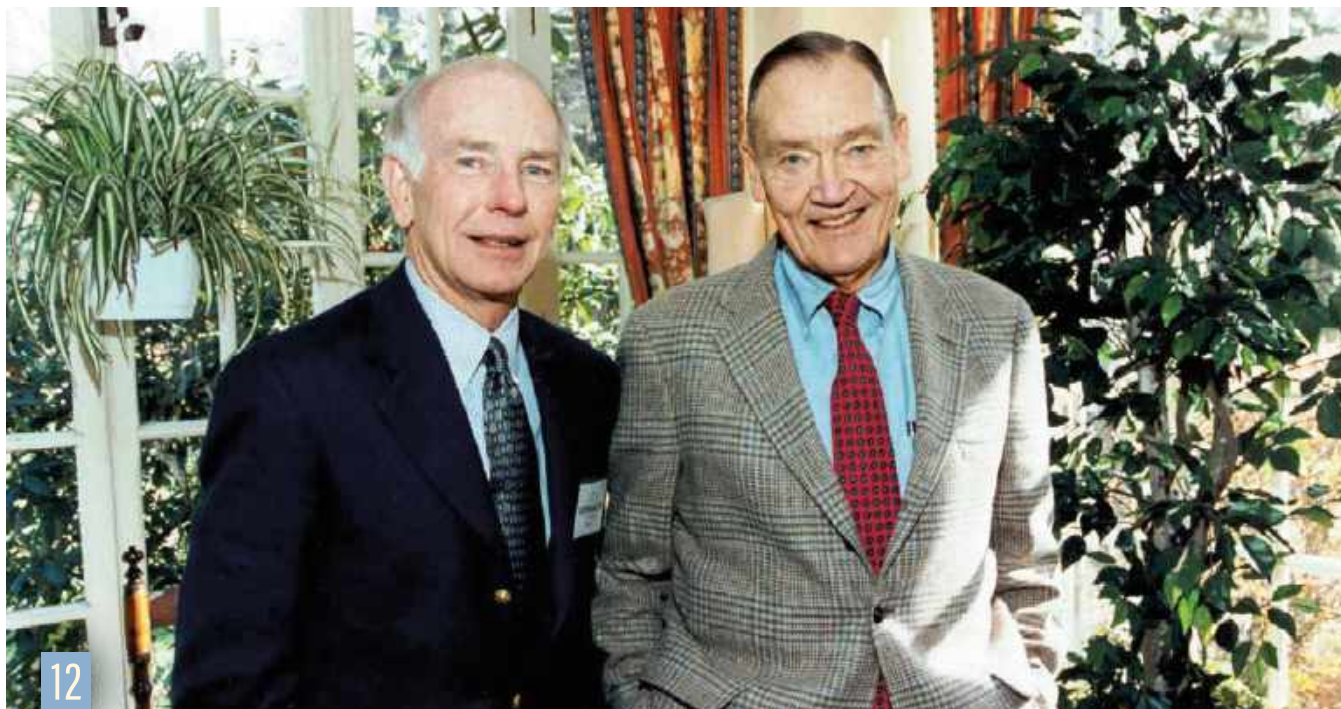
"Bill was most concerned about the School's finances, the ability to maintain tuition prices and the health and growth of the endowment.

He was quite active in recommending some good venture funds, which we invested in, and then overseeing those. Although he lived in California, Bill spoke every week to [Blair's 15th Head of School] Chan Hardwick to get updates on events at the School and remained quite active in hosting various Blair events on the West Coast, including at his home. I remember when Bill and [Blair Board of Trustees Chair Emeritus] **Jack Bogle '47** asked me to be the next Chair; Bill wanted to be sure he could attend all future Executive Committee meetings once I took on that role so he could keep an eye on school events (and, I'm certain, to make sure I was always headed in the right direction for Blair!). Bill loved Blair dearly."

—**Jim Jenkins '66**, who succeeded Bill as Chair of the Blair Board of Trustees in 2006



William R. Timken '53



12 Bill (left) with Blair's late Chair Emeritus of the Blair Board of Trustees **Jack Bogle '47** in a photo taken in November 1999. Jack had served on the board for nine years by the time Bill joined in 1972 and they worked together to move Blair forward for nearly four more decades. Both men remained active Trustees for the rest of their lives and spoke fondly of their extended partnership and leadership.



13 The Timken family. *From left to right, seated:* Grandson, Max Perkins; daughter, Jean Timken; Bill; Judy; daughter-in-law, Shelley Timken; and grandson, Will Timken. *From left to right, standing:* Son, Bill Timken Jr.; son-in-law, Steve Cuny; grandson, Jackson Perkins; daughter, Heidi Timken, and her partner, Leslie Johnson; and granddaughter, Blair Cuny.



14

14 Bill and Judy (seated) posed with family on the day of Eric's 2011 graduation from Blair. Also pictured, from left to right, standing: Grandsons, Max Perkins, Will Timken and **Eric Timken '11**; daughter-in-law, Shelley Timken; and son, Bill Timken Jr.

— A BLAIR PROFILE IN —

Courage



SHAMILA KOHESTANI '08

It is said that fortune favors the
brave, and that has proved to be
true for ***Shamila Kohestani '08.***



An Afghan emigre, Shamila emerged as a powerful advocate for girls in her native country, earning her the ESPYs' Arthur Ashe Courage Award in 2006, two years before she graduated from Blair Academy. We caught up with Shamila recently to learn more about the winding road she has traveled and where it has taken her since leaving the hilltop.

BEGINNINGS IN AN ANCIENT CITY

Born in Afghanistan, Shamila grew up in the 1990s and early 2000s in the bustling city of Kabul, an ancient metropolis of over two million surrounded by deep, narrow valleys and jagged mountains. Shamila remembers that, from a young age, she wanted to play sports. Living in an urban capital, she and her seven siblings had access to some traditional sports, but gender barriers existed in athletics.

Cultural expectations of modesty, Shamila recalls, guided women to participate in indoor sports, activities held away from public view. "Badminton, table tennis, volleyball—those are sports women would play, always indoors. Soccer was very popular, but a sport only for men."

Regime change occurred in Afghanistan in 2001, and with it, cultural mores began to shift. Rather unexpectedly, Shamila found herself at the forefront of those leading by example.

Needing soccer teams to play against, Shamila boldly began doing what she could to encourage the expansion of girls'

recreational soccer teams in Afghanistan. Working with the Ministry of Education and the Afghan Football Federation, Shamila started visiting high schools and recruiting female students to play soccer. It was a challenging task, she remembers. "It was a male-dominated sport, and it was very difficult. For us, we knew we had to go through this so the next generation wouldn't have to experience this trouble," she says. Working with a group of like-minded young women at several high schools across Kabul, Shamila and the Afghan Football Federation eventually succeeded in helping establish more than 15 different female soccer teams by 2006. She was also elected captain of Afghanistan's first national women's soccer team in 2007.

"It was an honor to represent my country," Shamila recalls. "We didn't even have a team when I started." Receiving threats from those who felt she was breaking long-standing tradition, Shamila played on the national team under armed guard in a field next to the American Embassy in Kabul. Despite the threats, she and her teammates persisted. "We showed them that Afghan women are brave. We are fighters. We are factors for change."

As part of her efforts to normalize women playing soccer in Afghanistan, Shamila also accepted an opportunity to participate in the Afghan Sports Exchange program, a nonprofit dedicated to giving girls the skills to become the next generation of leaders through sports. The program selected Shamila as one of eight girls to play soccer in the United States in 2004.



A FORTUITOUS MEETING

Two years later, a second soccer clinic led to another trip to the United States. It was there, while participating in the Julie Foudy & ESPN Sports Leadership Academy in Hightstown, New Jersey, in 2006, that Shamila first caught the eye of Blair's Dean of Campus Life and Director of Leadership Programs **Carolyn Conforti-Browse '79**.

Shamila made a strong first impression on Mrs. Conforti-Browse. "Shamila was determined to get the most out of every

a road trip returning Shamila to her host family in Delaware—the two had gotten to know each other well.

So it made sense that Mrs. Conforti-Browse was deeply distressed when she learned the following year that, back in Afghanistan, Shamila had gone into hiding. Mrs. Conforti-Browse recalls: "Shamila had become pretty well known by then, and a family in the neighborhood was trying to bully Shamila into marrying their son. They were being relentless. And I knew that Shamila's father and mother valued education..." Thinking that higher education might be a route better suited to her bright young friend, Mrs. Conforti-Browse spoke with the U.S. State Department and Blair Academy's administration to find out if offering Shamila a scholarship to Blair as a postgraduate was an option. Before long, that is exactly what happened.

TRANSITIONING TO LIFE AT BLAIR

After calling together a team at Blair, Mrs. Conforti-Browse recalls that then Head of School Chan Hardwick and Blair Chief Operating Officer Jim Frick made up their minds and told her, "We're doing this." And, in a short time, the Blair community pulled together to make Shamila's transition a success. Faculty and staff united to collect a wardrobe for Shamila, and a few Blair teachers funded her health insurance. Chan and his wife, Director of Advancement and Strategic Planning Monie Hardwick, brought Shamila to their home in South Carolina over spring break for driving lessons and a taste of Southern hospitality. The family of classmate **Taylor McKay '08** also took Shamila under their wings, supporting her as one of their own. "It took a village, but we did it," Mrs. Conforti-Browse says with a smile.

Shamila's story resonated so much with Blair parent Leo Motiuk, who happened to be on the board of Drew University,

“I teach the girls that you don't have to have a powerful position to lead. Every one of us has leadership within us.”

second and everyone she met at the camp,” Mrs. Conforti-Browse remembers. “She wasn't afraid to make mistakes, and when she was playing soccer, she played with such joy. It radiated from her. There was no question, she was just brave.”

That summer of 2006, teacher and pupil ended up spending a good deal of time together. When Sports Leadership Academy students overexerted themselves during one particularly sweltering practice, Mrs. Conforti-Browse offered to escort one dehydrated player to a doctor. Shamila tagged along to translate. In the hospital room, translating doctors' questions with a calm and self-possession rare for her age, “She really made an impression on me,” says Mrs. Conforti-Browse. By the camp's conclusion—and after

that she soon also found herself with an offer to attend that college on scholarship. Funding came from a newly formed, grassroots organization called the Afghan Girls Financial Assistance Fund. To date, the organization has funded the higher education of 50 Afghan girls. As she has in so many ways, Shamila boldly led the way as the first.

CONTINUING TO UPLIFT OTHERS

Today, Shamila has settled into a new routine. In the decade since she graduated college, Shamila and her husband, Kyle, have moved to Reseda, California, with her parents, who emigrated from Afghanistan just a few months ago. Rising each morning at 6 a.m., Shamila gets ready for her day as program manager for a nonprofit that oversees international developments in the Middle East and North Africa. Since her parents are still transitioning to the rhythms of American life and are not yet fluent in English, Shamila usually cooks them breakfast and, speaking to them in Farsi, gets them set for the day. “These are the things that we do for family,” she says, smiling.

Though she has now retired from playing soccer, Shamila continues to coach and advocate for the sport, mentoring roughly a dozen girls on various Afghan soccer teams in her free time. The young athletes see Shamila as a role model and part of the reason that they have had the opportunity, until very recently, to play outdoor sports. “They just reach out to me,” Shamila says. “It started informally, with them contacting me through WhatsApp and Facebook. I have players from youth-development teams and club teams. They have problems, and I try to help them.” Shamila notes that, with recent developments in Afghanistan, her protégés are uncertain about whether they will be allowed to pursue their dreams, but she will continue to assist them however she can.

It comes as no surprise that Shamila also still works at the camp that first led her to Blair, as it fuses two of her passions in life—sports and leadership. In the summer, Shamila works as an assistant coach with the Julie Foudy Sports Leadership Academy—alongside Mrs. Conforti-Browse—and relishes the opportunity to watch girls learn from the best athletes on the field while simultaneously building their confidence and developing other key life skills. “We teach not only how to kick a soccer ball, but how to be a leader in your community. When you learn leadership at a young age, it’s inside you. I teach the girls that you don’t have to have a powerful position to lead. Every one of us has leadership within us.”

Thinking back over the path that she has traveled over the last decade, Shamila finds that she has had much for which to be thankful. In addition to the gifts of education, freedom and friendship that she has enjoyed, Shamila finds herself grateful for the small pleasures in life, like welcoming her parents to her kitchen table laden with warm food this Thanksgiving. There, they met Shamila’s husband, a former U.S. Army cryptolinguist, for the first time. Recalling how her parents and husband greeted each other warmly, Shamila’s face lights up. “They were very pleased with him,” she says and adds, “and I am thankful they are safe.”

Because of Shamila’s courage and steadfast dedication, girls across the world have become better athletes and, in the process, learned the importance of teamwork, sportsmanship and leadership. Shamila hopes those she has mentored will hold those values dear and take every opportunity to pay forward what they learned on the soccer field in the years ahead. ■

To read more about Shamila’s experience at Blair, visit www.blair.edu/shamila-kohestani.



Shamila and husband, Kyle, reuniting with her parents in Reseda, Calif.



Shamila and **Carolyn-Conforti Browse '79** catching up in the summer of 2021.

HERE WE GO AGAIN!

After nearly two years of virtual or masked performances, the Blair Academy Players were back in DuBois Theatre in February for their production of *Mamma Mia!* Sit back, relax and enjoy highlights from the show through this photo essay by Blair's photography teacher, Tyson Trish.





MY BLAIR MENTOR

Relationships are at the heart of the Blair experience, and among the most pivotal and lasting relationships for any student is one with a faculty mentor. More than coaches, classroom teachers or dorm parents, mentors become trusted advisors, and their kindness, care and wisdom can resonate long after graduation.

In this first installment of the “My Blair Mentor” story, alumni reflect on their Blair mentor or, in some cases, mentors. They share how these remarkable individuals impacted their student days, their careers and so much more, and offer heartfelt thanks. We hope you enjoy their reflections and that their words inspire special memories of your Blair mentor, too!



Sam Durland '59

BLAIR MENTOR: W. CARROLL "SCOTTY" BROOKE

Sam Durland '59, seated center, with the founding members of the Blair Amateur Radio Club.

My Blair mentor was physics teacher W. Carroll "Scotty" Brooke. I had a closer relationship with him than with other teachers because he and his wife gave me a lift to my home state of Maryland during school vacations. During those journeys, we conversed on many topics, from physics to the state of the world.

Mr. Brooke brought physics to life for students by employing examples from our everyday experience. I particularly remember one task he set for us, which was to describe the outcome of a collision between two students of known mass and velocity using the principle of conservation of momentum. There was much hilarity in the classroom, but that important principle was made real to us, especially when considering the collisions that routinely occurred on the football field!

Some years following graduation from Blair, I migrated to Australia and commenced studying for my engineering degree at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. I'm sure that an appreciation of physics in the real world, which I believe was instilled by Mr. Brooke, played a part in my decision to pursue a career in that profession. And, my engineering degree launched me on a life that has been immensely rewarding personally and professionally, providing experiences that I could hardly have imagined as a student at Blair Academy all those years ago.

Mr. Brooke, I salute you as both a great teacher and mentor. Or as we would say in Australia, "Good on ya, mate!"



Francisco Santander '81

BLAIR MENTOR: ELLIOTT TROMMALD, PHD, HON. '65

Francisco Santander '81 (#71) as a member of the Blair boys' lacrosse team.

As a freshman coming from Venezuela, I had so many mentors at Blair. Assistant Headmaster Fernando Marcial, Hon. '39, was a mentor to all of us international students, and Assistant Headmaster for Finance and Development **Dennis Wm. Peachey '62** was an incredible man. But Elliott Trommald, PhD, Hon. '65, my history teacher, tennis coach and friend, was the best person to talk to. His keen sense of humor and intellectual commitment cut through everything. He answered my questions and demanded that I educate myself more. As a coach, he taught me to be competitive, think on my feet and adjust my mindset.

All of this gave me the courage and creativity to reinvent myself many times in my life, from economist to investment banker to insurance salesman to founder of a consulting company for Venezuelans coming to the States.

Mr. Trommald taught me that you can find meaning in any direction and that you eventually get to a point where you realize how to use everything you've ever learned. Today, I run a nonprofit that I designed, teaching martial arts to special needs individuals as part of their therapy. Without Mr. Trommald's influence, I never would have been creative enough to do it. He is so smart, so intelligent, and his positive influence on me inspired me to be a positive influence for others.

If you would like your story of a Blair mentor to be featured in a future *Bulletin* article, please email Director of Communications Andee Ryerson at ryersa@blair.edu.



Natasha Leitch-Huggins '97

BLAIR MENTOR: MARTIN MILLER, PHD, HON. '81

Natasha Leitch-Huggins '97 with Dr. Miller at her 20th reunion.

History teacher Martin Miller, PhD, Hon. '81, was my mentor in the classroom and on the athletic fields. He believed in my academic ability—even when I doubted myself—allowing me to take AP European history. The coursework and the other students intimidated me, but I worked hard and paid attention during class. I even remember a study session at Dr. Miller's home before the AP exam. I was so proud when I passed the exam, despite my own self-doubt when I started the course.

Dr. Miller sparked my love of history, and I believe that is the reason I'm a history teacher. He also played a part in my current doctoral studies in education. As a teacher, he had a calm and consistent presence, and it was clear he loved teaching and working with adolescents. Dr. Miller laid the foundation for my career path and trajectory.

During my senior year, I was co-captain of the girls' varsity cross country team. I will always remember a short conversation

with Dr. Miller about being a lifelong runner. He said, "You can run anywhere in the world; all you need is a pair of sneakers," and shared his experience running in Prague. This resonated with me. Four years later, I was an expat living and working in Japan. I felt the loneliness of being a foreigner in a rural town. Remembering Dr. Miller's advice, I put on my sneakers and started running. I trained for and ran the Nagano Marathon, then started running smaller road races, and through this, I was able to connect with other expatriates and Japanese people who were interested in running.

I would express gratitude to Dr. Miller by saying, "Thank you for seeing me!" Dr. Miller made me feel visible and valued. For a young person, that is a great deposit toward building self-esteem and self-worth. His impact helped me develop confidence in my academic efficacy that served me well in college, helped me overcome homesickness and form connections while living in Japan, and influenced my career.



Jillian Rogers '19

BLAIR MENTOR: LEUCRETIA SHAW

Mrs. Shaw and **Jillian Rogers '19** at the Peddie Day bonfire.

To know Mrs. Shaw is to love her, and her compassion for all her students stretches to every corner of Blair. I met Mrs. Shaw one of my very first days on campus because she was my ninth-grade monitor. At the time, I had no idea what kind of impact she would have on the next four years of my life. Although Mrs. Shaw technically was my academic monitor, she quickly became my mentor, friend and favorite person to talk to on campus. I am so grateful that her door was always open to me, for some of the best life advice that I received was in her nook of the admission hallway.

During my time at Blair, I had many moments of self-doubt academically and would always turn to her for words of wisdom. She had an amazing ability to help me see my potential even on the darkest days. Mrs. Shaw instilled a confidence in me that I have carried with me to college, and for that I am forever grateful. A few days before graduation, she gifted me a ceramic sign that simply reads, "Yes, you can." Those three little words perfectly capture how she has shaped

me into the person I am today. Whenever I feel an ounce of uncertainty or feel like giving up on my goals, her voice plays in the back of my mind, telling me that I am more than capable of succeeding in anything to which I set my mind.

Mrs. Shaw's empathetic nature and unrelenting positive attitude ultimately inspired me to pursue nursing. In the nursing world, it is imperative to take the extra time to get to know patients as people in order to establish trusted relationships and make them feel cared for during their most vulnerable moments. Similarly, as an educator, Mrs. Shaw exemplifies how seeing the best in every student and going the extra mile to make sure each one feels supported are key to each individual's growth. The genuine care and acceptance she showed me during my four years at Blair left a lasting impression and are both something I try to reflect in the care I show all my patients. Thanks to Mrs. Shaw, I know just how big an impact those little moments can make on one person.

A FEW CURRENT FACULTY & STAFF MEMBERS SHARE THEIR BLAIR MENTORS

**Carolyn Conforti-Browse '79**

Dean of Campus Life & Director of Leadership Programs

Monie Hardwick took on many roles at Blair, including English teacher, Director of Advancement and Director

of Strategic Planning. When she started, she was a working mom with young kids and the standard-bearer of a new era!

Day girls' advisor Lois Underwood and English teacher Charlie Underwood both gave me many life skills. As a student, I looked to Lois for lots of wisdom and guidance and learned the importance of laughter in healing.

Director of Athletics and math teacher Dan Hazen simply inspired all of us to love kids and love the job, reminding us that the greatest still sweep floors. The wisdom and perspective of his wife, Karen, got me through every tough time, even after the Hazens left Blair. Her advice has carried me through my career.

**Niki Applebaum '01**

Dean of College Counseling

Recently, I've been yearning to reconnect with Marty Schmalenberg, my history teacher and one of my many Blair mentors. His class first awakened my intellect, as he asked us to grapple with philosophical and ethical questions within the context of our historical studies. He not only fostered my academic growth, but he also served as a guide and friend by sharing his integrity, wisdom, artistry and creativity with me in conversations, in joint performances for Chapel and in his impressive bonsai tree cultivation.

**Paul Clavel '88**

Director of Athletics

When I was a student-athlete, my mentors included math teacher and wrestling coach Bob Latessa and math teacher Latta Browse. They had

a major impact on why I chose education/coaching as a profession. Go BUCS!

**E. Courtney (Brennan) Stanford '95**

Director of Stewardship

I can still hear my math teacher and coach, Dan Hazen, yelling, "BRENNAN!"—either proudly or

when I was in trouble. The perfect mix of kindness and toughness, he could stop you in your tracks and make you want to work harder in the classroom and on the field, and his hug could heal your angst!

**John Redos '09**

English teacher, Director of Crew Programs & head girls' rowing coach

My two Blair mentors were Dean of Students Carm Mazza and history teacher Bowen Posner. Their guidance

and patience have helped me get to where I am today, Carm as my dorm head/advisor and Bowen as my rowing coach.

**Rhett Moroses '13**

Assistant Athletic Director

Associate Dean of College Counseling and head boys' varsity basketball coach Joe Mantegna was not only my Blair mentor, but he is also a lifelong

mentor. The Blair basketball "Cause Over Self" mantra is a pillar in my life, and Joe's guidance has changed my life for the better.



Engineering students experiment with their mobile obscura.

Transforming How Blair Introduces Engineering to Students

Head of School Peter G. Curran was driving down the road last summer, when he spied Blair science teacher Chris Thatcher—on top of a local farmer’s barn. “Is that Chris Thatcher?” he asked. “It wouldn’t surprise me. He might be trying out an experiment for class.”

In fact, when Chris Thatcher was not climbing ladders and jumping on barns, the pioneering science teacher did spend his summer conducting experiments for Blair’s new elective, Engineering Science. Open to students in the 11th or 12th grades who have completed or are taking physics, Engineering Science is a new course designed for students interested in pursuing engineering as a field of study or possible future profession. Unlike most traditional classes, however, this course’s curriculum is the brainchild of

NASA engineers and secondary education specialists from the University of Texas (UT) at Austin. The program also offers teachers the rare opportunity to sample the curriculum as pupils themselves; last summer, Mr. Thatcher worked in teams with teachers from around the country to solve the curriculum’s engineering challenges, experiencing the course from a unique perspective.

Course Origins

Blair’s new course originated through a serendipitous turn of events. In 2008, the National Science Foundation awarded UT at Austin a \$12.5-million grant to develop innovative solutions for high school engineering education. In collaboration with NASA engineers, UT faculty developed a series of secondary

school courses designed to empower students to use creativity and analytical problem-solving to find solutions to real-world challenges. Whether it is launching a spacecraft or delivering safe, clean water to communities, in modern life, professional engineers find solutions to pressing problems. The UT program sought to design courses that would help secondary school students step into that role of professional engineer. A few basic principles guided the resulting curriculum, including that all course activities are “scaffolded” and build upon each lesson learned; that the standardized engineering design process acts as a framework for all projects; that students engage in simplified and meaningful activities that professional engineers undertake; and that all design challenges have multiple successful solutions.

When Blair science department chair Kelly Hadden saw that a window had opened to apply to the UT program, she quickly consulted with her colleagues. “Engineering is growing in importance as a foundational experience for our science students,” she said. “This was a great opportunity to introduce Blair students to different kinds of engineering—mechanical, chemical, environmental—in a hands-on learning environment.” Blair applied to the program and, along with a limited number of secondary schools from across the nation, was accepted.

That is how Mr. Thatcher found himself, in the summer of 2021, conducting all manner of science experiments, from building towers that can withstand earthquakes to brewing the “perfect” cup of coffee.



Experimenting with construction of a scaled-model skyscraper that withstands earthquakes.

In the Class

To date, Mr. Thatcher has structured “Engineering Science” around six projects that form the backbone of the new course. After an introductory exercise focuses on how to communicate effectively across specialized teams, he breaks students into groups to solve a series of challenges. In the first two, students study light, using pinhole photography to craft a “mobile obscura” and later re-designing a customized flashlight from scratch. In subsequent projects, Mr. Thatcher challenges students to brew the “perfect” cup of coffee, encouraging them to experiment with recipes, as well as variables such as brewing temperature, particle size and time. The curriculum also tasks teams with building safer buildings for earthquakes. In that exercise, student teams evaluate statistical data and then build a series of tower models, presenting their best design at the end of the course and testing it against a machine that shakes the tower and charts the structure’s



Science teacher Chris Thatcher and **Addie Scialla '22** break down a plan.

velocity and displacement over time during a simulated quake.

All projects involve parameters and real-world conditions that students are required to take into account. For the course’s culminating project, for example, student teams design a prototype of an aerial-drop mechanism that surveys a disaster area.

It is this application that most interested Mr. Curran. “The practical application of what Mr. Thatcher is teaching is very exciting,” he said. “Kids will take what they learn from this class to wherever they go next.”

Student **Addie Scialla '22**, who is one of 13 pupils in the inaugural class, knows

that she will learn valuable engineering skills in the course, but that is not what she is looking forward to most. It is getting to study with the teacher whose enthusiasm, scientific curiosity and devotion to his students took him on an experimenting adventure in the summer of 2021 that excites Addie and her classmates most. “I know Mr. Thatcher, and he’s so energetic and hands-on. I’m really excited to take his class,” Addie said. An avid coffee drinker, she also admits that the coffee challenge is an added enticement. “Every morning, I start my day with a cup of coffee. I *know* I can perfect it!” ■



Health-and-Wellness Program Helps Students Find Balance at Blair

“Take a big, deep breath—in through the nose and out through the mouth.” A soothing British voice coached Blair students in a softly lit room following lunch on a recent Monday afternoon.

“Close your eyes if you’d like to,” the recording instructed gently. “Relax and, as thoughts intrude, allow them to pass and return your attention to your breathing.”

Well, not quite. Having never meditated, some students’ eyes fluttered open while other students shifted in their seats, looking around at their classmates. Elsewhere in the room, more experienced students appeared tranquil, all signs of the busy school day erased, their expressions serene as they fully embraced the opportunity to meditate.

A practice that dates back to religious sects from the fifth millennium B.C., meditation is becoming more and more mainstream, thanks in part to easily accessible and guided programs like the one called Headspace that Blair students sampled at the beginning of the fall semester. People have been practicing meditation and mindfulness for centuries, likely because of its physical benefits. Studies show that meditation

and mindfulness decrease stress and anxiety while increasing happiness, helping bring practitioners into balance. That, explains health-and-wellness instructor Cency Middleton, is the goal for Blair students. Addressing the assembled students at the first session, she asked them to consider, “How can we be more intentional about finding the balance that works best for us?”

Along with school counselor Melany Jimenez, Ms. Middleton is leading a series of discussions with Blair’s dorm and day student groups this year titled “How to Be Well @ Blair.” The sessions seek to cultivate balance in students’ lives, as well as help them develop a personal skill set so that when they are challenged over the course of the year, whether academically, emotionally or socially, they have coping skills in place.

Origins of the Program

Promoting students’ healthy development, as well as enabling them to reach their potential, is Ms. Middleton’s priority. “When we create opportunities for kids to be well emotionally, they have more room for academic achievement and a sense of



Cency Middleton teaches health and wellness to students in Bogle Hall Science Center.



belonging,” she says. In planning the specific curriculum for these conversations, Ms. Middleton recognized the power of peer education and looked to incorporate student voices. Started in 2019, Be Well @ Blair is a student organization that seeks to create positive change on campus by focusing on peer health education. Specifically, students, assisted by faculty, incorporate health education into curricular and co-curricular opportunities, giving seminars about topics of interest to their peers. This group was a natural fit for Ms. Middleton’s goals, and within one meeting, they decided to join forces, and the program “How to Be Well @ Blair” was born.

“All idea topics are generated by the students themselves,” says Ms. Middleton, and they come from a variety of sources, not just the Be Well @ Blair student leaders. Some of this year’s topics, for example, were borne from senior exit interviews, a tool that Blair uses to gather students’ feedback about their experience on the hilltop. Others came from a survey in which students noted subjects they would like to learn more about.

Traveling from dorm to dorm and assisted by student presenters from Be Well @ Blair, Ms. Middleton and Ms. Jimenez oversee the lessons in small groups, so that there is space for student discussion and, in the case of the first lesson, meditation practice. In his second year working with Be Well, **Gabriel Ramirez ’22** believes the student leadership during these conversations is critical. “There is less translation required when students speak on these topics to other students, because the language is the same,” he says. “And something positive comes from learning information from other students. Being taught by a classmate breaks down barriers. When students see someone they know modeling positive behavior, they think ‘This



person is the same age as me and knows so much.’ I think it makes students more willing to engage with the lesson.”

Themes for 2021-2022

This semester’s first session, “Finding Balance at Blair,” sought to explore the science and benefits of mindfulness and meditation. It aimed to help students discover what practices work for them and to cultivate a quieter and more focused state of mind.

Topics scheduled for later in the year include teaching effective communication skills, so that, for example, students learn how to approach difficult conversations with roommates. A subsequent session will focus on healthy relationships and consent, while a lesson on social media will explore the impact that Instagram and other social networking sites have. The year will conclude with discussions about substance use, developing healthy habits, and how stress and pressure can build resilience and grit if processed in a constructive way.

“This is really a preventative approach,” says Ms. Jimenez. “Rather than waiting for problems to bubble to the surface, we are creating an environment where we can have those conversations before things occur. We are connecting students to the means and tools available to them across campus.”

New student **Courtney Payne ’25**, for one, feels that the initiative’s efforts are working. “I had never meditated before, but I’m going to be using this before tests.” Be Well student leader **Isa Dugan ’22** agrees. “Whether a sophomore or a senior, Blair students are coming into this with different levels of experience. Wherever you are at, Be Well is striving to make an impact and positively influence all aspects of life at Blair.” ■



Passion, Perspective & People: Blair's J-Term Combines Them All

8:30 a.m.	Listen to original music composed by students.
9:40 a.m.	See chairs built by students and learn about the environmental impact of consumerism, then run downstairs to talk with student artists in their gallery walk.
10:50 a.m.	Learn about financial systems and tips for building equity as a high schooler.
12:30 p.m.	Ask about the concept of "grit" and how it can be measured at a student expo.
1:40 p.m.	Explore agricultural policies and learn about the Farm Bill.

Had you been on campus on Monday, January 17, this could have been your schedule. Spread out over five sessions, this year's J-term experience culminated in presentations, performances, installations and conversations planned and prepared by each course's instructors. Students shared their final products while also participating in or attending those of their classmates, experiencing a snippet of the course and sharing in the learning. Participants could choose from seven courses in each time slot. The result was a conference-style day where you could learn from and about your classmates.

"Students appreciated the in-person presentations, which offered windows into what each of their classmates and friends had been studying during J-term," said Dean of Academics Nathan Molteni. "These final products illustrated the new lines of thinking our students took while tackling the real-world problems their courses presented, and students were proud to share this newfound expertise with their teachers and peers."



New Experiences Foster New Connections

Having begun last winter, J-term (short for “January Term”) started as an opportunity for students and faculty alike to dive into a topic about which they are curious. Each course was co-taught by two faculty members who found where their interests aligned in ways that may or may not correlate with their traditional course material. This year, Spanish teacher Tim Devaney and English teacher Tom Parauda combined their love of games to offer “Diplomacy and Human Nature.” Science teacher Nadia Abascal and fine arts teacher Evan Thomas brought their expertise in art, music and pop culture to the course “Exploring the Roots of American Culture.” These unique combinations, sparked by faculty interests, gave students a vast array of course offerings (*listed on page 33*) that explored topics

not traditionally covered by the Blair curriculum. “I loved my J-term experience. It enabled me to connect with others in the Blair community about something we were all passionate about,” shared **Jules Zweifel ’23**.

Students ranked J-term course offerings and were assigned based on their preferences, which allowed community members to make connections based on common passions with peers and faculty who they may not ordinarily cross paths with. The schedule was also a refreshing change from the norm as students took only one course for up to four hours each day. This eliminated the constant shift in focus and interaction a normal school day provides. “J-term allows for an in-depth exploration of one topic,” explained Mr. Molteni. “Combining curiosity, interest and focus allows our students to delve into



learning in ways in which they don't always have time. This leads both to deeper learning, but also stronger connections as they work consistently with a group of teachers and peers."

While many chose J-terms that allowed them to explore an existing interest, other students opted to try something brand new. "I am grateful to have had the opportunity to get out of the classroom setting and try something different," shared senior *Aitalia Sharpe '22*. "I was able to build a chair from scratch and learn about the carbon emissions that are produced with online deliveries. There were ups and downs to this process, as it took time to get comfortable with the tools, but overall it was a positive experience. Not only did I build a functional object with my hands, I learned about the aftereffects of online shopping, which has become a prominent facet of many people's lives."

Even for those who explored existing passions, feeling challenged was a trend. "I took 'Voice of an Image,' and the

final project pushed me out of my comfort zone," Jules noted. "I created an image that was personal to me and that sparked conversation on a struggle I've dealt with during my time at Blair. I felt vulnerable sharing my work at first, but the Blair community could not have been more supportive. It felt good to share this part of me and feel supported and heard by my peers, which was the best part of my whole J-term experience."

On Campus & Beyond

While last year's J-term courses were virtual, this year, the 10-day seminars took place on campus. Students and faculty both remarked on the improved relationships afforded by an in-person experience. Field trips, for example, allowed some classes to venture into the wider Blairstown area to enhance their learning. "The Politics of Agriculture" class with English teacher Molly

Hoyer visited local farms while learning about the Farm Bill, the largest piece of legislation currently influencing American agriculture. “Blair Puzzle Hunt” students, led by French teacher Allan Issenchmidt and math teacher Will Murray, visited an escape room, evaluating the qualities of an effective group puzzle so they could create their own as a final class product. Other trips sated students’ taste buds, such as the “Why Vegan?” (Mike Ryerson and Danyelle Doldoorian) class visit to a Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, vegan bakery and the “You Are Where You Eat” (Cristina Castillo and Lian Wang) trip to a nearby Indian restaurant. Still other classes visited local businesses and service organizations. This opportunity to get off campus offered students first-person, hands-on experiences that both deepened and strengthened their learning.

Classes that couldn’t venture off campus brought the outside world to Blair. Field experts and alumni populated almost every course, either in person or virtually, allowing students to learn from their experiences and hear their different perspectives. Students in “The Power of the Artist,” taught by Jennifer Pagotto and Ryan Manni, learned from singer/songwriter **Anthony D’Amato ’06** about the power of purpose in artistry and the larger cultural contextualization of a composer/songwriter’s process. The course “Driven by Story, Driven by Purpose,” taught by Anders Fogel, Amanda Lucas and Cally Queally, worked with award-winning author and Pulitzer Prize finalist Rebecca Makkai on the power and purpose of storytelling. For “Anti-Semitism in America,” Allison Leddy and Tracy Klein invited a Holocaust survivor to speak to their class. Anna Raley and Maria Issenchmidt’s “Dismantling Systemic Oppression” class learned from a lawyer at Bryan Stevenson’s Equal Justice Initiative, who talked to students about the civil rights and advocacy nonprofit organization featured in the book and film *Just Mercy*. Other guests shared their expertise on entrepreneurship, mentorship, diplomacy and more, as each teacher supplied speakers for each course’s specific needs.

Whether strengthening a passion they already had or exploring something new, students and faculty alike remarked on the opportunities to explore areas of interest, develop new connections and work collaboratively to gain new expertise. Which curiosity would you explore? What would you learn and whom would you meet on that journey? Which J-term course would you choose? ■

2022 J-Term Course Offerings

- Anti-Semitism in America
- Blair Puzzle Hunt
- The Carlisle Indian School: The Past & Future of Boarding Schools
- Conscientious Carpentry: Building by Hand to Better Understand Buying Online
- Current Events Forum in Washington, D.C.
- Design for the Other 90%
- Development: Mirror & Mentors
- Diplomacy & Human Nature
- Dismantling Systemic Oppression
- Do You Want to Live in a Dystopia?
- Driven by Story, Driven by Purpose: The Stories We Choose to Tell
- Exploring Personal Identity Through Creative Writing
- Exploring the Roots of American Culture
- Financial Planning & Building Equity
- Food, Culture & Community
- Historical Personalities Who Altered the Course of Mathematics
- How to Build a Business Plan
- The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
- Juneteenth in Mexico: Border Stories
- Make Up Your Own Mind: Using “Simple” Data to Estimate Complex Answers
- Modeling Global Change Through Coding
- The Politics of Agriculture
- The Power of the Artist: Examining the Intersection of Purpose & Music Making
- Race & Sociology of *The Wire*
- Radical Art
- Rights for Women—What Took So Long?
- Risky Business
- The Science of Happiness
- Sports & the Law
- Sports Media & Journalism
- Voice of the Image (Vol. II)
- What Is GRIT?
- Why Vegan? Benefits of a Plant-Based Diet
- You Are Where You Eat
- You Can’t Leave Blair Without Seeing This!

New Course Finds the Intersection Between Math & Real Life

How do populations grow? How do viruses spread? How do you interpret what an infographic is really trying to say?

These are all questions that can be answered in Blair's new course, Mathematical Modeling & Applications.

Open to seniors, the course replaces College Algebra and is designed to promote reasoning, problem-solving and modeling using basic mathematics skills, such as algebra. Students learn critical-thinking skills to formulate a real-life problem, construct an appropriate mathematical model, calculate solutions and validate the results.

Math department chair Julia Rowny, who teaches the course, was inspired to create it with Dean of Academics Nathan Molteni after noticing an increased need for a new style of learning mathematics among students who might not be interested in advanced math courses, such as calculus.

"When am I ever going to use this?" is a question often heard in classrooms around the world, and Ms. Rowny wanted to ensure that her course content would be relevant and useful to students' lives.

"We knew some students needed a different way of learning math, because they've been stuck in this algebra-based trap where it's very abstract and symbolic," she noted. "This new way of looking at things has us teaching material in a way that's useful to them, but not the norm of learning in regular math classes. That's the core of it."

The class, comprising 12 students, kicked off the year with probability, learning about decision making on topics

such as taking certain bets, or picking one option over another and what those consequences would be. Students then moved into exploring statistics, including how to interpret them for accuracy.

"When someone refers to the average age of something, what does that really mean," Ms. Rowny explained. "Is it accurate? Is it fabricated? How can you learn when you're being lied to with numbers? All of that is explored in this class."

Students ended the fall 2021 semester with their first signature assessment, which saw them asking statistical questions, researching data online from reputable sources and analyzing their hypotheses.

Signature assessment examples included which basketball player is the "best" basketball player, which country is the "best" in the Olympics on average, and even birth statistics, such as looking at survival rates of different kinds of deliveries.

"Many students' projects switch directions because of how easy or hard the data is to find, which is awesome," Ms. Rowny said. "I'm seeing students have to change their question or data source due to this, and that's exactly what we experience living life every day."

During the spring semester, students will participate in a financial simulator, where Ms. Rowny will roll dice to determine their financial status as they plan for college and postgraduate life. Based on the financial status they're assigned, students need to determine what their needs might be and what careers work with their major at the college they can attend.



This includes determining income potential after graduating and locating an apartment based on student loans and geographic limitations. Following that unit, the course will expand to topics such as budgeting, taxes, health insurance, interest rates and credit scores.

The course is being well received, as students are thriving in the teamwork-based learning environment. Ms. Rowny noted that the class will often jump into solving a problem and ask questions along the way, rather than listening to her lecture at the whiteboard. Students were also surprised to learn that they are allowed to use any quantitative tool that works best for them, including calculators, Google Sheets and even their phones.

By offering a real-world view of mathematics, the course is key to the growth of students' critical-thinking skills and understanding of how important math truly is. Mathematical Modeling & Applications provides a strong tactical foundation that prepares students for key issues they will face after their time at Blair Academy is complete. ■

SEED

BY THE NUMBERS

For the past several years, Blair has been a site for the personal and professional development program known as SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity). Open to all Blair faculty, staff and their partners, the National SEED Project works with communities and schools to create professional spaces for conversation to drive personal, institutional and societal change toward social justice. SEED instructors adapt seminars to meet the needs of the

site community and include personal reflection and experiential learning, while exploring the intersection of identities. SEED takes a systemic approach to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) and acknowledges that justice work is an ongoing process rather than a onetime training. Each monthly three-hour session starts with dinner and serves the expressed purpose of allowing participants to foster conversation and community among colleagues. ■

'16-'17

First cohort

5

Number of years the program has been offered

9

Participants this year

2

Number of current faculty trained as facilitators

8

Meetings per year

24

Hours per year

2+3+40=45

Total community members who have participated in SEED (2 faculty spouses, 3 staff, 40 faculty)

7 SEED

GROUND RULES:



Speak for yourself



Respect the roles of silence



Balance speaking and listening



Share the airspace



Consider what is confidential



Trust that learning is a process



Acknowledge intent and assess impact

Kathy Otinsky



They call her the “Voice of Blair”—and with good reason.

Administrative assistant Kathy Otinsky has worked for Blair Academy for over four decades, and for much of that time, she has been the warm, steady voice at the end of the line when calling the School. As Blair’s longtime telephone operator, Kathy is the person most parents interact with first. Sitting at her desk in the student life office, Kathy has calmly fielded every concern from “Can you get a message to my son?” to “I’m lost on campus. Help!” By virtue of her 46 years at Blair, she may also be the School’s de facto historian and information specialist. “On a typical day,” Kathy says, “when someone needs to remember something from Blair’s past, they come see me. I can tell you where the underground pool is,” she says conspiratorially.

“I started working at Blair in the summer of 1976,” Kathy remembers, when she was a local high school student. Planning to enter the Army upon graduation, Kathy thought that her seasonal position in Blair’s school office would last only the summer. When a full-time position opened up unexpectedly in the mail room, Kathy took it, and the rest is history.

While she has filled a variety of positions at Blair, Kathy works now in the student life office, where, on a normal day, she takes attendance, and if absent students do not respond, she assists in locating them. She compiles the Daily Bulletin, listing the updated schedule for faculty and staff, and coordinates students’ off-campus excursions, organizes School vehicles and drivers, answers the main phone and helps her sister, Karyn, who works in the Blair mail room, when it is overrun with packages. “It’s pretty funny,” Kathy says, “because I can remember playing school with my sister, Karyn, when we were kids, but it was never with 400 packages!”

Partners in crime, the sisters have worked together at Blair for over 20 years. Relationships like that one, Kathy says, stand

out in her memory the most. For instance, when she and her husband bought their first house in 1995, Kathy recalls that Blair faculty filled the flower beds of the couple’s new home, sharing their gardening expertise and perennials. The act of kindness led to Kathy’s passion for creating beautiful landscapes and to deep friendships with fellow gardeners Micheline Miller, wife of former history teacher Marty Miller, PhD, Hon. ’81, and Dawn Homes, wife of former fine arts teacher Philip Homes.

Kathy is also especially grateful for the mentors she found at Blair—those special people who come into our lives and, through some twist of fate, both inspire and influence us. In Kathy’s case, she took time off after having her children, and her coworker Ginny Van Stone, registrar and mother of Blair Board of Governors member **Robert Van Stone ’69**, took Kathy under her wing and championed her return. “Not only did she model an incredible work ethic, she was instrumental in helping me be reassigned here full time. Some of the strongest friendships in my life have come from people I’ve met at Blair,” Kathy attests. “People whom I never would have met except for work.”



The Mitchell family celebrating Ginny Van Stone's birthday. Back row from left to right: Chris Mitchell, John Mitchell, Karyn Schar and Debra Mitchell. Front row from left to right: Kathy Otinsky, and Ginny and Caryl Mitchell.



Kathy's favorite maple on the bank next to her house, a Blair "transplant."

As if right on cue, longtime Blair senior portrait photographer Justin Baiter approaches Kathy while she is being interviewed. "Hey Kathy," he calls, breaking into a smile as he walks up to his friend of several decades. "It's great to see you! I'm glad you're speaking with Kathy," he says. "People don't know this, but she runs the School!" In typical good humor, Kathy blushes and chuckles at the compliment. "I really like working here," Kathy adds. "I can't believe it's been 40 years. I don't plan on leaving anytime soon. There's too much to do!"

In the Q & A that follows, get to know Kathy as she recalls some of her most memorable experiences "outside the classroom."

Q: With your passion for gardening, do you have a favorite plant?

Kathy: Yes, I have a favorite tree! Years ago, there was a beautiful Japanese red maple in front of Clinton Hall. I

noticed a young sapling growing along the walkway after the tree had to be cut down, and I asked a member of the grounds crew to dig it up for me. This is that tree now (pictured above), which Mike and I planted in front of our house in 1995.

Q: You have a proud Blair lineage—your father, John R. Mitchell '42, went to Blair, as did your sister-in-law. Your sister, Karyn, and mother, Caryl, worked here, and you met your husband, Mike, through Blair. What has that experience been like?

Kathy: Blair has been a part of my life in so many ways. I realize that more than ever while reminiscing and answering these questions! From my first memories of going for speech therapy with Dagne Trommald [wife of former faculty member Elliott Trommald, PhD, Hon. '65] in South Cottage when I was 6, to being a caddy for my grandpa while he

golfed with Charlie Hall, who taught mathematics and geography here for over two decades, to learning how to ice skate on Blair Lake. And who could forget Helen Hall? She was a very creative seamstress and the town librarian at the "Old Mill" before working here. She taught us [local kids] how to look up books in the library and the importance of reading.

My mom worked for Assistant Headmaster Fernando Marcial, Hon. '39, in the '50s and then again in the '70s. She even covered my job on the morning I gave birth to my second child! Without her taking care of my sons, I wouldn't have been able to come back to work full time in 1985.

The best thing, though, has been meeting my husband, Mike, in 1989. He had recently come out of the Army and started working in Blair's building maintenance department. I had worked with his mother, who worked here in the bookstore, before I knew him.



Two students seeking Mrs. Otinsky's help with attendance permissions.



Kathy and her husband, Mike, share a moment together at Rockefeller Center before attending a show at Carnegie Hall with Blair teachers and students.

Q: What made you consider the military as a career option for yourself?

Kathy: My family couldn't afford to send us to college, and there were not many jobs available in the area. A recruiter had been in touch with me, and I thought going into the Army doing secretarial work, not signing up to be in combat, would be a good idea. My father and grandfather were both in the Navy and lifelong American Legion members. I always respected the men and women who served our country. However, I had no interest in joining the Navy because I get motion sickness!

Q: What has been the biggest transition in technology that Blair has made?

Kathy: The biggest transition would be, of course, computers. When I first started working in the machine room/mail room, we recorded

addresses and gift amounts on little metal plates that fit into Graphotype and Addressograph machines. I also operated an offset printing machine, which proved to be a bit dangerous if you didn't have your hair pulled back. Yes, it wrapped right around the ink roller. Thank goodness I could reach the "off" button and, growing up in this town, I knew the local hairdresser and ran down there. She was able to wash out the ink!

In the early years, there were no computers and no copy machines. Then, in the mid-1980s, floppy disks came out and the first Xerox copiers, which jammed several times a day. There was the switchboard that was finally upgraded to a new phone system in the mid-1980s and now our newest system, which was installed a little over two years ago. If I am away from my desk, a voicemail message appears in my email. Amazing!

The invention of GPS was also a game changer, for sure. Before the Internet and GPS, I gave callers

directions over the phone, including parents who needed directions for away games. I had it down pat, though.

Q: How has Blair changed most in the last 46 years?

Kathy: That's easy—the additions and changes to many buildings and houses. I have counted them. Since I started working here, I believe, there have been seven new academic/athletic buildings, seven new faculty houses, several renovations like the Carriage House, Bogle Science Center and, of course, Memorial Hall turned into Timken Library. There have been a couple of demolitions, the saddest being the Blair Mansion in 1979.

The roadways have also changed. When I first started working here in 1976, I would drive up the front hill and through the Arch! Yes! In my '63 Ford Falcon.

Q: You mentioned that you once counted, and on a single day, saying



Kathy in 1988 in the “original” school office reading the newspaper during a coffee break.

“Hello, Blair Academy. May I help you?” 175 times. Do you still field that many calls each day? Who are your favorite callers?

Kathy: Since the newest phone system was installed two years ago, there’s been a huge decline in calls that come through my office. Callers now have many selections and can go directly to the office they choose. I do miss speaking to folks from “the outside world,” but, then again, it’s nice not having to be “glued” to the phone.

My favorite callers are the ones who say “I have a silly question....” You just never know what is going to follow! I like to stay upbeat and reassure them that their inquiry isn’t all that silly. Also, our alumni who graduated in the ‘40s and just want to talk to a live person!

Q: What are your favorite memories at Blair?

Kathy: There are so many wonderful memories! School musicals are among my favorites. I would bring my grandmother to the productions when they were in Memorial Hall. You could



Former Blair controller Debbie Gordon’s retirement party at Buck Hill Brewery in 2019. From left to right: Current and former Blair employees Alma Costantino, Karyn Schar, Kathy, Pat Togno, Debbie, Marion Clifford, Linda Klesik, Hon. ‘16, Olga Brazaitis, Marie Giuricich, Jo Ellen Van Vliet and Lori Rybicki.

see the orchestra in front of the stage, which I liked since I played the alto saxophone in elementary and high school. The Blair Academy Players have always done a phenomenal job. The talent that the students and faculty have is amazing.

Q: As one of our resident experts on all things Blair, what are some fun or unusual things that have happened on campus that stand out in your memory?

Kathy: Blair’s sesquicentennial in 1998 was very exciting! I finally got to meet [former Board of Trustees Chair] **J. Brooks Hoffman ‘36** in person after talking to him on the phone for many years. He called often when he was the Chair of the Board of Trustees. I better start now learning how to pronounce “demisemiseptcentennial”—Blair’s upcoming 175th anniversary.

Other fun times were opening-of-the-school-year dinners. I have missed only one out of all my years. I was pregnant with my second son when I attended the first one! In 1995, I was given my 10-year chair and was amazed when everyone stood up and clapped and cheered for me! Then, fast forward to 2010, I was presented

with a lovely watercolor painting done by local artist Jan Swift in recognition of 25 years working at Blair. The feeling of comradery is very special at events like these. I am honored to be in the “over 25-year club” with so many great teachers, administrators, staff members, dining hall and housekeeping workers.

Q: What is something people are always surprised to learn about you?

Kathy: I can stay quiet longer than you’d think! Also, I don’t color my hair. I’m just lucky that it hasn’t turned gray. I have donated it twice and will probably do so again soon since it’s grown a lot during the pandemic.

Q: What is your favorite guilty pleasure TV show?

Kathy: Mike and I enjoy many sitcoms and series. I have been watching “Wheel of Fortune” since it started 47 years ago and still have not won the bonus round! I’ve seen all of the shows aired on HGTV at least once. “The Voice” is fun to watch also. And, my Lifetime movies because you know there’s always going to be a happy ending! ■



The Blair Field House transformed on January 23, 2022, for the competition.

RISE OF THE MACHINES: BLAIR HOSTS ROBOTICS COMPETITION

On January 23, 22 high school teams, comprising more than 130 students, descended on Blair's field house for an event the robotics team has been looking forward to all year. Titled the FIRST Tech Challenge, the annual event was held at Blair for the first time, and the plan for our team was simple. Line up the robots at the start. At the sound of the starting bell, charge the playing field, surmount the barriers laid like land mines waiting to disable the Blair team and complete the task in the allotted time. Whatever happens, do not allow your robot to pounce on an opposing player.

MEET THE ROBOTICS CLUB

Computer science teacher Mike Garrant has advised the robotics team at Blair for six years, and he loves the intense FIRST Tech annual competition because it allows students to think like engineers. "The competition simulates a real-world environment, where things go wrong and students have to fix it in the moment to advance in the competition," he says. "And players gain genuine, real-world skills: Think on your feet, act rapidly as a team, learn how to tap each player's speciality."

Each year, the Blair robotics club spends months preparing for the event. Meeting Monday through

Friday after school, teammates convene in the Chiang-Elghanayan Center for Innovation and Collaboration's robotics lab—Mr. Garrant's spacious, glass-walled classroom outfitted with a full-size FIRST Tech Challenge playing field. And then they get to work, designing and refining robots that will compete head-to-head against some of the best secondary school robotics teams in the state.

The Blair team attends several meets each season, concluding with the exciting FIRST Tech Challenge. If they do well, the team advances to the state championship. Three years ago, Blair students brought home an 11th-place finish from the state championship, but the club was unable to continue building on its forward momentum when the pandemic struck and events were paused. Mr. Garrant is glad to be restarting. "Interest in the club continues to grow at Blair," he said in October. "We've got twice the number of members this fall than we've ever had before. It's going to be a good season."

THE FIRST TECH CHALLENGE

At the one-day competition, students were asked to design, program and operate a robot built to complete a specific task. This season's challenge required



Teammates (left to right) **Amogh Katare '24**, **Roman Usher '24**, **Aidan Ward '22** and **Jack Gerdson '24** transport their robot from one match to another on game day while scoping out the competition. **Ksenia Burdiuzha '24** checks the Blair robot one last time.

participants to create robots that dropped game pieces into storage bins, much as real robots do in Amazon's warehouses. During the first 30 seconds of competition, the preprogrammed robots operated independently, attempting to skirt barriers and deposit their game pieces, followed by two minutes of action during which students used remote controls to guide the robot's movements.

For the first time in FIRST Tech history, this year the one-day event was held at Blair. Inside the Hardwick Hall Field House, excited students huddled in clusters by the entryway, hoping their robots would meet all the required criteria and pass inspection. In the area nicknamed "The Pit" that is designated for fixing broken robots, frazzled-looking students rushed to make last-minute adjustments and repair pieces that had broken off their machines. Other students strategized quietly, trying to figure out how to capitalize on the strengths of the peer schools with which they had been paired. "It's an interesting dynamic," says Mr. Garrant. "One of the exciting elements of the game is being paired with this team that you've never met before." Everywhere in the room, students buzzed with excitement.

Captain of the robotics team, **Aidan Ward '22**, felt inspired by the full spectrum of robotic designs and tactics

he saw at the tournament, and he was honored to compete against such creative opponents. "I was really impressed by the variety of ways you see other teams tackle a problem and grateful for the chance to build my skills," he says. "Our success relies on being able to compromise and communicate with teammates to get the most points. We needed to find ways to work together, and we did."

At the day's conclusion, Blair robotics ranked fifth in their league of 40 teams, and Mr. Garrant commended the team on their strong showing. "Blair robotics has become a well-regarded FIRST Tech Challenge team in New Jersey," he said, "but I think I am most proud to see students building skills that might be of value in the future. Even if a student is not the next scientist or engineer, I believe they will work with or lead people in these fields, so for our students to learn how scientists and engineers think, is invaluable."

Mr. Garrant is now looking forward to new challenges and competitions when the FIRST Tech season begins again next fall. Aidan will be off to college at that point, but he is thankful for the opportunities he has had at Blair to pursue his interest in robotics. "This is what I want to study next year, and I'd love for this to be my career," he says. "Robotics is just really cool!" ■



TEAM BREED CLAIMS ITS SIXTH HEADMASTERS' TROPHY!

After Head of School Peter G. Curran announced Sharpe as the runner-up at the end of Friday night's talent show, a deafening roar spread across the auditorium, making it hard to hear who finished first. But no one needed to. After hearing the teams listed in ascending point order, the students of team Breed knew they were victorious and rushed the stage to claim their trophy. After a week of grit, determination and spirit, Breed became the first Headmasters' team to reach six wins, ending its five-year drought. "I certainly couldn't be more proud of the win we pulled off this year," shares **Zoe LaMent '22**, one of Breed's senior leaders. "I've always loved the competitive spirit of Breed. It really suits me!"

Friendly competition is one of the hallmarks of the Headmasters' games. While students banter with opposing teams, the competition actually unites the School. "Headmasters' breaks up the winter and gives the community something to come together for," explains Zoe.

BREED	847
SHARPE	810
HOWARD	743
KELLEY	714

"I look forward to it every year; it is genuinely just super fun and gives me the opportunity to compete with a huge group of people I might not have interacted with otherwise."

The randomization of student team assignments ensures that sense of camaraderie between teams. "We intentionally split up siblings to make sure the family feel of campus returns when the week ends," shared commissioner and Associate Dean of Students Rod Gerdson. "Other than siblings, though, the teams are totally random, so you're almost guaranteed to be competing against your best friend and alongside someone you've never met." The combination of strangers coming together to battle their best friends in competitions creates the magic that is Headmasters'.



This year, each day brought a fresh variety of challenges ranging from dodgeball to cup stacking on Monday, volleyball to virtual reality on Tuesday, brain games to a scavenger hunt on Wednesday, basketball to Jenga on Thursday and Super Smash Brothers to the fan-favorite tug-of-war on Friday. New this year, Thursday's draggin' boats competition, in which two canoes were tied together and teams rowed in opposite directions, tug-of-war style, to see who could reach the pool edge first, proved exciting. Of course, the mural competition and talent show capped off the week, displaying the artistic talents of all the teams.

While Howard won the first event, Breed took the lead at Monday's close and never looked back. Each team was right on their heels, with some of the closest day-end scores in Headmasters' history. By Tuesday's end, only four points separated first and third place. Breed never lost its lead, though, and ended the games with 847 points, followed by Sharpe, Howard and Kelley to round out the 19th-annual Headmasters' Societies Games.

Breed's efforts and senior leadership cinched their victory for this year. But they can't get too comfortable. By Monday, teams Sharpe, Howard and Kelley were already scheming for next year's games, where each hopes to claim victory. ■



TRIP TO THE MET BRINGS MANY HIGH NOTES

It is not every day that Blair students see English teacher Douglass Compton in formal wear. On a typical afternoon, students might pass the unabashed outdoor enthusiast in shorts and a T-shirt, squash racquet in hand, or catch a glimpse of him in cycling wear, powering up Millbrook's steep hill after a day of class.

But, on November 16, Mr. Compton traded his athletic shorts for a suit when he accompanied a group of 15 Blair students and five teachers, also donning their sharpest evening wear, to New York's Metropolitan Opera House for a performance of Puccini's "Turandot." While they looked uniformly well manicured, in actuality, they were an eclectic bunch. Mr. Compton, the avid outdoorsman from Maine, was joined by Blair's concertmaster, **Julian Huang '23**, along with a visiting teacher from France, and senior **Sammi Antonelli '22**, who simply wanted to see a show in the city. Perhaps the biggest opera fan in the group, Latin instructor Mitch Towne also went along—a teacher known by locals for frequenting a restaurant on Main Street, easing up to the jukebox and choosing an aria. They were young and old, music fans and theatre novices, English speakers and polyglots. For many in this diverse group, it was their first experience attending an opera.

"I was just in awe," says Mr. Compton, who experienced the genre for the first time. "It was a story that captivated my attention about the torments of love; it was about a princess who gets burned by love and the prince who falls in love with her. It's a universal theme, and the performance was so well done."

Sammi found herself equally entranced by the performance, though for different reasons. Dazzled by the spectacle of the staging and deeply moved by the sweeping orchestral melodies, Sam found tears sliding down her cheeks as she let herself float in the sea of music. "I had no idea opera would be so moving," she recalls.

The idea for the trip came about after Mr. Towne taught a mini-course about opera at Blair this summer. "The first opera was written around 1600 CE—making it one of the oldest genres of music that we still perform and listen to," explains Mr. Towne. "And opera houses are always packed. Yet, somehow, when the uninitiated hear the word 'opera,' they think 'boring' and 'old-fashioned.'"

So Mr. Towne set out to construct a course that would clear up misconceptions and show students why global audiences of all ages continue to be entertained



The opera aficionados in the quiet moments before the performance.

and even profoundly moved by opera. When that class concluded, students expressed an interest in attending an opera and Mr. Towne volunteered to find an opportunity. When “Turandot” appeared on the Metropolitan Opera’s schedule, Mr. Towne quickly consulted with Dean of Campus Life and Director of Leadership Programs **Carolyn Conforti-Browse ’79**.

“I thought ‘Turandot’ was perfect because I grew up listening to that opera on repeat in my house,” she recalls. “Mr. Towne liked ‘Turandot’ because it is a classic.”

To prepare for the “Turandot” performance, Mrs. Conforti-Browse opened her home and hosted a Sunday brunch for the growing group of attendees. Sipping coffee and nibbling on French toast, Mr. Towne offered the group a primer in opera. By previewing the score and history of Puccini with students, he hoped to give students context for the dramatic narrative, soaring music and stagecraft that they would be seeing.

The experience did not disappoint. Julian, who is an accomplished violinist and student of music, felt prepared when he took his seat in the famous red theatre and described being “blown away” by the spectacular set, complete with pond and palace. When the opera’s sweeping score began, though, it was the composer’s

craftsmanship that awed Julian most. “Puccini takes this traditional Chinese folk melody and weaves it throughout the Italian opera,” Julian says, impressed by the composer’s dexterity with a leitmotif.

Blair’s newest crew of opera enthusiasts is hoping that if Mr. Towne’s summer mini-course was the first act and “Turandot” was the second, there will be more to come after an intermission. Mrs. Conforti-Browse agrees. “This experience opened doors for students interested in opera and we’d like to keep the momentum going,” she says. One participant’s enthusiasm for the trip was so infectious that her mother, Susan Yee P’23, was inspired to begin work on plans to bring a speaker to campus to help spread the joy of opera.

If there is one note lingering at the end of Blair’s evening at the Met, it is one of universal enjoyment. The students and teachers who attended “Turandot” set out as a well-dressed, if disparate, group and came back uniformly praising the experience. As for Mr. Compton, he looks forward to the next time he trades his bike shorts for evening wear. “Oh, yes, I would go again,” he says, “just to marvel at the majesty of it alone.” Just be sure to give him time to get changed before the next opera. ■



NEW CLUB FOCUSES ON **WOMEN IN BUSINESS**

Two students wondered why Blair Academy didn't have a club for women interested in business, so they chose to start one themselves.

Katie Schultz '22 and **Megan Donaghy '22** were inspired to create the Blair Women in Business Club in 2020 after realizing the benefits a women-centered business club would provide for students on campus.



"I think a small group is really a strong place for girls to lean on one another and open up to others," Katie explained. "I have been passionate about business since I was a little girl, and I wanted to create an opportunity for all of the girls at Blair to learn more and be open to that environment."

The pair suggested the idea of a business club for women to Senior Associate Dean of Admission and Director of Financial Aid Caroline Wilson, who agreed that this type of resource would benefit Blair students. The new club was approved for the 2020-2021 school year, and, since September 2020, the club members have convened virtually for regular meetings.

Over the course of the fall 2020 semester, the Women in Business Club welcomed several guest speakers, including Karen Heath-Wade, senior vice president and head of global client services at American Century Investments; April VanDervort, vice president of life and annuity at Nationwide; and Candi Carter, executive producer of the "Tamron Hall Show." According to Katie, each speaker



Club leaders **Megan Donaghy '22** and **Katie Schultz '22** moderating this year's Young Alumni Skeptics panel.

brought her own unique point of view about how to run a business successfully, and club members enjoyed hearing their stories and advice, and asking questions.

During the spring 2021 semester, the club organized and ran fundraising events to support the nonprofits headed up by some of their guests, including a clothing drive to support Bottomless Closet, a nonprofit brought to the club's attention by Ms. Heath-Wade.

"It's important to our club members to give back to others in the community," Katie said. "Following up on the discussions we've had with such incredible women is inspiring. A goal of our club is to give back what we have learned from these accomplished women. I can't wait for Blair to become involved with these great organizations."

During the fall 2021 semester, the club was joined by Kim Raymer, vice president of regulatory affairs at Halloran Consulting, who spoke of her experience working in her field. The club also moderated this year's

Young Alumni Skeptics panel, which focused on women in the technology industry. Speakers included alums **Sierra Yit '13**, **Kathryn Middleton '10**, **Kate Anello '12**, **Elizabeth Martens '08** and **Lara Bucarey '06**.

Ms. Wilson noted that Katie and Megan are doing 99 percent of the work running the Women in Business Club, including contacting speakers, setting up the meetings, creating plans and maintaining all contact with the club members. "I am simply helping with a few logistics," she said. "I am so impressed with everything Katie and Megan have done to bring female empowerment to our student body."

"The Women in Business Club is truly a place where students at Blair can hear from women who have succeeded in different areas of the business world and gain the knowledge and confidence they need to succeed in their own ways," Katie said. "Although this is only our second year, we are excited to continue to grow, and we look forward to seeing the future impact of our club at Blair." ■



Last year, Blair introduced J-term...

... a two-week learning opportunity during which students intensively study a subject that interests them. The J-term course titled "Where Have You Come From, Where Are You Now?" provided students with the time and space to interview and profile Blair alumni from around the world, learning how to tell someone's story and sharpening their writing skills. What follows is one J-term article written by **Apple Wu '24** and updated this year about Blair alum **Lukas Dong '15**. The piece showcases not only how distinguished Blair alumni have made a global impact but also just how exceptional writing is developed at Blair.

TIMELESS

VITA OF A BUCCANEER FILM PRODIGY, LUKAS DONG '15

BY SHIHAN "APPLE" WU '24

A lone chandelier sits on the streets of Vancouver, magnificent and spinning, a sight to behold. It is in no fancy ballroom and obviously does not belong here. Yet it draws people all the same, receiving much more attention than its fellows that have hung, gathering dust, on the high ceilings where they seem to belong. Somehow, this particular out-of-place chandelier has become the spot where art is accessible to all, not just to the nobles in their grandeur. This spinning chandelier is an emblem of where art and daily life interact, explains **Lukas Dong '15**. He shows that in one of his newest music videos, "Rising Chandelier."

Mr. Dong, a young filmmaker set to shine on the international stage, has made dozens of such inspiring and art-driven videos since leaving Blair. From exploring vintage couture in London to studying elegant furniture design at B&B Italia in Milan to capturing the spinning chandelier in Vancouver, the director's works have taken him on excursions around the world and introduced him to every form of art. But Mr. Dong does not blindly take on projects and shoot just anything about art. "I'm fascinated by brands that have a strong emphasis on quality and design. I really enjoy telling that story and showing how different creators go that extra mile to get everything right," he explains. It is no coincidence that Westbank, a Canadian luxury residential company dedicated to designing beautiful buildings, is Mr. Dong's biggest and by far longest-tenured client.

It is hard to describe the kind of amazement and attraction one feels when watching his films, but "going the extra mile" is a clear signature of Mr. Dong's work. Upon closer look, his films do not have even the slightest superfluous detail, while every tiny corner of the camera shot is meticulously planned. It is this special attention to small things that gives

Mr. Dong's films their unique insignia: Everything is worth pondering, and there are no mistakes or coincidences. Perhaps it is because of this similarity that Mr. Dong considers Wes Anderson one of his favorite filmmakers. As the director of many famous movies, such as "Fantastic Mr. Fox" and "The Grand Budapest Hotel," Anderson's works all contain "this insane level of detail," Mr. Dong exclaims.



But learning from Anderson's "insane level of detail" is just the start when it comes to improving his films and finding inspiration. Surprisingly, many of the director's ideas do not even come from the film industry. He has a hard time finding inspiration from only film, he says—contrary to common belief. Instead, Mr. Dong finds ideas in design, paintings and especially fashion, discovering joy in anything art. He suddenly stands up, scuttles to the corner in the room and brings out the mood board he has been working on. Mr. Dong is using the mood board to visualize his tasks, attempting to wean himself from dependence on

On April 6, 2011, a brilliant young man from Hong Kong, dressed in a sports blazer, wool sweater and thin tie, showed up at the Blair Room for his interview with **Mr. [Ryan] Pagotto '97**, Blair's Associate Head of School, who was Dean of Admission at the time. "He looked very sophisticated," he says. Mr. Pagotto refers to him as a "late great"—a great student who just came in late in the admissions process. Joking about Mr. Dong's interest in dressing well, the former admission dean digs out a photo he took a decade ago: Lukas in a suit, his peers in hoodies.

The demand for his short films never stopped.

a computer. The mood board, he says, is also his current medium for pitching to a client for a project.

Evidently his strategies are working: Job opportunities have begun pouring toward the young director, who has already founded his own company, Lukas Dong Films, while barely out of college. But Mr. Dong's ventures started when he was younger, at the age of 10. Still in primary school, young Lukas found a passion for film. He pursued this hobby for years, and at the age of 11, he got his first video camera. "[Filmmaking] gave me something to do. It's such a time-consuming craft, and there's always more things to learn," Mr. Dong reflects more than a decade later.

Talking about his campus tour at Blair, Mr. Dong still remembers the strong sense of community he felt then and there. Five months later, Lukas Dong entered Blair as a member of the class of 2015, beginning a brand-new four years as an international student. Looking back, Mr. Dong recalls his first few weeks as "scary;" he was a ninth grader about to live on his own with no family in this new environment on foreign soil. He still remembers his first day at Blair: He arrived on campus a few days earlier than his domestic soon-to-be classmates. Meeting up with all the other international kids, the tight-knit sense of community gave teenage Lukas some comfort. He saw a strong level of



bonding at Blair, so much so that he describes every night at Blair as a sleepover. Yet, while the sense of community influenced Mr. Dong to choose Blair, the life outside of academics that made him certain that he made the right choice to become a Buc.

It was at Blair that this young film lover's career really took off. His dorm parent, Mr. Padden, praised his efforts, and for the first time, Lukas experienced the joy and immense confidence of receiving encouragement for his work. His own work. For the next four years, he took on dozens of projects. He went to class during the day, edited videos all night, then went back to class the next day, and so on. The demand for his short films never stopped. "I just couldn't say no [to a request]," Mr. Dong says, grinning. Mr. Dong's contributions of Blair-related videos were so memorable that Mr. Pagotto still describes his films as the best ones the School ever had. His six-minute-video "Blair in Kenya" is still shown to young film students at Blair as an example of a micro-documentary.

In 2014, when Mr. Dong was only 17 years old, he became the youngest director ever to receive the Best American Short Documentary award from the American Documentary Film Festival. During his time at Blair, Mr. Dong swept up dozens of awards, with a *Downtown Magazine* article specifically written about his talents for filmmaking. But talking to the modest filmmaking prodigy, one can barely tell that this is the person who has enjoyed what others might call "an early success." Blair has given this teenager something so much more than a few film awards: countless opportunities to experiment with films, regardless of success. As he constantly says himself, Blair was the place where his career really started, the place that made him sure that directing is his calling.

By the time he graduated, Mr. Dong had decided that film was something he wanted to do for a living. He studied filmmaking at the University of Southern California for four years, which was when he started doing videos for clients,

not just friends. His business grew so big that the director started recruiting friends to help him manage all those projects and deal with administrators. It was in college that Mr. Dong found he enjoyed conversing with clients over a specific project, not just working on it. Thus, in 2019, out of both passion and necessity, Lukas Dong Films was founded.

Currently, Mr. Dong is working on a couple of videos. In February 2021, he set out to edit a narrative film, something he hasn't done in a while. Sponsored by *The New York Times*, the film, "A Concerto Is a Conversation," is a collaboration with Kris Bowers, the world-famous virtuoso for "The Green Book" and "When They See Us." Threading together the storylines of writing a concerto, family history and race in America, Mr. Dong has helped the 13-minute documentary land a nomination for the Academy Awards. But, this is far from the peak of his career. In October 2021, the premiere of the highly anticipated Chevrolet Corvette Z06 excited motor fans around the globe. Elegant shots of the luxury sports car filled with modern-style frames caught the heartstrings of many viewers. But award-winning films and sleek commercials for world-renowned companies are simply a sneak peek into Mr. Dong's hidden wonders. The cork to his talents is still waiting to be fully unscrewed. For the young director, there is always so much more to learn. "That's kind of what keeps me going: There's no ceiling, it's always [about] getting better at something and learning something. It excites me that I'll never know everything or be the best."

Looking back on his life, Mr. Dong believes that everything has happened for a reason. When asked if he would change anything in his past, he replies firmly, "No, I would not." In a brief conversation, English department chair Jim Moore, Mr. Dong's ninth-grade teacher at Blair, observed: "Lukas is always about style, and style is timeless." Timeless indeed. Time is just a construct when it comes to art. Just as the chandelier in the Vancouver streets will always be spinning and chiming to the soft wind, Mr. Dong's works will never cease to amaze. ■



About the Author

Born in Chengdu, China, sophomore Apple Wu spent much of the last year learning entirely online due to the pandemic. Drawn to the J-term course as a means to connect to the Blair community, she jumped at the opportunity to hone her storytelling skills in this essay. This year, she is fully experiencing the tightly woven community and discovering for herself what it means to love Blair. Readers can join us in celebrating the young journalists, playwrights and novelists in our midst by following the Blair Oracle at <http://blairoracle.com>.

Pictures **Worth a Thousand Words**



Throughout the year, students and faculty spent time appreciating the work of visiting artists exhibiting in Blair's Romano Gallery.



Students opened the Blair theatre season with Qui Nguyen's *She Kills Monsters*, a sensitive examination of one girl's journey through loss, complete with homicidal fairies, dark elves and '90s pop music.



In November, Blair's Symphony Orchestra, Singers, Chamber Choir and Jazz Ensemble came together for an evening of beautiful music, showcasing several new pieces with international influences.



New Art Exhibit Challenges Students to Transform Collaboration

Art lives everywhere. It's in downtown Blairstown on the exterior walls decorated with murals. It's in Blair's hallways, where both student and professional artwork adorn the walls. Wherever students gather to learn—whether from instructors or from one another—art can be a catalyst for creativity. As part of its culture, Blair Academy continues to support and embrace student artists.

The Romano Gallery is no exception. Known for welcoming and embracing artists of all styles and types, the Gallery recently opened “Experiments in Artistic Collaboration,” featuring the collaborative work of Blair's student artists. In this community-based show, groups and pairs of students experiment across and within arts disciplines offered at Blair, finding opportunities to stretch and take bigger aesthetic risks as they interpret their

work through a multidisciplinary lens. The exhibit showcases the results of this experimental journey in art creation at the end of the first semester.

The exhibition has allowed the Blair community to experience artwork from fellow classmates. Featuring

ceramics, painting, graphic design, illustration and photography, the show is a testament to the craftsmanship and creativity of Blair students.

The fine arts department, led by Kate Sykes, wanted the exhibit to lead to moments of curiosity and teamwork. The



team, comprised of teachers Evan Thomas, Tyson Trish and Robert Hanson, is always open to discovering new ways of making and thinking about art.

For students, the exhibition was a challenge in both artistic skill and teamwork. Students were tasked with creating a project and collaborating to bring the piece to life. Each team ended with a self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses.

The Work

“Layers of Life,” created by *Shanayah Kasam '23*, *Ava Satasi '23* and *Darcy Setliff '23*, is a realistic sculpture inspired by growth through different periods of life. Through the project, the artistic team improved in their patience, time management, problem-solving skills and resilience.

Maya Ciminello '23 and *Eleanor Dana '22* crafted “City of Lights,” a hanging sculpture inspired by floating and cascading orbs. The duo explained their difference in work styles as their greatest collaborative challenge, as Eleanor is a perfectionist and Maya prefers to go with the flow. Together, they worked to overcome their differences, explored new media and built on their strengths to create their piece.

“Bison in Wyoming,” a Photoshop collage by *Bobby Castillo '22* and *James Castillo '24*, combined Bobby’s watercolor skills with James’ digital editing and photography skills. Together, the duo learned essential collaboration and patience, while figuring out how to blend their two talents to create the piece.

In all, the exhibit exemplifies how art connects with curriculum by building creative and innovative thinking. ■



Student Artists Showcased in National Art Show

At Blair Academy, students are encouraged to push their creative boundaries to explore their potential as artists. This often includes exploring a number of opportunities to showcase their work, both on and off campus.

The Alliance for Young Artists and Writers recently honored a number of Blair's budding artists at the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, hosted in New York City. **Duc Dinh '22** and **Julian Huang '23** both had work chosen to be on display at the in-person gallery from a pool of winners. Students had the opportunity to see their work in person during a trip to the show on October 3.

The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards is one of the nation's longest-running, most prestigious recognition programs for creative teens. Founded in 1923, the program has inspired bold ideas in creative students throughout the country. All entries are considered for Gold Key, Silver Key, Honorable Mention, American Visions Nominee and American Voices Nominee Awards.

Throughout the school year, Blair faculty encourage art students to enter the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, but it is not a requirement, according to photography teacher Tyson Trish. For students, the competition is a unique way to showcase work outside of Blairstown for the world to see.

"It is wonderful when your creative work is acknowledged by others outside of your community, as it provides students with confidence and positive feedback," Mr. Trish noted. "I am very proud that these two students' work is on display for others to see and be inspired by."

Both Duc and Julian, who earned the Gold Key for their images, were remote-learning students due to the pandemic when they took the photos. Mr. Trish loved that they were able to turn to photography and art as an outlet and form of self-expression during this difficult time.

Mr. Trish and his photography students look forward to entering the contest again this year. ■

2021 Scholastic Art Award Winners

Sofia Ciminello '22 "Tenacity" – Silver Key

Ashley Dai '21 "Pavillion Design" – Gold Key,
American Visions Nominee

Duc Dinh '22 "Gender Fluidity" – Gold Key

Duc Dinh '22 "On Cloud 9" – Gold Key

Duc Dinh '22 "Flower for Thoughts" – Gold Key

Hope Dragonetti '22 "Loansome" – Silver Key

Julian Huang '23 "Light" – Gold Key

Julian Huang '23 "Busy" – Honorable Mention

Christine Jeong '23 "Miss You" – Honorable Mention

Christine Jeong '23 "Spike" – Honorable Mention

Christine Jeong '23 "House of Goddess" –
Honorable Mention

Christina Jiang '24 "The Handprint" – Silver Key

Olivia Kreider '21 "XXXTentacion Portrait" –
Honorable Mention

Mia Leddy '23 "crystal skies" – Honorable Mention

Christina Tan '21 "Mermaid" – Gold Key

Linda Thomas-Galloway '21 "Black and White" –
Honorable Mention

Sean Um '22 "Hopeless" – Gold Key

Sean Um '22 "Gaze" – Gold Key

Sean Um '22 "Arab Spring" – Honorable Mention

Sean Um '22 "Dreaming the Impossible Children's
Book" – Gold Key

Sean Um '22 "Earnest Prayer" – Gold Key

Dong Bin Won '22 "Emergence" –
Honorable Mention

Dong Bin Won '22 "Looking through the Internal
and External Self" – Gold Key



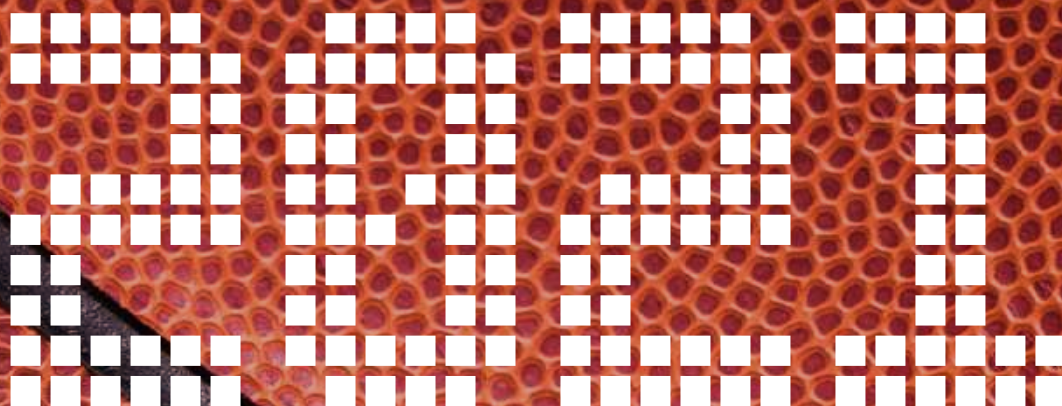
Duc Dinh '22 pictured below his Gold Key-winning work "On Cloud 9."



Recipient of the Gold Key, **Julian Huang '23** is pictured below his winning piece "Light."



AFROBASKET





Luol Deng '03.

Royal Ivey '00 & Head

Coach Joe Mantegna

Reunite for AfroBasket

A new student arrived on Blair's campus in the fall of 1999 lugging a bookbag and little else. Standing over six feet tall, with a broad reach and a broader smile, the boy told classmates that he "came from nothing," and indeed, he didn't have the basketball shoes he needed to play at the School. Seeing an opportunity to help, a Blair postgraduate approached the younger man, offering him his basketball sneakers....And the friendship between Blair basketball legends *Luol Deng '03* and *Royal Ivey '00* was born.

Head coach of the Blair varsity boys' basketball team Joe Mantegna fondly recalls the early years in which the two basketball standouts trained on the Blair court together. "Luol had just come from the United Kingdom, and Royal mentored him, challenging him on the court in practice every day. They developed a very close rapport, and Luol certainly got used to American basketball."

Having fled war-torn South Sudan with his family in 1990, Luol entered Blair Academy as a student from the United Kingdom and went on to a storied basketball career that took him to the highest echelons of the sport. After graduating from Blair, Luol spent one season at Duke and then starred for 15 years in the NBA, even playing for Great Britain in the 2012 London Olympics before retiring in 2019.

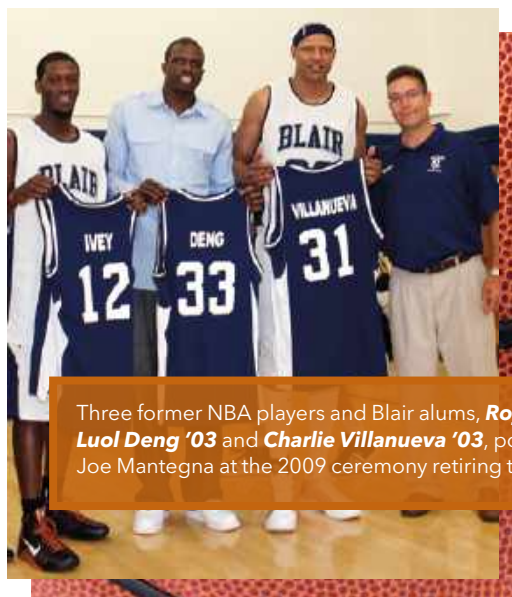
Then, in November 2019, an unexpected opportunity came knocking. The country of South Sudan needed a leader for their newly formed national Basketball Federation, and with overwhelming support, the parliament elected Luol Deng. With responsibilities that included overseeing the men's and women's national teams with hopes of creating a junior national team down the road, Luol settled into his new position as president of the South Sudan Basketball Federation.

PREPARING FOR THE TOURNAMENT

While the presidential position didn't require coaching the men's national team, Luol soon found himself faced with time and budget constraints and accepted the role of coach for a few games last year. To his delight, the South Sudan men's team made history, grabbing one of 14 spots and qualifying for the 2021 African basketball championship, known as AfroBasket, for the first time. The hugely popular tournament, which occurs once every four years, has served in the past as a qualifying tournament for the FIBA World Cup and the Summer Olympic Games. Recognizing that the national team needed experienced leadership for this prestigious tournament, Luol turned to those who had befriended and mentored him in his first semesters at Blair.

In the years since he graduated from Blair, Luol had kept in close contact with Coach Mantegna and Royal. While Coach Mantegna built Blair's boys' basketball program into a national prep school powerhouse, he also served as consultant to Luol's nonprofit foundation, running camps throughout North America for Sudanese immigrants and, annually, for the best players in the U.K. The two maintained a close relationship, with Luol even serving as godfather to Coach Mantegna's youngest son, **Xavier '24**. Meanwhile, Royal played college basketball at the University of Texas at Austin and then starred for 10 years in the NBA before retiring as a player in 2014. He then commenced coaching in the NBA, serving as an assistant coach for the Oklahoma City Blue, the Oklahoma City Thunder, the New York Knicks and the Brooklyn Nets, while still finding time to reunite with his fellow Bucs at events like Blair's 2009 ceremony at which their numbers were retired (*pictured above*).

Recognizing the impressive talent and deep experience that his fellow Blair alums offered, in May 2021, Luol Deng named Royal Ivey head coach of the South Sudan Basketball Federation's Men's National Team and Coach Mantegna assistant head coach.



Three former NBA players and Blair alums, **Royal Ivey '00**, **Luol Deng '03** and **Charlie Villanueva '03**, pose with Coach Joe Mantegna at the 2009 ceremony retiring their jerseys.

REUNITED IN RWANDA

In August 2021, Coach Mantegna traveled to Rwanda, where the AfroBasket competition was held from August 24 through September 5. He recalled the excitement he felt about this opportunity for both of his former students. "It is an incredible honor for Luol to be the first president of the South Sudanese Basketball Federation. This is the first time South Sudan has competed in AfroBasket, and it carries incredible weight. I am humbled to be a small part of it," he said.

Coaches Ivey and Mantegna had their work cut out for them. In the early weeks, they needed to refine their roster, run training camp, strategize and develop detailed game plans for each opponent they faced. But Luol was confident that Royal was the right person to guide the team. "Royal is one of the hardest workers I've ever met, with an exceptional understanding of the game," Luol said. "His personality, IQ and drive are precisely what our Men's National Team needs to elevate to the next level."

Coach Mantegna concurred. "Royal is an absolute star coach in the making. This is a great opportunity to not only lead the South Sudanese national team but to show the world what a talented leader he is."

TOURNAMENT SUCCESS

The brand-new team wasn't sure what to expect as they stepped on the court for their first game of the tournament. They were headed into the group phase, where they would battle Cameroon, Senegal and Uganda to earn a spot in the single-elimination bracket that followed. While the first game's sound defeat of Cameroon brought early confidence to the team, it was followed by a loss to Senegal, which ended up third in the tournament. The South Sudanese players closed the first phase, battling for an 88-86 victory over Uganda that clinched a spot in the next round.

Now in the single-elimination phase of the tournament, every basket mattered as South Sudan took the court against Kenya. The team came out fighting, scoring the first two baskets and leading 39-24 at the half. The tides shifted in the second half, however, as Kenya came back, outscoring South Sudan in both the third and fourth quarters. The South Sudanese players held on, though, coming out on top after a tense back-and-forth during the final moments of the game. Sadly, the Cinderella story ended there. In the quarterfinals, the South Sudanese team lost to Tunisia, which would eventually go on to win the tournament.



Small forward Nyang Wek with his teammates, helping South Sudan reach the quarterfinals.



Coach Joe Mantegna on the court with the 2021 AfroBasket team.

MORE THAN A GAME

While South Sudan's 2021 AfroBasket tournament ended in the quarterfinals, the coaching trio is already looking forward to the next tournament and reminiscing on the power of the game. "For South Sudan and many teams, playing the game of basketball means being part of something bigger than yourself," said Mr. Mantegna. "As part of the Blair team, it means getting to be a part of the brotherhood. With this tournament, you feel like you have the hopes, dreams and aspirations of your entire country hanging in the balance. To be a part of uplifting a country—it goes beyond wins and losses." For this team, AfroBasket's impact reached far beyond the final score of each game. Their performance in the tournament brought hope, excitement and pride to their country.

"I think South Sudan's performance in AfroBasket really showed the power of sport. When we beat Uganda and Kenya, which are both nations bordering South Sudan, there was literal dancing in the streets of Juba. For hours after those wins, there was a lot of pride in South Sudan, and they didn't care which tribe the guy came from, they just knew that South Sudan had beaten Uganda and Kenya," said Mr. Mantegna. "There's real power in that. People underestimate the power in that, especially in such a divided, polarized country."

A BRIGHT FUTURE

Luol Deng has come a long way since he arrived at Blair toting only his backpack. As all great athletes do, he has learned from the past. He will now show up on the court armed with two weapons: Royal Ivey and Joe Mantegna. Join us in cheering them all on later this year when the South Sudanese team, led by a threesome from Blair, will be back for two World Championship qualifying windows this summer. ■



Blair Bucs Capture MAPL Championships

This February, both of Blair's varsity basketball teams brought home huge wins, claiming championships in the 2022 Mid-Atlantic Prep League (MAPL). For the girls, this win marks their 11th-straight league title. For the boys, the victory marks their fourth-straight league title.

The moment was never too big for the girls' team. In the semifinals against Peddie, the team clinched a decisive 84-36 victory. **Ally Lovisolo '22**, **Tara Daye**

Johnson '22, **Sophia Davis '22**, **Jaylin Hartman '23** and **Zeynep Ozel '24** all played tremendously throughout the game. Blair's tenacious defense led to easy fast breaks and open three-point shots. In the finals, **Kennedy Henry '25** scored 25 points, making four three-pointers down the stretch.

"I am elated that our group has been able to carry the tradition to our 11th MAPL championship," said **Batouly Camara '15**, head girls' basketball

coach. "It has been a challenging span of two years due to COVID. I am so proud of our team for coming together, putting in countless hours of work and fearlessly showing up. This title is a testament to their relentless efforts to represent themselves, their community, the Blair family and those who have paved the way."

For the boys' team, the tournament began with a first-round bye and semifinal game against The Lawrenceville School,



where they won 101-65. Six Bucs ended the game with double-digit scoring, with **Otega Oweh '22** leading the way with 20 points. **Lual Manyang '22** had a hot hand throughout the game, shooting shot after shot from the field and incredibly landing each, contributing 16 points. Another notable performance came from **Jayden Lemond '23**, who recorded 10 points, eight rebounds and six assists.

In the finals, Blair played a tough Hill opponent. It was a battle throughout the game, but Blair pulled away with a 74-65 victory and the MAPL title. Otega once again dominated as the leading scorer with 20 points while **Jayden Williams '24** and **Brady Muller '22** added 17 points and 11 points, respectively, to the offensive attack.

"I am so happy for this group after enduring such a difficult year last year,"

said Joe Mantegna, head varsity boys' basketball coach. "For them to be able to come together, fight through adversity, stay connected and be ready to win at the end of the season is a testament to their grit and selflessness. The fact that it was such a balanced team effort just makes the win that much more satisfying." ■

Update: The girls' varsity basketball team went on to defeat Hun 87-41 to win the 2022 New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) Prep A State Championship. This marks the team's third state championship in five years.

Bucs Sign National Letters of Intent

Surrounded by excited family and friends, Blair Bucs took the next step in their athletic careers, signing their National Letters of Intent (NLI) on November 10 in the Hardwick Hall courtyard. A National Letter of Intent is an agreement binding a student-athlete and an NLI member institution. As of this November, eight seniors signed their NLIs while their family, friends and members of the Blair community gathered to celebrate the students' milestone. Eight athletes have committed to Division I schools. In addition, three Bucs accepted athletic commitments to Amherst College, the United States Naval Academy and the University of Pennsylvania.

Congrats, Bucs! ■

Football:

Keith Delaney

Soccer:

Marisa Snee

Crew:

Dylan Bentley & Petra Csanyi

Basketball:

Ally Lovisolo, Brady Muller & Otega Oweh

Wrestling:

Louis Colaiocco, Marc Koch,
TJ Stewart & Danny Wask



Ally Lovisolo '22 signed her National Letter of Intent to Loyola Maryland.



To play college basketball, **Otega Oweh '22** (left) signed with the University of Oklahoma and **Brady Muller '22** (right) signed with Bucknell University.





Head girls' varsity soccer coach David Mamukelashvili joins **Marisa Snee '22** as she commits to the University of Richmond.



Petra Csanyi '22 signed a National Letter of Intent to the University of Miami to row on the crew team.



Dylan Bentley '22 signed with the University of Virginia to row on the crew team.



Keith Delaney '22 signing his commitment to Amherst College to play football.



Wrestlers **Danny Wask '22** (left) and **Louis Colaiocco '22** (left center) signed commitments to the United States Naval Academy and University of Pennsylvania, while **Marc Koch '22** (right center) and **TJ Stewart '22** (right) signed National Letters of Intent to Davidson College and Virginia Tech, respectively.



Bucs Bring Home the Kelley- Potter Cup!



“THIS IS OUR DAY!”



In a dramatic conclusion to a spirited day of competition, Blair Academy brought the Kelley-Potter Cup home to Blairstown for the first time since 2013! Just moments before, the varsity football team celebrated a 39-7 victory over the Falcons as students stormed Hampshire Field in celebration.



As the sun faded on Blair's campus, Head of School Peter G. Curran and Peddie Headmaster Peter Quinn spoke to a cheering crowd of students as Mr. Curran welcomed the Cup home to Blair. This year marks the eighth time Blair has won the Kelley-Potter Cup since its inception in 1988.

"You demonstrated hard work, dedication, grit and great sportsmanship," Mr. Curran said of his first Peddie Day win as Head of School. "I hope Peddie Day is an occasion you will mark on your calendar for many years to come, and that you will return to campus often for it to celebrate this age-old tradition."

Over the course of the day's competition, the Bucs brought home seven wins, with the Falcons winning five. Girls' junior varsity soccer ended in a 0-0 stalemate. Parents, families, friends and Blair alumni were present on campus to support athletes in their various competitions.

The Kelley-Potter Cup is named in honor of James R. Kelley, retired headmaster of Blair Academy, and the late F. Edward Potter Jr., former headmaster of the Peddie School. The Cup represents the highest ideals of fair play, competition and sportsmanship. ■



Wins & Losses:

VARSITY FOOTBALL: W (39-7)

JV FOOTBALL (PLAYED ON 11/1): W (33-0)

BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY: L (19-40)

GIRLS' CROSS COUNTRY: L (13-37)

BOYS' VARSITY SOCCER: L (1-2)

BOYS' JV SOCCER: W (2-0)

BOYS' THIRDS SOCCER: W (5-0)

GIRLS' VARSITY SOCCER: W (1-0)

GIRLS' JV SOCCER: T (0-0)

VARSITY FIELD HOCKEY: W (5-0)

JV FIELD HOCKEY: W (4-0)

GIRLS' VARSITY TENNIS: L (2-5)

GIRLS' JV TENNIS (PLAYED ON 11/1): L (1-4)





Blair's New Water Polo Team Makes a Splash

Head coach Mitch Towne wasn't sure what to expect on the other side of the glass, but it wasn't what he found. Opening the door to the Wallace Pool for the first home game of the season, the coach of Blair's water polo team was met with a thunderous wave of sound from the stands. Blair students, packed shoulder to shoulder, filled the seating area, talking and cheering so loudly that the pool room reverberated. "I was shocked," says Coach Towne. "I realized that the home game had drawn a big crowd and, there is no question, that gave us a huge psychological advantage."

In the third game of its inaugural year, the Blair water polo team had

already played two matches against rivals Lawrenceville and St. Benedict's, losing one and tying the other. "We're a first-season team competing against schools that have had programs for a long time," explains Coach Towne. "We've just started building a team and our players are still learning the game's fundamentals, so I didn't expect to win." But at this home game, Blair did just that, rising to the occasion to upset St. Peter's with a score of 12 to 4.

Across all sports, teams win more often when competing at home. Part of the home field advantage can be explained by comfort—getting a good night's sleep in one's own bed and playing on familiar turf. But those factors did not

come into play for Blair's water polo team; Blair's athletes sleep in the same beds every night. The only explanation, Coach Towne feels, was the support of the home crowd. "The energy in the room was electric. The way the kids responded, came out and played was just phenomenal. It's my goal to carry that over and grow this program."

Building a Program

With the encouragement of Blair's administration, the water polo team first came together last year under the tutelage of Senior Associate Dean of Admission and NCAA championship swimmer Caroline Wilson. Due to the pandemic,



Water polo head coach Mitch Towne flanked by team co-captains **Zoe LaMent '22** (left) and **Ethan Lau '23** (right).

however, competition was postponed. This year, language teacher Mitch Towne has taken the helm. As a water polo player for Williams College's team and having trained with the New York Athletic Club, Coach Towne has deep experience with the exciting and fast-paced sport. He happily agreed to lead Blair's new club team along with assistant coach Rod Gerdson. To their delight, in 2021, the water polo program fielded 15 interested

students, whom Coach Towne proudly begins ticking off.

"**Zoe LaMent '22** has been a leader on the team, especially outside the pool, creating a good team dynamic," he says. "**Ethan Lau '23** is so strong—just stellar at all aspects of the game. **Obm Poonsornsiri '23** is incredible in goal, and **Chelsea Thatcher '23** is a fearless defender. And **JC Cong '23**?" he says. "He's just got a cannon of an arm."

One point that Coach Towne emphasizes, though, is the importance of teamwork. Whether players are setting up a formation, passing to teammates or forcing movement to create an opening to score, the key to success in water polo, Coach Towne says, is "working together as a team. There's room for individual brilliance, to score the goal or make the block, but everyone must play their part for the offense to work."

It Takes All Kinds

From the outset, Coach Towne has welcomed players of all abilities to Blair's water polo team, relishing his role as program organizer and technical coach. While water polo has a reputation for being a strenuous contact sport—players tread water during four eight-minute quarters when they are not racing to launch the ball across the pool—Coach Towne promises that the sport is not as intimidating as it looks. "Everyone can play water polo. Students have to be able to swim, but you don't have to be a superstar swimmer. Treading water is a skill that can be learned." Practicing five days a week in the Wallace Pool and weight lifting at Blair's gym on Saturdays, players soon acquire all the skills they need. "Almost no one on our team had ever played water polo before this year," he says with a smile, "and look at them now!"

The team was initially as a coed club that played four games this season because Coach Towne did not know if there would be enough student interest to support two single-gender teams. Student enrollment is strong, however, and he hopes the program will continue to grow into a varsity-level sport, which means competing against 10 to 12 teams

"The energy in the room was electric. The way the kids responded, came out and played was just phenomenal."

—Head water polo coach Mitch Towne

per season. “We have terrific support from our administration and fans, and if we continue growing at this pace in numbers and ability,” he notes, “there’s a good possibility that we can grow to compete at the varsity level and in the MAPL [Mid-Atlantic Prep League].”

Team co-captain **Ethan Lau '23**, for one, shares that goal. “We’re doing phenomenally for our first year. We started off with eight people and have grown to a team of 15 that gels really well. We’re ready for the next level.”

Ethan notes that there is no leader more enthusiastic than Coach Towne, nor more devoted to the task at hand. “He took us to Princeton last week,” Ethan says, to learn from their collegiate team, and frequently lugs his TV to practice so that players can replay their performance in real time. “Sometimes, Coach Towne plays goalkeeper against us in practice. He’s really, really good in goal. But the day is coming when I’m going to beat him!”

When asked which team he would like to face the most, Ethan does not hesitate. “Peddie!” he says, naming a school he hopes will use their accomplished swimmers to form a water polo team. “I can’t wait until we play Peddie. If we play them away, we’ll beat them. If we play them at home, and all of Blair shows up like they did [against St. Peter’s]?” Ethan smiles. “We’re going to crush them.” ■



Follow Blair's water polo team at
@blairaquatics on Instagram.



The water polo team poses for a photo on Media Day. (Top row, left to right) **Alex Bean '23**, **Jason Zhao '24** and **Will Marino '23**; (middle row, left to right) **Orson Yu '22**, **Will Collins '22**, **Christopher Couri '24**, **Ethan Lau '23**, **Ohm Poonsornsiri '23**, **JC Cong '23**, **Julian Huang '23** and **Zoe LaMent '22**; (bottom row, left to right) **Paige Folli '23**, **Demi Delapenha '24**, **Shanayah Kasam '23** and **Chelsea Thatcher '23**.



BUCCANEERS



01



04



05



08



02

01 *Ethan Anthony '23* plays great defense against Mercersburg Academy.

02 *Libby Russell '25* on a breakaway in a varsity field hockey game.

03 One of the top runners for the boys' cross country team this year, *Tim Xi '22*, in action.

04 *Zoe LaMent '22* looking to score against St. Peter's Prep in water polo.

05 *Kelsea Mitchell '22*, recipient of the Marcial Tennis Award this fall.

06 Veteran rower *Isa Dugan '22* participates in the new fall sculling program.

07 Senior captain *Laura Posner '22* was a team leader in digs for the girls' varsity volleyball team.

08 *Moussa Kane '23* blasts past the Hill School defense on Family Weekend.

09 *Marty Dericks '22* and *Betsy Kim '23* earned personal best times throughout the girls' cross country season.

10 *Madison Guiry '25* dribbles up the sideline against Mercersburg.



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New Thursday Night Series Helps Students *Imagine Careers*



B

aseball journeyman *Eddie Lehr '15* doesn't *mind* being compared to Jonah Hill. Ever humble, Eddie just thinks a comparison to a different, background character is probably more accurate. In the 2011 film *Moneyball*, Brad Pitt and Jonah Hill play Oakland Athletics personnel who pioneer using data analytics to evaluate potential baseball players and assemble a competitive team. Based on the Oakland Athletics' real 2002 season, the film captures the period when many Major League Baseball teams began to approach scouting using sophisticated mathematical modeling to analyze players and capitalize on underrecognized talent.



Eddie is a former Blair baseball pitcher and college player now serving as the Cincinnati Reds' amateur video scout and analyst, a position in which he evaluates and helps acquire potential players. As the new member on the Reds' management team, he relates to Jonah Hill's role in the movie and uses his background in economics and business analytics to supplement the team's more conventional scouting efforts.

Eddie also works with another Blair graduate, *Jeff Graupe '02*, the Reds' senior director of player personnel. In addition to evaluating players, Jeff plays a key role in the team's salary arbitration, free agent recruiting and draft negotiations. As the Reds look for new and creative ways to acquire talent, both men use data analytics to inform their decisions.

Recognizing that these alumni hold positions that are likely of interest to Blair's students, Director of Alumni Relations Shaunna Murphy welcomed the opportunity to bring Eddie

"This series is a great way to show students what opportunities they can pursue and to start to network early."

— Director of Alumni Relations Shaunna Murphy

and Jeff back to Blairstown for a new event series at Blair. Titled the Young Alumni Professional Panels (YAPP), the series promises to connect students directly with alumni who are just a few years out of school to talk about the work they do. "This series is a great way to show students what opportunities they can pursue and to start to network early. Networking is all about connecting people. These panels are exactly that," said Mrs. Murphy.



New Thursday Night Series
Helps Students *Imagine Careers*

The Genesis of the Panels

History department chair Jason Beck, who oversees the panel discussions, said the YAPP series was born out of a desire to help Blair students better understand the breadth of options that exist in the job market. “Many Blair students are already thinking about their future,” said Mr. Beck. “We wanted to create a mechanism for students to explore the questions they have about future careers.”

Frequently, students get stuck in siloed thinking about traditional positions. “Our goal is to expose students to a variety of paths that they may not think about,” explained Mr. Beck. “Many students say that they want to go into finance or business, but often, they don’t really know what that is. The panels will give students a better idea of the concrete possibilities that are out there and show the process that other alums have used to secure those positions.”

“We wanted to create a mechanism for students to explore the questions they have about future careers.”

— History department chair Jason Beck





Upcoming Speakers

To that end, Blair kicked off the YAPP series this fall with a discussion featuring Blair alumni who now work for consulting firms, including **Elliot Parauda '09**, recruiter for information technology firm the Eliassen Group, and **Brandon Hardman '10**, consultant for the Scandinavian engineering, consulting and design company AFRY.

In October, **Jeff Graupe '02** and **Eddie Lehr '15** led the discussion about sports management and their experience with the Cincinnati Reds baseball team. Other guests in the series included marketing industry specialists **Lauren Keiling '04** from ESPN, **Alexa (Gilmartin) Jachowski '08** from Reckitt and **Paula Hong '16** from Oracle Moat.

The YAPP series is now a part of Blair's regular Thursday evening programming, which includes The Romano Art Gallery

openings and current events conversations with Mr. Beck. Students attend in person and, following a brief talk from the panel, have the opportunity for questions and discussion.

It is Mr. Beck's hope that these alumni panels open doors, as well as minds, for students. "The series helps students make connections with these alumni that can continue after that evening," he said.

Eddie Lehr did not start out knowing what career he wanted, but he feels fortunate to have traveled the path he has—from pitching to Coach Wagner on Blair's baseball mound to working alongside a fellow Buc in the sport he loves. "This is my dream job. I haven't worked a day since I graduated college," he said brightly. "If sharing that experience helps others find their way, I am happy to do it." ■

Blair Alumni Gather to Share Memories

Blair alumni, scattered throughout the world, are frequently invited to come together and share their memories of Blair Academy. They have had many opportunities to gather at various locations both near and far from campus over the past year. Alums from nearly all recent decades have been represented, which inspired many conversations about Blair's history and how the School has grown over the years.



Peddle Day celebration gathering at the home of Bill & Courtney Hyder P'23 in Charlotte, N.C.



Blair community members gather to celebrate Peddie Day in New York City, hosted by **Curt Huegel '86**.

BLAIR FAMILY GATHERINGS



Miami Marlins Game



Reception at the home of
Victoria Bailey '97

Want to learn more about upcoming events for Blair alums or even host your own? Contact Shaunna Murphy, director of alumni relations, at (908) 362-2047 or murphs@blair.edu.

PEDDIE DAY EVENTS

BOSTON
Massachusetts

PALM BEACH
Florida

CHARLOTTE
North Carolina

LOS ANGELES
California

CHICAGO
Illinois

NEW YORK
New York

DALLAS
Texas

PHILADELPHIA
Pennsylvania

DENVER
Colorado

SAN FRANCISCO
California

EASTON
Pennsylvania

WASHINGTON, D.C.



Board Chair Doug Kimmelman P'12 '13 '15 '22 hosts alums at a Miami Marlins Game.



Alums gathering for a reception at the home of **Victoria Bailey '97** outside San Francisco, Calif.

Blair's Caroline Wilson Selected as One of Top 100 Swimmers

In the quest to find the top swimmers in the world, a blue-ribbon panel of judges from the College Swimming and Diving Coaches Association of America (CSCAA) sifted through nearly 3,000 athletes from the last century. From those 3,000 nominations, the panel winnowed the pool down to the top 100. Among the finalists, there are 87 swimmers and 13 divers. Twelve are members of the International Swimming Hall of Fame, and 59 are Olympians. The athletes hail from 13 countries, 28 states and one small town in scenic Warren County, New Jersey. Blair's Senior Associate Dean of Admission and Director of Financial Aid Caroline Wilson has been selected as one of the CSCAA's top 100 swimmers of the last century.

As a member of Williams College's varsity swim team, Caroline rose to national prominence and was named NCAA Division III swimmer of the year in 2013. She is a 13-time Division III National Champion and a seven-time Division III NCAA national record holder. *Swimming World Magazine* describes her as "a multi-event threat, capturing individual NCAA Division III titles in eleven of twelve opportunities."

While retired from national competition now, Caroline continues to share her passion for swimming at Blair, where she coaches the varsity swim team. "I love that swimming continues to be a big part of my life, even though the context has changed tremendously," she says. "I was fortunate to have wonderful, dedicated coaches throughout my swimming career, and I strive to offer that same dedication to the swimmers I coach."

Caroline hopes that Blair students will take away several lessons from her swimming career. "I hope boarding school students appreciate the balance these environments provide. Athletes can improve in their sport while also receiving a high-level education and making lifelong friends. The boarding school campus really allows students to 'have it all,' and I am so grateful for the opportunities I had as a boarding student growing up."

When they learn of the honor from the CSCAA, Caroline hopes that students understand that "Everyone leaves a legacy behind. I have been hearing from coaches and teammates I



had in college, high school, and even from youth programs growing up as a result of this award....It has made me realize that I had an impact on these communities. I know our students carry similar qualities throughout their day-to-day lives, but I hope they know that their impact at Blair will last far beyond their days on campus!"

The Blair community takes great pride in its long tradition of athletic excellence, and we are delighted to congratulate Caroline on this tremendous achievement. ■



Batouly Camara '15 (right) under the Blair Arch and (above) with her WAKE protégées.

Yahoo Profiles **Batouly Camara '15** as a Next-Generation Changemaker

In early December, Blair college counselor and head varsity basketball coach **Batouly Camara '15** was profiled by Yahoo as part of its “In the Know: Next Gen” series on changemakers positively impacting the world. A Yahoo camera crew spent a full day on campus filming Batouly, ultimately creating a video that shows her working as a Blair counselor and coach and mentoring young girls in Guinea, West Africa, in her role as CEO and founder of the nonprofit WAKE (which stands for Women and Kids Empowerment).

During the interview, Batouly talks about her journey as a young girl in Guinea and becoming a standout basketball player at the University of Connecticut and, later, a professional

basketball player in Spain. She founded WAKE in 2017 when she traveled with her parents to their native Guinea, where she ran a basketball clinic for youths. There, she met a girl who opened her eyes to the lack of resources these kids had. “I started WAKE because of one girl,” Batouly said in the video. “I felt it was so irresponsible of me to instill hope in young girls and not give them the resources, the opportunities or the access to fight for their dreams. I felt a personal responsibility at that point to do something.”

Today, more than 700 kids have participated in WAKE programs, and the nonprofit’s offerings have grown to include two basketball courts, a speaker series and workshops. Despite Blair’s

busy pace of life, Batouly is still actively involved in growing the organization and plans to expand WAKE’s basketball camps to five-day-a-week, six-week-long programs focused on the intersection of leadership, sports and education. She and her team hope to enroll up to 50 girls while continuing to run the camps for which WAKE has become known. Future plans also include building an all-girls boarding school on five acres in Guinea and reinforcing the importance of secondary education, as well as developing more partnerships in New York City that would allow Batouly and her colleagues to host after-school programs for girls in all five boroughs.

Batouly’s own mentor and her former Blair coach, longtime history teacher



Quint Clarke '87, makes a cameo in the Yahoo video to touch on what makes Batouly such a special person and player, noting she is inclusive, caring and has a gift for connecting with people. The two have known each other for 11 years, and they remain close. Not only is Batouly proud to carry on Quint's legacy as girls' varsity head basketball coach, but she has also benefited from his advice as the founder of the independent nonprofit "Blair in Kenya," which has been doing similar work in another part of Africa for many years.

Ending the Yahoo interview with her characteristic optimism, Batouly noted that she is proud of her generation.

"I think it is filled with fearless changemakers who see something that is not right and feel like they have everything they need to make a difference," she said. Part of making a difference, Batouly concluded, is dreaming big and developing in the next generation the confidence and education to foster agency in and access for others—and, as she has shown, the basketball court is a great place to start. ■



Watch the video & read
the article in full at
www.blair.edu/batouly.

Melissa Clark '05 Stars in PBS' 'Drive By History: Eats'

What would George Washington have eaten? Thanks to her starring role in the television series "Drive By History: Eats," **Melissa F. Clark '05** knows the answer. This fall, the Blair alum secured the role of chef on PBS' new series that dives into New Jersey's culinary past, recreating recipes from renowned moments in Garden State history. In the first episode, Melissa and historian Dr. Libby O'Connell explore a meal designed to curry George Washington's favor at The Hermitage in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey. Using ingredients that would have been on hand during the summer of 1778 and employing the food trends popular during the period, Melissa dishes up a delectable fried breaded chicken with sorrel sauce and raspberry fool for dessert.

In subsequent episodes, Melissa prepares recipes from World War I that reflect the war effort to go meatless and wheatless, and she examines the culinary legacy of the Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation in Parsippany, New Jersey.

Melissa says that she especially enjoys teasing out the flavors of fresh, local ingredients when she is preparing mouth-watering cuisine from past eras. "[Farm to table] happens to be what I was trained in. I'm very passionate about getting



into those seasonal moments," she told the cameras in the first episode about George Washington.

Be sure to join Melissa for "Drive By History: Eats," airing on PBS. The second season is currently being filmed and is expected to debut in 2022. ■



In Hardwick Hall, Mandy Dana P'87 '92, whose granddaughter is a senior at Blair, takes in the visual narrative of the Athletic History Wall.

Hardwick Hall Athletic Mural Dedicated in Memory of **Tony Maltese Jr. '55**

On the new mural that lines the long corridor of Hardwick Hall, the striking images of Blair athletes from every decade offer their stories across time. The oldest students in Blair's Athletic History Wall gaze out from 1894. They sit as a team, confident baseball players with handlebar mustaches and crisply parted hair, posing in thick, quilted pants, their legs set wide. The newest images capture Blair's student-athletes in action—a young woman flying through the air to clear a hurdle, another straining as she pulls back to launch a javelin. Chronicling the story of the School's sports triumphs, the mural celebrates the Buccaneers who have toiled and left their best on Blair's athletic fields from the 19th century to the present.

It took a team, led by Assistant Athletic Director **Rhett Moroses '13**, eight months to build Blair's Athletic History Wall, and that team gathered on September 29 to unveil the mural and dedicate it to the memory of **Tony Maltese Jr. '55**, a devoted, philanthropic and engaged alumnus who loved Blair. An

accomplished athlete, Tony was the recipient of the Franklin Prize during his two years at Blair, captain of the wrestling team and two-time state wrestling champion. He served on Blair's Board of Trustees for over a decade, and was recognized for his contributions to the School with the Alumnus of the Year award in 1994 and the School's highest honor, the Citation of Merit, in 1999.

"By all accounts, Tony was a force to be reckoned with during his Blair days, both on the football field and in the wrestling room, but his love for Blair extended far beyond athletics," said Head of School Peter G. Curran as he opened the ceremony. "It is hard not to be moved and inspired by Tony's generous spirit and the mark he left on Blair through his dedicated support and service."

Tony's daughter, Kristen Maltese Krusen, told the audience how happy and humbled her father would have been to be honored in this way by dear friends who enriched his life and kept him connected to Blair. "My dad loved Blair and attributed



Posing with the image of their dear friend, 15th Head of School Chan Hardwick (left), former Director of Advancement and Director of Strategic Planning Monie Hardwick (center), and **Taki Theodoracopoulos '55** (right).



Tony's daughter, Kristen Maltese Krusen, with her husband, Charles, and children, Lion and Blakeslee.

much of his success in life to his experiences here," she said. "In the wrestling room, he learned that if you get knocked down, you get back up every single time, and that's a lesson he instilled in his children. Dad would have loved seeing generations of Blair athletes represented on this wall and getting the chance to attend this dedication and talk with all of you today."

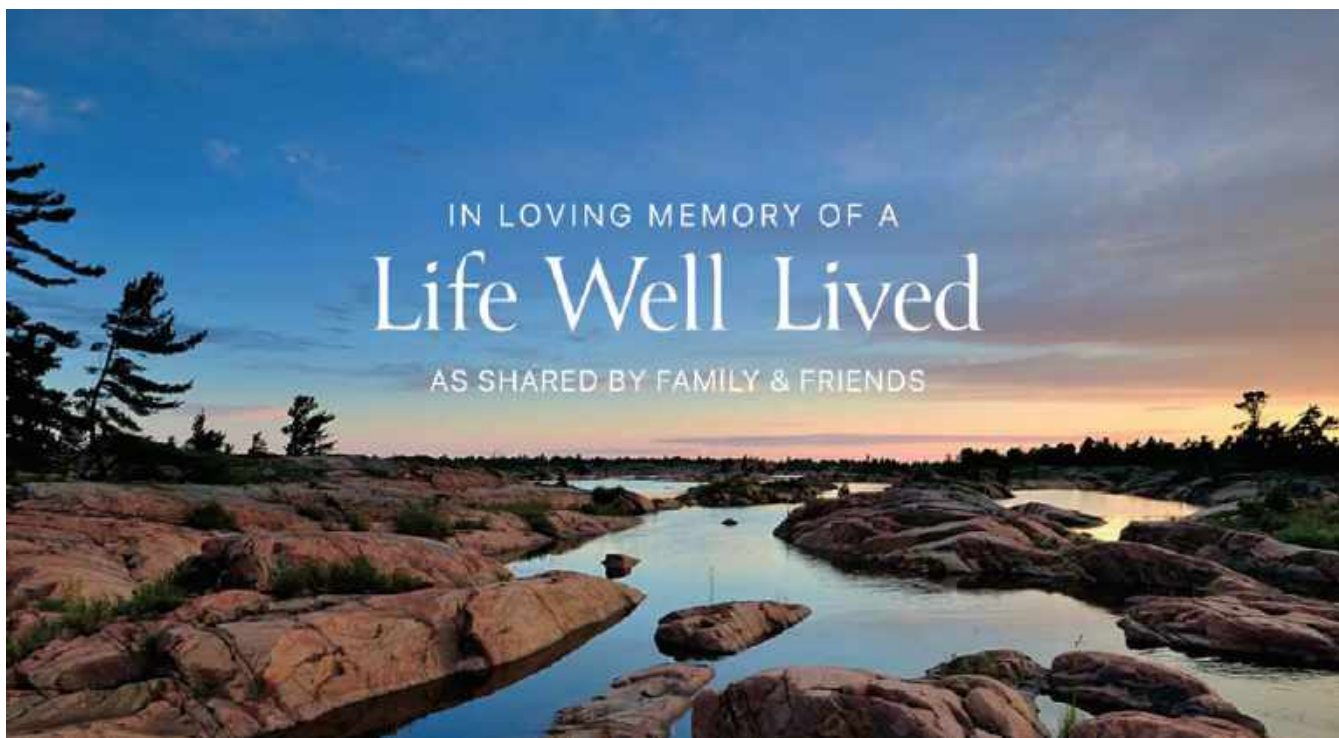
Tony's passing in January 2021 affected many in the Blair community deeply, especially his classmate, **Takis "Taki" J. Theodoracopoulos '55**, with whom he maintained a close and lifelong friendship. At the ceremony, Taki addressed assembled guests that included former Blair Head of School and one of Blair's newest Trustees, T. Chandler Hardwick III; his wife, Monie Hardwick, who led Blair's advancement office for 10 years; as well as Blair's present Head of School, faculty and coaches. Speaking about how his friend personified selflessness, Taki explained, "Tony always put others first. Even when I happened to run into Tony [when his son was gravely ill], he asked only about me. I've never met a person who was more giving. His generosity extended to his family, his friends, this school and, of course, the country. I am very lucky to have met him."

Chan also spoke of his friend Tony as one of the great 20th-century "Blair boys" for his strong character, quiet generosity

and love for Blair. "Remember Tony Maltese," Chan urged. "He was one of the greatest Blair alumni, a great friend to this school and a great friend to us."

Director of Athletics **Paul Clavel '88** believes that visitors will be engaged by the rich history now etched onto the walls of Hardwick Hall. From the long-forgotten wooden track that once guided Blair runners to the triumphant faces of the boys' basketball team hoisting their trophy high for the first time, the mural suspends in time favorite and fascinating moments from Blair history. Coach Clavel also hopes the Athletic History Wall will serve not only as a reminder of past accomplishments but also as an inspiration to current students. "When our athletes look at these images, I hope they realize that victory comes through teamwork, and strength comes from embodying humility, a strong work ethic and good sportsmanship. I hope they see that image of Tony Maltese and compete like him."

Frozen in time, the enlarged image of one handsome wrestler stands out from the mural. Crouched and ready to pounce, Tony Maltese stands as a fitting symbol of the energy, dedication and character it takes to be a true Blair athlete. ■



Dennis Wm. Peachey '62: Celebrating a Life Well Lived

The Blair community gathered to bid farewell to a beloved faculty member on October 9, remembering **Dennis Wm. Peachey '62** as a kind and humble leader who dedicated his life to caring for and supporting Blair students and all aspects of campus life for 40 years. Nicknamed “Mr. Blair” for his renowned dedication to the School, Dennis’ story began, in many ways, the year that he turned 15.

“In the summer of 1958,” wrote longtime friend **Larry Snavelly '67** in a memorial video presented at the service, “Dennis rode 14 miles through the woods to interview for a job on Bar Island, Parry Sound, Ontario. Impressed by his initiative, Walter Baumann [Blair class of 1922] hired him on the spot.” Over time, Walter’s admiration for the boy grew, and, before long, “He was inspired to make Dennis a very generous offer. Walter offered Dennis a full scholarship to his alma mater, Blair Academy.”

The rest is Blair history. After graduating in 1962, Dennis returned to the School a few years later, joining the faculty as Secretary of the Academy. In addition to his development role, Dennis coached soccer, skiing and hockey and taught in

both the science and art departments. He married his wife, Lynn, Hon. '65 '74 '77, and, together, they began raising their two children on campus. Later, as Assistant Headmaster for Finance and Development, Dennis revitalized the School’s endowment and oversaw a renaissance in the development of Blair’s buildings and grounds. His greatest achievements, however, were reflected in his genuine love of people and personal relationships.

At a packed memorial service at Blairtown’s First Presbyterian Church and at a reception on campus, former students and colleagues, longtime friends and family stepped forward, giving heartfelt eulogies for a man remembered for his quiet humility, incredible thoughtfulness, superior athleticism and absolute devotion to his family, friends and Blair Academy.

James T. Thompson '77, who came to Blair two weeks after his own father passed away, described Dennis, saying, “He was truly the father I did not have.... I am a firm believer that the presence of God is found in the interaction between human beings. If you want to find God’s spirit, that’s where it is. That is what Dennis gave to so many people. He gave so much

of himself.” Speaking to his dear friend and mentor, James promised, “You are in all of our hearts. You will live on.”

Dennis’ children, Trustee **Derek Peachey ’93** and **Meghan Peachey-Bogen ’96**, also addressed the gathering, peppering their recollections with jokes and family anecdotes, capturing the deep humanity of their father in its fullness. “Dennis Peachey was a complex man, more sensitive than he let on. Intensely human,” Derek offered. He said his father taught his children about the importance of a strong work ethic and how to live a life with humility and decency.

Head of School Peter G. Curran recalled the huge role that philanthropy played in Dennis’ life story. Dennis’ story began with a life-changing opportunity, thanks to the generosity of Mr. Baumann, and Dennis’ legacy will include paying that generosity forward. The Dennis Wm. Peachey ’62 Endowed Scholarship was founded so other students would have the chance that Mr. Baumann provided to Dennis. “It is so moving to have seen so many alums and lifelong friends give back in Dennis’ name as a way to honor and thank him,” Mr. Curran said. To date, he said, the fund has raised nearly \$300,000 from more than 50 donors, granting other students the gift of a bright future.

As one of the School’s foremost ambassadors during his lifetime, Dennis touched many lives in his capacity as coach, mentor and friend. In all those roles, he exemplified living a life of principle, dedicated to uplifting others. His daughter, Meghan, offered that she had received many kind notes after the passing of her father, but one stood out for capturing the essence of Dennis Peachey well: “When all is said and done, your dad was simply one of the finest persons that I have ever known.”

The Peachey family and Blair Academy sincerely appreciate the gifts that have been made to the Dennis Wm. Peachey ’62 Endowed Scholarship and wish to thank the many alumni, families and friends who have generously contributed. Their gifts honor Mr. Peachey’s legacy of love for Blair and its students and have helped grow the educational opportunities afforded through this scholarship. ■



“At his core, Dennis Peachey was just a shy boy from Parry Sound. Some might say that the final years of his life were tragic, but life is only tragic if you let it be. The only tragedy would have been to not have this husband, father, brother. May God continue to grant the gift to humanity of determined boys riding to a better future.”

If you would like to support the Dennis Wm. Peachey ’62 Endowed Scholarship, please contact Chief Advancement Officer Craig Hall at hallc@blair.edu or (908) 362-2032 or Assistant Director of Advancement for Capital and Planned Giving Velma Lubliner at lubliv@blair.edu or (908) 362-2041.



Crew Training Center Dedicated

In recent years, Buccaneers have benefited from facility upgrades that have enriched the Blair athletic experience year-round. These projects have included replacement of the turf on Hampshire Field; the establishment of the Blair Squash Endowment; renovation of the basketball locker rooms; the additions of a lacrosse practice wall and outdoor basketball and pickleball courts; resurfacing of the tennis courts; improvements to the Wallace Pool including a new scoreboard, touch pads

and a new record board; and the addition of the winter sports complex (aka the Bubble) for winter practice and activities.

At a dedication ceremony on October 22, Blair celebrated the opening of one more: the new Crew Training Center.

Standing before parents, faculty and athletes assembled for the ribbon cutting, rowing director and head girls' coach **John Redos '09** told the crowd that the facility's eight-seat sweeping and sculling

tank will be invaluable to Blair's up-and-coming crew teams. "Our women's program is currently the number-two high school program in our event in the country, and our men's team is hot in pursuit. I am very confident that this center, along with the athletes and coaches in our program...is the start of Blair being a permanently recognized national program." ■

Generous donors, alumni and parents have provided the initial funding for this project and naming opportunities remain. If you would like to make a gift to support Blair's student-athletes and the new Crew Training Center, please contact Chief Advancement Officer Craig Hall by phone at (908) 362-2032 or email hallc@blair.edu.

Students Christen 'The Shipyard,' Blair's New Outdoor Basketball Court



Teachers, coaches and students bedecked in sweatshirts and blue-and-white jerseys gathered on the thick grass of Blair's athletic fields on November 9, joining Head of School Peter G. Curran and Director of Athletics **Paul Clavel '88** to celebrate the dedication of Blair's newly constructed outdoor basketball court.

Standing before the crowd and the crisp new court, Mr. Clavel said he was excited about this addition to Blair's sports complex, which will afford the entire community greater opportunity to sharpen their athletic skills and stay active. Students will be able to play a quick game or just shoot the ball with friends. "One takeaway from the pandemic is that students really enjoy playing basketball outside," he noted before the event. "I am delighted that we've added this court to Blair's athletic complex."

With its open accessibility and outdoor lights, "The court makes it easy for students to play pickup games, and those are indispensable for building basketball skills and confidence in young athletes," Mr. Clavel offered.

Located next to the Siegel Property in the far corner of Blair's athletic fields, the court is the result of the generosity of two anonymous donors, whose only request was that Blair students name the court. To that end, Blair created a March Madness-style bracket last year and the entire school voted, every three days, until a winning name emerged.

"The Shipyard it is!" Associate Dean of Students Rod Gerdson noted before the event. "I can't believe 'the Thunderdome' didn't make it!" he joked.

The celebration ended as representatives from each student class council took to the new court, facing off to determine



the ultimate "Knockout" champion and claim bragging rights before digging into cider donuts and iced coffee.

Now the only March Madness brackets will be for students' outdoor tournaments on their new favorite court. Open daily for the enjoyment of all members of the Blair community, The Shipyard is lined with three pickleball courts as well as a basketball court. Community members are welcome to play as often as they like. ■

BOB VAN STONE '69 & MARIAN DARLINGTON KEEP A PROMISE THROUGH A PLANNED GIFT

When one hears of scholarships, it is only fair to first think about the recipients. Who are these deserving students, what are their life stories and why did they receive such prestigious rewards? Yet, most stop listening to the story there, missing the importance of the backstory behind each prestigious reward. What is the name of the scholarship, who awarded it and how did the scholarship come to be?

These important questions, which oftentimes get overlooked, can lead to a beautiful story. Such is the case with The Virginia Van Stone Memorial Scholarship made possible by **Robert "Bob" Van Stone '69** and his wife, Marian Darlington, honoring the commitment Bob's mother, Ginny Van Stone, made to Blair over four decades of service.

"I had been thinking about the gift for a while," stated Bob. "I had talked to my late mother about it, and I had promised her that I would do it, and I wanted to keep my word."

Bob's father died when he was very young, and Ginny and Bob moved to campus after Ginny came to work for the School. She was Headmaster Benjamin D. Roman's secretary and then the School's longtime registrar. Ginny lived in Blairstown with her family, and Bob began attending the school in 1965 as a day student.

"Blair is basically my hometown," Bob commented. "Some people may have no interest in going back to their hometowns, but in my case, Blair was such a great experience and the School was like a bucolic little paradise for kids. When I think about my past and the experiences I had growing up, it usually revolves around Blair."

Although Blair always held a special place in his heart, Bob admitted that it took him a while after graduating and starting his own career for him to realize just how meaningful Blair was to him. A little help from Blair's athletic teams, particularly the growing boys' basketball team under renowned coach Joe Mantegna, did not hurt.

"I didn't get too involved with Blair after graduation," Bob said, chuckling. "Or at least until Blair got a really good basketball team."

Bob had been working in the Center City district of Philadelphia when two of his colleagues' sons struck up a conversation with him about basketball. He recounted, "They all came into my office, and I said something along the lines of wanting to watch one of their games." When it came out that Bob had played basketball for Blair, the boys were impressed, calling Blair's program one of the best in the country. Now it was Bob who was impressed! He continued, "They then showed me a photo of



Bob Van Stone '69 and Marian Darlington.

current Blair boys' basketball coach Joe Mantegna with **Luol Deng '03**, **Charlie Villanueva '03** and **Royal Ivey '00** standing there with a basketball, grinning." Amazed by the strength of his alma mater's program, Bob thought, "You've got to be kidding me."

Remembering that day fondly, Bob believes that conversation served as the catalyst that prompted him to get re-involved with his beloved school. It was a chat that led to Bob and Marian establishing a Charitable Gift Annuity and planning to fully fund The Virginia Van Stone Memorial Scholarship, through a gift from their estate, to give the opportunity for a deserving and willing student to attend Blair.

"This scholarship fund in recognition of my mother will go to a local student who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to attend a school like Blair," said Bob. "A school where, every time I visit, I just instantly feel better. I think it's because you know you're at an institution that is doing very good things, and just by being there, you know you're doing good things, too." ■

Continue Supporting Students at Blair After Your Lifetime

Please consider making a provision in your will or estate plan to support scholarship at Blair Academy. Like Bob and Marian, you may also choose to honor someone who has made a difference in your life with a named scholarship. For more information and to join the John C. Sharpe Society of planned givers, contact Velma Lubliner, assistant director of advancement for capital and planned giving, at (908) 362-2041 or lubliv@blair.edu.

@ www.blair.edu/gift-planning

1939	DeWitt C. Baldwin Jr. January 5, 2022 Chicago, Illinois	1954	James J. Farriss III September 21, 2021 Easton, Maryland	1968	Theodore B. Scherf November 18, 2021 Helena, Montana
1944	Richard W. Rowe October 2, 2021 West Melbourne, Florida	1956	Charles R. Wiener January 20, 2022 New York, New York	1972	Pieter H. Woodcock November 6, 2021 Blairstown, New Jersey
1945	Blair M. Davis November 16, 2021 New York, New York	1958	Richard W. Blackmar October 5, 2021 Green Valley, Arizona	1974	Curtis W. Kay June 7, 2020 Newton, New Jersey
	Thomas H. Jones January 18, 2021 Wilmington, North Carolina		Roger P. Hailes May 22, 2021 Richmond, Virginia	1976	Tonya J. Harmon December 12, 2021 Lawrenceville, Georgia
	Vito S. Schiavone February 5, 2022 Allentown, Pennsylvania	1959	P. Jan Anstatt November 7, 2021 Wilmington, North Carolina	1986	Brynn C. Olin December 2021 Deerfield, New Hampshire
1946	Ralph E. Hersey Jr. July 28, 2021 Ormond Beach, Florida	1960	Robert H. Brunner January 13, 2021 Bethel, Connecticut	1989	Joshua J. Arnedt October 2, 2021 Bath, Maine
1949	Raymond V. Morrow Jr. January 28, 2022 Bethlehem, Pennsylvania	1961	James H. Bullock January 31, 2022 Westminster, Maryland	2004	Charles W. Clark September 22, 2021 Dekalb Junction, New York
1951	Robert C. Brower October 29, 2021 Florham Park, New Jersey	1963	Randall A. Greene September 29, 2021 Boulder, Colorado	Former Staff	Leslie Kimble November 20, 2021 Blairstown, New Jersey
1953	William R. Timken September 27, 2021 Walnut Creek, California	1967	John E. Blick Jr. February 4, 2022 Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania	Emeritus Trustee	Martha D. Furey October 20, 2021 Leawood, Kansas
			Richard Nashner January 8, 2022 Havertown, Pennsylvania		

1939

DeWitt C. Baldwin Jr. Known affectionately by his colleagues and friends as “Bud,” Dr. Baldwin dedicated the last 14 years of his career as a senior scholar-in-residence at the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), advocating for and studying the experience of medical residents and fellows in the clinical learning environment. He was highly regarded for his research around medical resident and fellow burnout and well-being, and his emphasis on taking a collaborative approach to treating patients. His expertise and vision helped shape major initiatives in American medical education and led to innovations that improved education

and safety in residency and fellowship programs, their sponsoring institutions, and ultimately, in clinical practice. The son of missionary educators who worked alongside medical care teams, Bud lived in Burma (now Myanmar) until age 10. This early experience had a lasting impact on him as he developed into a caring physician and educator. He became a noted champion of humanism in medical education, long advocating for the reform of medical school curricula, and he emphasized the need for mental health support for medical students, residents and fellows, and was a pioneer in the interprofessional teamwork movement. A pediatrician, family physician and psychiatrist, Bud

was educated at Swarthmore College, the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale, Yale Divinity School, Yale Medical School, and the University of Minnesota and Yale graduate schools. He was a diplomate of the National Board of Medical Examiners, the American Board of Pediatrics and the American Board of Family Practice. During his academic career, Bud wrote, lectured and conducted research in the fields of higher education, moral development, interdisciplinary health professions education, medical ethics, rural health, behavioral sciences, humanistic medicine, child development, psychology and dentistry. He published more than 200 articles and several books, and received

Emeritus Trustee

Martha D. (Thompson) Furey. Fondly known as “Martie,” Martha was the first woman to serve on Blair’s Board of Trustees. Appointed to the Board in 1976, Martie served as a Trustee until 1991 and was then elected to Emeritus status, serving Blair until her death at age 95.

During her time on the Board, Martie was a member of the Academic Committee, Budget/Audit Committee and Educational Policy Committee. She was a proud Blair parent to **David C. Thompson ‘71** and **James T. Thompson ‘77** and served on the Blair Parents’ Executive Committee. Martie graduated from Allegheny College in 1947 with an AB degree in art and English. She completed one year of graduate study at the Mills School for her certification for primary education and taught for several years.

Martie is a former alumni trustee of Allegheny College, former trustee of the New Jersey Historical Society, former president of the Women’s Branch of the New Jersey Historical Society and a former board member of the New Jersey Society of the Colonial Dames. She was involved

with the Junior League of Newark and Kappa Kappa Gamma Alumni Association.

Martie retired as president of real estate firms Park Liberty and Dale Realty Co. in Bloomfield, New Jersey. Over the years, she and her husband, Clement, spent time at their home in Osterville, Massachusetts. Martie hosted several Blair events at The Wianno Club, where the Fureys were members. They enjoyed spending time in Florida several months out of the year before moving to Prairie Village, Kansas.

Martie loved spending time with her family and friends. She will long be remembered at Blair for her dedication, great deal of care for the School and her loyal guidance as she helped to chart the School’s direction.

She was predeceased by her husbands, David C. Thompson and Clement A. Furey and her son, Lewis. Martie is survived by four children; five stepchildren; 18 grandchildren, including two granddaughters who are members of the Blair family, **Mary K. Thompson ‘07** and **Juliana N. Furey ‘08**; and 12 great-grandchildren.

numerous honors and awards. Bud’s passion for his work and compassion for other human beings were palpable in everything he did. He lived a long and accomplished life, full of achievements, adventures and, above all, love. He is survived by his wife, Michele, two daughters, four grandchildren, and many friends and colleagues.

1944

Richard W. Rowe. “Dick” was a two-year Blair Buc and loyal member of his class who attended many Alumni Weekends. Following graduation from the University of Miami, he had a successful career in the military at the Naval Intelligence Command. Following retirement, he and his wife, Bebe, enjoyed life on the Intracoastal Waterway in Florida. His hobbies included listening to the symphony and theatre, and serving as an elder of their Presbyterian church. He is survived by his wife, children and grandchildren.

1945

Blair M. Davis. Spending three years on campus, Blair was a member of the soccer squad, swim team, and Blue and

White Key Society. Blair served in the United States Navy. He worked and lived in Manhattan and his Midtown apartment hosted many weekly alumni luncheons during 50 years of living there. When not in New York City, he spent time in Maine and New Hampshire. Blair loved photography, videography and following the harness-racing circuit. He is survived by friends and family, including his nephew, **Todd M. Davis ‘68**, and great-nephew, **Hamilton T. Davis ‘04**.

Thomas H. Jones. Thomas attended Blair for one year and graduated from Muhlenberg College with a major in foreign languages. He served in the United States Navy during World War II in the medical corps. He became a French teacher in the New York City school system. Thomas loved classical music, and he joined local orchestras and chamber quartets, where he played the violin. Thomas and his wife were worldwide travelers. He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Phyllis, two children and three grandchildren.

Vito S. Schiavone. Vito was a graduate of Bangor High School and attended

Blair Academy for a postgraduate year and remained a loyal alumnus. He matriculated at the University of Bridgeport and was a U.S. Army Air Force veteran, who served with the 20th Air Force in the South Pacific during World War II. He was deeply involved with his community, where he was a member of St. Thomas More Roman Catholic Church and a member of the Knights of Columbus as a 3rd Degree Member of Council 528 and a 4th Degree Member of Assembly 931. Vito was a member of the Pottstown Flying Club, Veterans of Foreign Wars of Northampton, the Roseto American Legion, St. Marcos of Temple, Victor Emmanuel, Fearless Fire Company and Coplay Saengerbund. He is survived by his wife, Sylvia, her family and his extended family. Vito was preceded in death by four brothers, including **Anthony F. Schiavone ‘48**.

1946

Ralph E. Hersey Jr. The 1946 ACTA notes that Ralph “puts his extra time to good use on the cinder path, where he is ever trying to lower his time in the mile and other long-distance runs.” During his two years at Blair, he wore the varsity “B” for

cross country and track. Ralph served as a U.S. Marine from 1946-1948, stationed in Guam, and received degrees from Beloit College and Caldwell College. Upon retirement from GE Company, he and his wife, Nancy, spent time in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina and in Florida. Ralph enjoyed family and traveling to Wyoming, including the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone, as well as Mt. Rushmore, South Dakota. Ralph is survived by his wife, three children and grandchildren.

1949

Raymond V. Morrow Jr. Following graduation from Blair, Ray went on to earn a bachelor's degree in chemistry, with honors, from Lafayette College. He established himself as a chemical engineer and a successful entrepreneur. He honorably served his country in the Merchant Marines and the United States Army. Ray was an avid Notre Dame, Philadelphia Eagles and Detroit Tigers fan. He was a lover of life, master scuba instructor, patent holder, inventor, skydiver, and an accomplished writer and poet. Ray is survived by his wife of 48 years, Bonnie, four children and 13 grandchildren.

1951

Robert C. Brower. Bob excelled in academics and was a three-sport varsity athlete on the football, basketball and baseball teams. He enlisted in the U.S. Marines during the Korean War, and later, received his degree from Seton Hall on the GI Bill. Bob worked as an institutional equity salesman in the brokerage industry for more than 40 years with Spencer Trask and Eberstadt. Bob loved his work, travel, friendships with his co-workers and clients, and the vibrancy of New York City. His biggest achievement and love was his family, and Bob shared his love of New York City restaurants and theatre and summers at the shore with his family. One of his favorite sayings was: "Always be hungry, humble and hardworking," and he instilled strong values in his children and shared his wisdom with his grandchildren. Bob was

predeceased by his son and is survived by his wife, Dorothy, four children and 10 grandchildren.

1953

William R. Timken. (See page 04.)

1954

James J. Farriss III. A two-year Blair Buc, known to his classmates as Felix, he was a member of the choir and tennis team. The 1954 ACTA notes: "Felix...that crazy laugh!" He served in the United States Army and retired from Army intelligence in 2003. He is survived by his wife, Sharon.

1956

Charles R. Wiener. Known to his Blair classmates as Richard, he served as *The Blair Breeze* and the ACTA photography editor and a member of the track and basketball teams. He attended his 55th class reunion with many of his classmates. A graduate of Bucknell University, he became a restaurateur, owning Paxton's Public House, Little Johns and the Jamaica Arms on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where he also lived his entire adult life. His last restaurant was the famous Wolf's Delicatessen and Restaurant in lower Manhattan. Rich and his wife enjoyed time at their home in upstate New York, and he loved rock-and-roll music, his family and friends, and, most of all, making people laugh. He is survived by his wife, Barbara, his sisters and many family and friends.

1958

Richard W. Blackmar. During his three years at Blair, Rick was an outstanding wrestler and co-captain of the 1957 Blair football team. According to the 1958 ACTA, "He could usually be found in the wrestling room and was very excited about attending college in Colorado." He matriculated to the University of Colorado, graduating with a business degree, and became an officer in the U.S. Navy, where he proudly served aboard the USS Coral

Sea. During his successful career as a salesman, Rick helped launch pioneering technology, such as airline ticketing machines and ATMs. Rick enjoyed many activities during his life, including wrestling, football, following the CU Buffaloes, skiing, golf, computers and the banjo. He volunteered at the GVR Computer Club and helped form the local music group, Arizona Banjo Blasters. Predeceased by his wife, Paula, he is survived by his two children and grandchildren.

Roger P. Hailes. Roger graduated from Davis & Elkins College, earned a master's degree in English from the University of Richmond and his PhD in English literature from the University of South Carolina. His heart belonged to the Collegiate School in Richmond, Virginia, where he taught English from 1966 to 2014. Called "Doc" by most, he had a warm sense of humor and enthusiasm for life. He was an avid supporter of Collegiate sports, especially football and tennis. You could always find Doc on the sidelines with a high-five and fist bump. Doc had a unique ability to recall play-by-play details, even years after the contest. He taught and changed the lives of over four decades of Collegiate students. Doc ran track at Blair during his two years on campus. He is survived by his loving wife, Deborah, his three children, two bonus children and eight grandchildren.

1959

P. Jan Anstatt. Peter, known to most of his classmates as "Jan," entered Blair in September 1953 as a seventh grader. Jan was on student council, *The Blair Breeze*, a swimmer and a baseball player. He continued his loyalty to Blair by serving on the Alumni Board of Governors. Jan attended Carnegie Institute of Technology, where he was a member of ROTC and, following graduation, he served as a second lieutenant in the Army Corps of Engineers (Korea and Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri) and received a certificate of achievement while an assistant division engineer in 7th Infantry Division. As a partner at Einson Freeman,

a point-of-sale company, he helped transform Einson into an advertising and promotion agency. Jan received several honors during his career at the Point of Purchase Advertising Institute: Chairman in 1981, Man-of-the-Year in 1984 and Hall of Fame in 1994. Jan subsequently joined the Discovery Challenger Space Learning Center, providing education and simulation opportunities for students interested in science and space exploration. He went on to form a consulting company, EDNOVATIONS, LLC, based in Morristown, New Jersey. Jan loved music, dancing, golf, boating and sports of all kinds, especially the New York Giants. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Jean, two children, two grandchildren and godchildren, **Kelley A. Troia '87** and **Michael R. Quain '90**.

1960

Robert H. Brunner. A three-year Blair Buc, Bob earned a bachelor of science degree from Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. He started out as a research chemist for Stauffer Chemical and then became an environmental auditor at Union Carbide. After meeting the love of his life, Eileen, while skiing, they were married for more than 51 years. He enjoyed time outdoors and was an avid skier, hiker and archer. Bob loved hunting and fishing and was a member of Bethel Fish & Game Club. Bob was a man of many talents and taught himself plumbing and carpentry. Bob is survived by his beloved wife, Eileen, and his two children.

1961

James H. Bullock. Jim was a runner his entire life, beginning at Blair and continuing in college for Springfield College (class of 1965). In 2010, at halftime of the Peddie football game, Jim served as master of ceremonies for the reunion of the 1960 cross country team that swept Peddie. Rather than one runner crossing the finish line first, the 1960 team crossed the finish line together, holding hands in unity. Mr. B, as he was known, dedicated his

career to education and was a retired educator for Carroll County Public Schools, having worked in the field for 42 years. Throughout his career, Jim was a physical education teacher, adaptive physical education teacher, assistant principal, principal and supervisor for special-education transportation. He was passionate about working with children and adults with special needs. In 1986, after a student asked why he could not participate in the Special Olympics, Jim created the Tournament of Champions for students with orthopedic, visual and behavioral needs who did not qualify for the Special Olympics. After 35 years, this remains a beloved event held each spring at McDaniel College, where kindergarten through 12th-grade students are paired up with college buddies to participate in a variety of athletic activities adapted to meet the individual needs of each student. Jim coached cross country and track and field for Westminster High School and Francis Scott Key High School. He was an active longtime member of the Westminster Road Runners Club. In 2015, he completed the half marathon leg of a team Ironman triathlon in Australia. He was most proud of running the New York City Marathon and crossing the finish line holding hands with his wife. Jim is survived by his three children and six grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Judith, and his two brothers, **Michael E. Bullock '59** and **Bruce L. Bullock '66**.

1963

Randall A. Greene. He recently retired as CEO of Safe Flight Instrument Corporation in White Plains, New York. Randy was a pilot with ratings in a large number of aircraft of all types, a test pilot, an entrepreneur, a self-taught engineer, an inventor with 19 patents in the area of avionics, a writer of technical papers in aviation publications and a devotee of outdoor sports. He earned two master's degrees, from General Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School, while he was CEO of Safe Flight Instrument Corporation, and oversaw the Corporate

Angel Network. While at Blair, Randy was a member of the football and fencing teams and a member of the radio and camera club. He is survived by his wife, Anne, and their son.

1967

John E. Blick Jr. A resident of Blairstown, John was a five-year day student who matriculated at Boston University, where he received a bachelor of science degree in broadcasting and film. He worked as a health-and-zoning codes officer for the Borough of East Stroudsburg for more than 30 years. Prior to that, John was superintendent for the Sewage Treatment Plant in Springfield, Vermont. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, five sons and six grandchildren.

Richard Nashner. Dick treasured his Blair experience and remained a loyal alum, returning to campus for reunions and many Leadership Dinners. He was a member of the soccer, wrestling and golf teams, and worked on *The Blair Breeze*. For decades, Dick provided marketing, financial and strategy consulting services to clients in a range of industries. Initially he worked with real estate clients on development, reuse and urban redevelopment projects for which he provided feasibility, strategic and market studies. Later, as principal of Beacon Advisors, he provided business strategy and planning services to nonprofit and for-profit organizations in businesses ranging from manufacturing to health care as well as religious institutions and museums. Dick earned a bachelor's degree in architecture and a master's in business from the University of Virginia and a certificate in strategic management from the American Management Association. He is survived by his wife, Emma, and two daughters.

1968

Theodore B. Scherf. A two-year Buc and Washington University in St. Louis graduate, Ted received a degree in journalism from the University of Missouri, moving to Sidney, Montana, to write for the *Sidney Herald*. His career

in insurance allowed him to move and travel around Montana, and he lived in Havre and Bozeman before settling in Helena with his wife and son. Ted was an avid tennis player, skier, artist and musician. At Blair, he was a member of the varsity golf and winter track teams, and sang in the choir and glee club. He is survived by his son and family.

1972

Pieter H. Woodcock. He attended Blairstown Elementary School and graduated from Blair in 1972. Pieter studied animal behavior at Bucknell University. For over 30 years, he worked as a pharmaceutical sales representative for Sanofi-Aventis. Most recently, Pieter was employed by the Arc of Warren County, where he helped people with developmental disabilities in a group home in Oxford, New Jersey. An avid baseball and hockey fan, especially of the Mets and Devils, he enjoyed traveling with his family to Alaska, Norway, the Caribbean islands and many other places. Pieter vacationed on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, every summer where he enjoyed fishing, boating and spending time with his family. He was a member of the Knowlton Presbyterian Church. Pieter was a loyal alumnus of the School and served as a class rep for many years. As a student, he played soccer, ran track and served as a prefect. He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Karen; his son; two daughters, **Carol P. Roman '97** and **Heidi V. Mavrakes '99**; six grandchildren; and his brothers, **Stanton B. Woodcock '74** and **D. Scott Woodcock '78**.

1974

Curtis W. Kay. Curtis was a member of the lacrosse team during his junior and senior years at Blair Academy. The 40-year radio veteran launched his career in 1980, when Howard Stern hired him to work at WRNW in Westchester, New York. Curtis eventually joined WDHA-FM, where he went on to play classic rock for WDHA's loyal listeners for nearly four decades. At Beasley Media Rock, 105.5

WDHA-FM, he was a legendary on-air personality and served as program director at the station. His passion for radio and desire to become a radio disc jockey began at the young age of 13, while he was sitting on the stoop of his family's Long Island home, listening to music on his small transistor radio. Curtis is survived by his family, friends and many of his devoted listeners.

1976

Tonya J. Harmon. Tonya was a beloved and loyal member to the class of 1976. During her three years at Blair, she was a member of the field hockey team, basketball team and manager of the softball team. Her leadership was valued as a prefect, member of Blue and White Key Society, and a captain of the field hockey and basketball teams. During commencement in May 1976, she was awarded the Headmaster's Prize. In 1980, she graduated from Rider University. Tonya worked for AT&T and also had her own travel company, Travel in Harmony, LLC. She is survived by her son, daughter and many family and friends.

1986

Brynn C. Olin. Following graduation in 1986 from Blair, Brynn went on to study social work at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. Brynn's passion for social work and caring for others continued into her career, where she worked in many positions supporting those with disabilities. Most recently, she worked for a home that offered a foundation upon which individuals could achieve and maintain a level of recovery from psychiatric symptoms. Brynn's interests included gardening, cooking, homeopathic medicine, reiki, music and Scottish culture. She is survived by her son, three daughters and four siblings, including a twin sister.

1989

Joshua J. Arnedt. A four-year senior at Blair, Josh matriculated at Brandeis University. After Brandeis, he stayed in Massachusetts, working as a paralegal

by day and playing in the bands Dabble, Uncle Edge and Lucky Dog by night. Josh headed to Maine, where he was a year-round resident on Monhegan Island. Josh was a man for all seasons: a cook, lobsterman, roofer or tutor, whatever was needed. From there, he moved back to the mainland, where he eventually settled in Bath, Maine. Josh was an amazing cook, skilled guitar player, voracious reader, history buff and Anglophile. He is predeceased by his mom, Eloise "Tish," and father, former faculty, John E. Arnedt, and survived by his siblings, including **Anna Ring '90**, his stepmother, and many nieces and nephews.

2004

Charles W. Clark. "Charlie" was a member of the wrestling team during his one year at Blair. He was a National Prep School Champion and earned All-American Honors at the National Championships. As a student at The Ohio State University, he had the opportunity to be teammates with his brother and be coached by his other brother. Charlie was an outdoor enthusiast, hiking solo on the 138-mile Northville Lake Placid Trail, biking and trout fishing. He was a talented artist, musician and an award-winning salesman for Acutis Diagnostics in Boston. He is survived by his parents and six siblings.

Former Staff

Leslie Kimble. Leslie was a longtime resident of Blairstown and worked at Blair from 1986-2004. She was a past parent and worked in the development office, when she received the Dennis W. Peachey Award in 1998. Leslie is the only recipient to receive this award who is not an alum of the School. She will be remembered for her laughter, her wise advice and dedication to Blair. She is survived by her son, **Joseph J. Kimble III '90**, known to many as "JJ."

Save the Date!



Visit www.blair.edu/alumni-weekend for more information.

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The Blair Fund provides the resources to ensure that Blair students feel known and supported and that Blair faculty members have the tools to provide a rich and meaningful educational experience.

To make your Blair Fund gift, visit www.blair.edu/make-a-gift.

Questions?

Contact Emma Barnes O'Neill, director of annual giving, at (908) 362-2045 or barnee@blair.edu, or Shaunna Murphy, director of alumni relations, at (908) 362-2047 or murphs@blair.edu.



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Mark your calendars!

The 2022-2023 school year is Blair's demisemiseptcentennial.
Be on the lookout for events and opportunities to celebrate
our 175th school year!

